

# THE TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN NORTH AFRICA AND CENTRAL AMERICA: AN INTER-REGIONAL COMPARISON

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## SUMMARY

From the very beginning of the so-called Arab Spring in the winter of 2010, different authors drew parallels with the fall of communism and the democratization of Eastern Europe in 1989/1991. Even the name given to the political processes of the 2010 in North Africa was similar to the names of the political changes in communist Eastern Europe. The Eastern Europe parallel was strongly emphasized and the arguments that accompany it do carry some weight. However, this paper claims that because of the specificity of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, its comparison to the Arab Spring is not completely adequate. Eastern Europe went through a triple transition and was later heavily influenced by the allure to join the European Union, unlike North Africa. Therefore, this paper stipulates that the Arab Spring is more adequately compared to the democratization of Central America than the democratization of Eastern Europe.

**KEYWORDS:** democratization, transformation, political systems, North Africa, Central America

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

From the very beginning of the so-called Arab Spring in the winter of 2010 and its bursting to flames in the spring of 2011, both media and academic commentators (Way 2011; Saideman 2012), compared it to the fall of communism and the democratization of Eastern Europe in 1989/91. Even the name given to this political phenomenon is similar to the names of the political changes in communist Eastern Europe like the *Prague spring* of 1968 or the *Croatian Spring* of 1971. Wiarda (2012: 134) claims that the name Arab Spring derives from the title of his friend Bill Taubman's book *Moscow Spring*. The parallel with Eastern Europe could not be emphasized any stronger and the arguments that accompany it do carry some weight.<sup>1</sup> We claim, however, that due to the specificity of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the comparison with the Arab Spring is inadequate. The Arab Spring, we believe, is more readily comparable with the democratization of Latin America.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, using primarily (but not exclusively) the theoretical framework laid down by Offe (1991) and using the methodological approach of inter-regional comparison, we will test this hypothesis.

We will compare the political transformations of two regions – Latin America and the Middle East – that is, more specifically, the political transformations of the countries from two sub-regions – North Africa and Central America. We focus on North Africa because it is a trendsetter within the wider region. One of the North African countries – Algeria – was the first Arab country that attempted democratization much prior to the events of the Arab Spring. Tunisia is the only success story of the Arab Spring, and Egypt was for a long time a role model for many other Arab republics. Gaddafi's Libya had a rather unique political system which

1 Zgurić (2014) also identified the fact that when a popular uprising is given the name “spring”, in most cases the popular uprising will fail. This was both true for Eastern Europe “springs” as it is true for the Arab Spring.

2 This is not to say that we are implying that there are “better” or “worse” comparisons and comparative research designs. We just believe, following our prior research on both regions, that Latin America and the Middle East share more similar characteristics with each other than with the Eastern Europe. In this sense our research design can be to an extent, but not completely, described as the use of most similar systems design while there are similarities between two regions with different transformation outcomes. On the other hand, Latin American and Eastern European cases could be compared using the most different systems design, while Middle Eastern and East European Cases for example, or all three regions, could be compared using the qualitative comparative analysis. In a way, the aim of this paper is to highlight the need to put more emphasis on control variables while selecting cases for research. For different comparative research strategies see: Landman (2008).

differed from other the republics and monarchies of the region.<sup>3</sup> Central America, on the other hand, shares the same phenomena as South America – European colonial government, wars for independence, bloody civil conflicts, authoritarian governments, army rule and democratic transition. The Central American states, however, are among endangered states of the world due to natural disasters. Furthermore, the United States considers them as a sphere of its vital interest since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the subregion has experienced numerous American interventions, of which the most significant were during the civil wars and interstate conflicts which affected the region during the 1980s. After the conflicts ended and the peace treaties were signed, democratic transition took place, but they did not bring much peace to Central America. Therefore, we consider Central America to be a subregion of Latin America, but also a region in its own right that consists of even smaller subregions (Kos-Stanišić 2013).

The paper is divided into three sections. In the first section we present the theoretical and methodological framework of the paper; in the second, we present the transformation of the North African regimes; while in the third the political transformation of the Central American countries.

## 2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Our research question is: is the democratic transition, or rather the transformation of political systems, in countries affected by the Arab Spring more akin to that in Eastern Europe or to that in Latin America? Our hypothesis is that the transformation of political systems in North Africa are more akin to the one in Central America, although each of these regions has its own specificities (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2007). The focus of our analysis is the democratic transition, or rather, the transformation of political systems. We understand the democratic transition as a transition to democracy, while the transformation of political systems not only as a one-way political process leading to democracy, but also as regime change, change of government, change of the system of government (Merkel 2011), and so on. This should be taken into consideration because transitions to democracy are susceptible to counter waves, frequent in Latin America, and happening also in the Arab Spring countries.

As stated before, some scholars believe that the Arab Spring transformation resembles the transformation of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Both, the Eastern Europe regime collapse and the Arab Spring, claims Way (2011) took scholars by surprise, because seemingly stable regimes began falling like dominos. The diffusion effect showed

3 Although it should be mentioned that Lebanon's confessional democracy is also rather unique in the wider region.

its strength in both regions. The Romanian communist leader, Nicolae Ceausescu and the Libyan Colonel Gaddafi met their ends in a similar fashion. Following the collapse of the old regimes, in both regions, the old elites acted in ways previously unimaginable. In Egypt, for example, The Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) arrested Mubarak and put him on trial. The communists in the former USSR abolished the Communist Party and proclaimed their support for democratic changes. The counter-transition wave that hit the former USSR countries, was also, according to Way (2011), threatening the North African democratizers – something we have been witnessing. Saideman (2012), on the other hand, insists that the Arab Spring in fact bears most similarities to the events in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s because the Yugoslav republics “imitated” the democratic changes happening in their midst. Like the spread of ethnic conflict in former Yugoslavia, the spread of the Arab Spring was coupled with conflicts like the civil wars in Syria, Yemen and Libya, or political repression over the opposition in Bahrain (Saideman 2012, 717).

The diffusion effect is thus well established in both regions, but still, from the wider perspective of the so-called third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991), the diffusion effect was also present in Southern Europe and Latin America. Therefore, we need to construct more specific variables which are going to help us find the similarities and, more important for our purpose, the differences between Eastern Europe and North Africa. As a first step, let us establish the specificities of the Eastern European transitions to democracy, compared to those in Southern Europe and Latin America.

The nature of the transition in Eastern Europe and its differences from the one in Southern Europe and Latin America was highlighted by Claus Offe (1991).<sup>4</sup> Offe (1991: 867–868) states that research on democratic transitions after WWII focused on three country clusters. The first cluster included the post-war democracies of West Germany, Italy and Japan; the second cluster comprised the Mediterranean states – Portugal, Spain and Greece; while the third cluster comprised the Latin American states –

4 Offe was not the only one who believed that due to the substantial differences between regions the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe would be if not impossible than it would be rather improbable. Sarah Terry (1993) also concluded that there were much more differences than communalities between the regions and that these differences in the end will determine the outcome of transformations. Merkel (2006) calls this the theory of inability and admits himself that he fell into the trap of this fallacy, while later he proved that transitions in the Eastern Europe were quite successful. However, Schmitter and Karl (1994) although they admit that inter-regional differences are substantial they do believe that all cases of the third wave democratization should be analyzed together, never mind their geopolitical position or cultural context, and focus on the same outcomes – successful democratization. In this sense the most different system design is useful.

Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile and Paraguay. However, the democratic transition in Eastern Europe was quite different from the previous cases. In the three clusters identified by Offe, all countries, except for Germany, preserved their territorial integrity,<sup>5</sup> while the Eastern bloc states experienced territorial conflicts, migrations, nationalistic conflicts and conflicts with national minorities and secessionist tendencies (1991: 868). Furthermore, the transformation in the first three clusters was political and constitutional in nature, or as Offe (1991: 868) describes it, the transformation was related to the “form of government and legal relations between the state and the society.” The changes did not include the transformation from socialist to market economy. In other words, Eastern European states went through a “triple transformation”, which included states breaking up and nation building, constitutional transformation to democracy and economic transformation from socialism to market economy (Offe 1991). No small difference either, but the autocracies in Latin America and North Africa were not totalitarian in contrast to the periods of totalitarianism in communist Europe.<sup>6</sup>

The role of the EU, or the EEC then (Way 2011) and the previously hegemonic role of the USSR (Linz and Stepan 1998) are also brought up as important factors distinguishing Eastern Europe from the previous cases of transition to democracy. States that wanted to become members of the EEC had to maintain their democratic course and successfully conclude the democratic reforms. It must be admitted that the role of the EU, as a democratic promotor, was quite more important in the Central and South European (Balkan) post-communist countries, whereas EU had far less influence on the post-Soviet space (Levitsky and Way 2010, 89–90). As for the USSR, it “guarded the socialist revolution in Eastern Europe not only ideologically, but also militarily with armed forces in each Warsaw pact member, ready to intervene as in the case of Czechoslovakia in 1968. After the dissolvment of the USSR Russia retained the role of the so-called

5 Until 1989 only 9 states existed in communist Europe, while after the fall of communism 27 states were created, 15 from the USSR (Linz and Stepan 1998, 273). We should add Montenegro gaining its independence in 2006 and Kosovo proclaiming independence in 2008 to this count.

6 Hannah Ardent (1996) claims that the USSR was, during a specific time period, one of the only two totalitarian states, the other of course being Nazi Germany. Merkel (2011) writes about post-totalitarian states in Eastern Europe, like Czechoslovakia and Rumania, which means that at one point at time they were totalitarian. The regimes in North Africa were never totalitarian. In their beginnings they could be described, using Linz's (2000) definition, as postcolonial mobilization regimes. In their essence they had totalitarian tendencies, but they never achieved them. When it comes to Latin America, O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986) write about transition from authoritarianism, while totalitarianism is not being mentioned.

black knight<sup>7</sup> in some, but not all, of the post-Soviet states (Levitsky and Way 2010, 185). This hegemonial position did not exist in Latin America or the Middle East, although the United States and some other Western countries played the role of external veto actors (Stepan and Linz 1998; Bellin 2004).

It is thus possible to single out three variables that distinguish the transitions from communist rule from the previous transitions to democracy: “triple transformation,” international influence of veto actors (or hegemon) on the transformation, and the desirability of democratic reforms for attaining membership in international integrations or alliances. In the rest of the paper, applying inter-regional comparison<sup>8</sup>, we will use these variables to highlight the similarities between Latin America and the Middle East, or rather their sub-regions of Central America and North Africa, based on the differences between these two regions and Eastern Europe. Although this research strategy is extremely rare (Basedau and Köllner 2007; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2007), it will allow us to focus on the transformation processes as regional processes and compare them (2007).

### 3. THE TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN NORTH AFRICA

The end of the WWII meant the entrance of Eastern Europe into the communist camp. However, the end of WWII and the spread of the “icy blaze” of the Cold War slowly but surely led to the politics of decolonization in the Third World. The Arab world was no exception to the rule. Independence during that period in many Arab countries resulted with the instalment of centralized presidential republican regimes – later labelled as authoritarian – which was, to some degree, the result of Arab leaders wishing to preserve their hard-gained independence (Owen 2013). This is also the period when the same Arab regimes started taking the path of Arab socialism. However, Arab socialism soon met its end, facing the poli-

7 In this sense the “black knights” are “counter-hegemonic powers whose economic, military and/or diplomatic support helps blunt the impact of U.S. or EU democratizing, pressure” (Levitsky and Way 2010, 41).

8 There are three types of comparative area studies – intra-regional, inter-regional and cross-regional comparative area studies (Basedau and Köllner 2007). Intra-regional comparative area studies are the best known and the most common form of comparative area studies. Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2007: 199) concluded that around 70 percent of all articles in the three strongest journals for comparative politics by 2007 dealt exclusively with one region. This type of area studies compares different political processes, like democratic transition, within the countries of the same region (i.e. democratic transition in Latin America). Cross-regional comparative area studies compare analytical units from different regions, like the role of the state in economic development of Korea, Brazil, India or Nigeria (2007).

cies of economic liberalization. In this paper we will analyze four North African countries – Egypt, Libya, Algeria and Tunisia. We will leave out Morocco from the analysis primarily because it is a monarchy that was barely touched by the Arab Spring, or more precisely, because there was no regime change. Although Algeria did not experience a regime change during the Arab Spring, it had its original ‘spring’ in the early 1990s. Egypt is included in this analysis because most of its territory lies on the African continent, although it is considered to be more of a Middle Eastern than a North African country.

### 3.1. TRIPLE TRANSFORMATION?

As Offe (1991) claims, Eastern Europe went through a triple transformation. North Africa did not. Furthermore, Bogaert (2013) believes that the Arab Spring was, to a certain degree, a result of the rebellion of the people against some 30 years of neoliberal policies carried out by the regimes in the region. Even the IMF, prior to the beginning of the Arab Spring, praised some North African countries for their sound economic policies and their dedication to free market reforms (Bogaert 2013).

Still, prior to the free-market reforms of the 80’s, the North African countries were “building” Arab socialism. The rise of Arab socialism was tied to ideological roots of popular leaders like Nasser or political parties like the Ba’ath party in Syria and Iraq (Bogaert 2013). Tunisia, Algeria and Libya, after their revolutionary struggles in the 1950s and 1960s, also started implementing socialist economic policies and hence “elaborate welfare bureaucracies,” (Anderson 1997, 130) were installed throughout North Africa. In Egypt, after Nasser’s coup in 1952 and the instalment of one-party autocracy of the Arab Socialist Union, the policies of economic nationalization began, as wealth was previously in the hands of Egypt’s traditional upper class (King 2007). By doing this, Nasser discarded the policies of economic and political liberalism of the interwar era (1921–1942).

In Tunisia, Bourguiba first initiated the liberal economic policies (1956–1961) and, after the failure of these policies, implemented the Arab socialism (King 2009, 48). In the 1970s, Gaddafi conducted radical socio-economic policies of redistribution and nationalization (St John 2008, 60). Socialism was an integral part of most revolutions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Gaddafi’s Libya was no exception. In 1978, the second part of Gaddafi’s “Green Book” was published, more precisely, the publication under the title “The Solution of the Economic Problem: ‘Socialism’” (St John 2011, 129). The praxis of socialist economic policies afterward was hastened, and in 1981 the Libyan GPC (General People’s Congress), a body which can be considered the Libyan parliament, announced that by the end of the year, the state will take over all import, export and distribution (2011: 130). Algeria,

after its independence, which was the result of eight years of bloody war with France (1954–1962), implemented a command economy and a developmental strategy which also emphasized the role of the public sector, while public enterprises were supposed to be the main carrier of economic growth (Akacem 2005, 115). The first four-year plan adopted for the 1970–1973 period was based on industrialization and social justice (Benziane 2005, 102). However, despite the dedication of North African regimes to Arab socialism, adversities caught up with it in a short while, which in the end resulted with gradual economic openings toward market reforms.

The market reforms began in Egypt with Sadat in 1974 (*infitah*). Other countries in the region, especially the ones without oil, but Algeria as well, followed that trend. However, it should be emphasized, by doing that, the state was not eliminated from the market, but new forms of economic relations were created in which the state managed the economy indirectly (Bogaert 2013, 222–223). In the mentioned countries entrepreneurs were mostly co-opted by the ruling regimes, so the economic system was more political capitalism, as defined by Županov (2002), in contrast to entrepreneurship capitalism, where the market players are (more or less) free from the political nomenclature. Regional wars, the fall of oil prices and corruption are just a few of the causes that led to the inability of the ruling regimes to further maintain the programs of social redistribution (Khashan 2012). As stated before, economic reforms started in Egypt in 1974 with the opening toward market economy, and privatization was also encouraged. However, rapid privatization in Egypt started in the 1990s, during the Mubarak era (King 2009, 81). In the end, the result was a weakened middle class and the strengthening of the super-rich affiliated with the military, Mubarak and his family (King 2007). In Algeria, the FLN-s – the party that ruled Algeria starting with the liberation from France in 1962, under the leadership of the president Chadli Benjadid – already began with small steps towards economic liberalization in the early 1980s, while in the late 1980s privatization was hastened (King 2009, 87).

By the end of the decade, Algeria asked IMF for help and the liberalization of Algerian economy was conducted parallel with the process of democratization and introduction of a multiparty system (Akacem 2005, 116). However, the democratic process had its autocratic counter wave, which ended up in a decade long civil war. By accepting structural reforms in 1994, Algeria took a path of serious liberalization of its economy. Almost parallel to that, the oil industry started opening to private capital, as early as 1991, and even Sonatrach, Algeria's largest player in this sector, was partially privatized (2005: 118). In Tunisia, Bourgiba began with small economic reforms as early as the 1970s; more serious reforms, however, took place after his ousting. It is interesting to note that the Tunisian Socialist Destour



Party, after initiating economic liberalization programs, changed its name (only) to Destour Party (King 2007). Tunisia was also affected by an economic crisis in the 1980s, and one its results was Ben Ali's ousting of Bourgiba. Parallel to these events, a privatization of the economy, starting with the IMF's standby arrangement and the World Bank loans (1986–87), was conducted (Kaboub 2013). In 1992, Ben Ali concluded that all government tenders should pass through the Office of the president, hence – his hands. This is also the time when Tunisia endorsed the *Mise à niveau* policies (programs of structural adjustment) sponsored by the World Bank, which led to the privatization of state enterprises (2013). In 1990, Tunisia also joined GATT, and from 1995, Tunisia was the first Mediterranean non-member country signing the EU contract, which stated that in the 1996–2008 period it would lower its tariffs and liberalize trade with the EU (2013). A large portion of these policies was the survival strategy of the political elites (Andersen 1997, 132–133).

Even Libya, from the end of the 1990s, partially abandoned its command economy and “turned” to the free market (St John 2008, 53). Gaddafi tried to implement some market reforms in 1987, which he described as a “revolution within a revolution” (St John 2011, 131), and which some observers called “the Green Perestroika” (St John 2008, 53), but their implementation failed. This failure of liberalization attempts was accompanied by a later one, in 1991 (St John 2011, 127) – both reform attempts were cast away by the GPC delegates. Despite the failure of these efforts, in the 1990s, liberalization was well on its way, especially by the end of the 1990s, after the UN sanctions, set up due to the Lockerbie incident, were lifted (2011: 132–133). In 2003, Gaddafi concluded that the public sector is “broken”, so he called for the privatization of the Libyan oil industry. Despite the advancement of privatization in the oil sector, privatization in other sectors was much slower (St John 2008, 61; 2011, 147).

At the international level, some significant changes for the region occurred. The region has highly developed trade relations with the EU, so much so that in 2005, 64 percent of import and 70 percent of export was with the EU. At the same time, Tunisia is (alongside Morocco) an exceptionally well-known tourist destination. Tunisia is also a WTO member, whilst Algeria is in the process of accession<sup>9</sup> (Escribano and Lorca 2008, 145). Tunisia and Algeria signed the Association Agreements with the EU, aimed at creating bilateral zones of free trade. Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan are founder countries of the Agadir Process, the process of forming a free trade zone. The Agadir Agreement was signed in 2005 and ratified a year after, with the aim of coming to effect in 2007 (2008: 151). The Process was care-

9 The last, 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working group for Algeria took place on April 5<sup>th</sup> 2013 (WTO 2013 NEWS ITEMS).

fully monitored and financially aided by the EU from its very beginning, the goal being the deepening of the Mediterranean trade and integration (MEDEA).

From these descriptions alone, the differences with the Eastern Europe are quite visible. In communist Europe, economic liberalization took place after the fall of the communist regimes, parallel with democratic transition, although Hungary and Yugoslavia started implementing some elements of market economies prior to the fall of communism. The process of EU integration also started after the fall of communism. When the Arab Spring washed across the shores of the southern Mediterranean, the countries of the region had long abandoned Arab socialism and dedicated themselves to free market reforms, both on the internal and external plain. But, what do the other variables tell us?

As stated before, Saideman (2012) compares the wars of secession in former Yugoslavia with civil wars in Libya and Syria. However, the civil war in Libya was not an ethnic conflict. Furthermore, if we recall the Algerian civil war from the 1990s, it was also not an ethnic conflict. Moreover, Yugoslavia, after the fall of communism, broke up into six states (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia), and Kosovo. Not a single of the Arab Spring countries (including the Algeria with its civil war), broke up into new states following the democratic reforms and autocratic counter wave.

But, let us only concentrate on North Africa. After the 1969 Revolution, Gaddafi did not take a formal role in the political system of Libya. Libyan Jamahiriya was in theory a direct democracy. In practice, it was Gaddafi's personal dictatorship. The problem with his revolution was that it did not create a national identity for the Libyans, or a Libyan nation (Vandewalle 2011, 236). The Libyan society remained tribally divided, which was an ideal recipe for a possible break up of Libya and the creation of new states. Yet, that did not happen. The uprising and the conflict of 2011 started in Benghazi and spread to the East of the country. The rebels in Cyrenaica were between a rock and a hard place as they were being surrounded by the regime forces. Then, on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2011, NATO intervened on the grounds provided by the Security Council's resolution 1973. The Transitional National Council (TNC) formed in Cyrenaica was "recognized" by the West as a legitimate representative of the Libyan people (2011: 236). However, despite the tribal divisions in Libyan society, which also dominate the new political system of Libya, there was no dissolving of the state. The division on the East-West axis of the country (Cyrenaica-Tripolitania) also did not happen, despite the visible sparks between the Eastern and the Western parts of the country during the short period following the civil war. In Libya, the Berbers make between

eight and nine percent of the population<sup>10</sup> (Maddy-Weitzman 2012, 109). Gaddafi's Libya was openly hostile toward the Berber minority. The Libyan civil war even turned the spotlight of the world public on the Berbers in Libya. Many young Berbers took up weapons and went to fight against Gaddafi. After Gaddafi's fall, the Berbers started gaining some rights they did not have before. For instance, Tamazight was introduced to school curriculums in Berber villages and towns. TNC's draft of the new constitutional document stated that the language and cultural rights of all segments of Libya's society will be preserved, although Arabic remained the only official language (2012: 128–129). Yet, honey and milk did not flow for the Berbers. The constitutional document stated that the Shari'a will be the primary source of legislation, and not a single Berber became a member of the interim cabinet formed by the TNC (2012: 131). Although these moves were worrisome for the Berbers, aspirations for independence or violations of territorial integrity of Libya did not rise to the surface.

The civil war in Algeria lasted for a decade, with its bloodiest period being from 1992–1998. The official data for the 2001–2002 period, tells us that around 2.300 died (Martinez 2005, 14). Such a low body count, in comparison to prior periods, marked the end of the civil war. The civil war itself took away some 150.000 souls (2005: 15), although other sources show larger and lesser numbers as well.<sup>11</sup> The Algerian civil war was the result of a failed democratic transition. Yet again, it was not an ethnic conflict but rather a conflict between the militant Islamists and the security apparatus of the Algerian state (Zgurić 2012b). This conflict also did not result in the violation of integrity or fragmentation of the Algerian territory. Berbers in Algeria make a higher percentage of the population than in Libya, around 20 percent (Maddy-Weitzman 2012, 109). As in other North African countries, the ruling regime in Algeria tried to suppress the Berber culture and identity through policies of Arabization. However, in time these policies had quite the opposite effect than the one that the ruling regime wished for – Berbers won some concessions instead of being assimilated (2012: 114). During the civil war, the identity of the Kabylie Berbers, the largest Berber group in Algeria, was gaining strength. Still, during that time the regime was preoccupied with the Islamists so the “Berber question” remained on the margins. In 1994, three general strikes of Berbers demanding their cultural and language rights rehabilitated the “Berber question”. Two years after the Tamazight identity was added to the Algerian constitution, next to the Arabic and Islamic one, although the language was not constitutionally

10 Some 20 million Berbers live in North Africa currently (Maddy-Weitzman 2012, 109).

11 Zoubir (2005: 170), for instance, states that more than 200.000 people were killed in the Algerian civil war.

recognized, which did not go over well in Kabylie. In 2002, good news came at last for the Berbers as Tamazight was recognized as “national” though still not as an official language (2012: 120–122). Not even the “Berber question” jeopardized the territorial integrity of Algeria during the civil war, while during the events that shocked even Algeria in 2011, the “Berber question” was mainly left on the margins. Yet, the alienation of Kabylie from the central authorities is still progressing (2012: 133–134). Still we can conclude that Algerian Berbers do not have secession tendencies and will not ask for a separate state, rather they will try to achieve more rights within Algeria. Furthermore, we also do not believe, no matter how complex and violent the situation within Libya will develop, that Libya will dissolve into smaller states.

### 3.2. FOREIGN POWERS AND THE ALLURE OF INTEGRATION

The triple transformation that affected the Eastern Europe countries has, thus, no parallel in North Africa. We can stipulate here that during the Arab Spring there was just one transition -from autocracies to democracies, if even that. What about the influence of external forces? The influence of external forces on North Africa was surely less powerful than the influence of USSR on Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the influence of external forces as veto powers or promoters of democracy was different in different periods (Cold War, the 1990s, post 9/11). Egypt, in Sadat’s time, was conducting the “leadership of tactics” toward the USSR, and certainly not policies guided by firm principles, although it was receiving military help from USSR. Even though Sadat found out that in 1971 the Soviets planned to topple him, he signed a friendship treaty with them. A year later, Sadat “expelled” 15.000 Soviet advisers from Egypt (Rezk 2013, 69–70). Afterwards, Sadat began Egypt’s turn toward USA. During 30 years of his rule, US and Great Britain perceived Mubarak as a “moderate” Arab leader and a “dependable” ally (Hollis 2013, 171). After signing the peace treaty with Israel, Egypt became the largest receiver, second only to Israel, of American overseas military assistance (2013: 175–176). However, during the late 1990s Mubarak became the subject of criticism of the American administration, although Egyptian political reform was not high on the US foreign policy list, at least until G. W. Bush came to power (2013: 179). After 2003 (invasion on Iraq), American administration started pressuring Mubarak to democratize Egypt, which he energetically refused. Condoleezza Rice in her visit to Cairo in 2005, publicly, with an authoritative tone in her voice, asked for a democratization of Egypt, although she did not describe Mubarak’s regime as authoritarian (Sadiki 2012, 175–176). However, the success of the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt’s parliamentary elections in 2005 and the civil war that broke out in Iraq in 2006, led to the appeasement of American demands.

The Arab Spring took US by surprise. Although in the beginning they did not believe that regime change will happen, by the end of January 2011, Obama asked for a “peaceful change of the government”. However, the US played a far lesser role here, mostly as an arbiter, compared to the Egyptian military, which showed its true face as a main political actor (Hollis 2013, 184–185).

Six months after his revolution, Gaddafi started wiping out Western influence on Libya. He even expelled Italian settlers from Libya. In 1972, he banned elections and introduced a death penalty for those who would violate this ban (Andrew 2013, 196–197). Due to his dedication to international terrorism, with full support of the USSR, he was not beloved by the West. Even Sadat himself, to whom Gaddafi looked up, expressed his opinion that Gaddafi was totally crazy (2013: 202). With the end of bipolar divisions and later the beginning of the global war on terror, Gaddafi found himself on the side of the West. The US completely restored its diplomatic relations with Libya in May 2006. The normalization of relations showed that the Americans gave up on demanding democratization in their relations with the Middle Eastern autocracies (Zoubir 2008, 277–278). In the same sense, Gaddafi was an important Western ally in combating terrorism, yet this same West facilitated his demise during the Arab Spring (Andrew 2013, 195).

Instead of being pulled to democracy by an outside force, the North African countries were combating the challenges of democracy by mutual cooperation. Neighboring countries even let aside their conflicts and, because of the challenges posed by democracy and Islamist movements that went hand in hand, started a tighter cooperation in the late 1980s and 1990s, the result of which was the signing of the Arab Maghreb Union treaty<sup>12</sup> (Zartman 1997, 212–213). The situation in Algeria in the late 1980s and during the 1990s, led to Tunisia’s and Algeria’s rapprochement to Egypt in matters of security – these efforts were called the “Pan-Arab Security” (1997: 217). Algeria, after its independence, was receiving military assistance from the Soviets, and still has weapons contracts with Russia today. However, due to its historic relations with France, Algeria tried to act autonomously in relation to the global powers after gaining independence. It is considered that in this sense Algeria remained more independent in comparison to other oil exporters (Akacem 2005, 153). During the civil war in the 1990s, external actors had different roles. The Algerian government, for instance, severed diplomatic relations with Iran in March of 1993, due to Iran’s support of the Islamists<sup>13</sup> (Zartman 1997, 217–218). France was

12 The signing countries were Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria.

13 Algerian Islamists received support from Iran, Pakistan and the Saudis (Akacem 2005, 163–164).

primarily focused on protecting trade and its own investments, especially in the oil sector. Fear of possible Islamic Republic and the flow of the immigrants from Algeria led France to give support to the Algerian government (Akacem 2005, 157–158). After 1992, the US started showing more interest in Algeria. Americans were also very loud in demanding free elections. The USA even showed some support for the moderate Islamists because they believed that they will facilitate democratization (Zoubir 2008, 270). At the same time, they encouraged negotiations between FIS and the Algerian government and they criticized the government because of its poor human rights track record (2008: 272–273). However, after 9/11, the Algerian government became a US partner in the war against terror. Yet, a variety of international NGOs, including American, are continuously pressuring for the democratization of Algeria (Akacem 2005, 160–163). The Bush administration, if nothing more than only rhetorically, demanded further economic reforms and the renewal of the electoral process, to deepen its relations with Algeria (Zoubir 2005, 178). Although, during the 1990s the US was supporting the moderate Islamist party EnNahda, led by Rachid Ghannouchi, with Ben Ali's aspirations to get rid of the Islamists, the contacts between the US and Ghannouchi ended (Zoubir 2008, 286). The American war against terror suited Ben Ali perfectly to fend off democratization and deal with the Islamists (Henry 2008, 299).

The EU should not be too quickly dismissed as an external factor of democratization in North Africa, but still, the North African countries that do share several similar features with the Balkan countries, are not at all in the same relation to the EU as the Balkans.<sup>14</sup> As Boduszyński (2013: 190–191) correctly noticed, under the supervision of the EU, Balkan states are (more or less) on a one-way street to join the EU and Croatia already became a member on 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2013.<sup>15</sup> Balkan and North African states share the same Ottoman legacy. As the wars in the 1990s have shown, there are religious and ethnic divisions in the Balkans as well, some running even deeper than the ones in North Africa, and yet all the Balkan states are democracies despite their numerous defects.<sup>16</sup> A strong reason for this is the EU conditionality policy, or the so called Copenhagen criteria, which must be

14 Whitehead (1986) noted that the allure of EEC membership was also a mayor contributing factor for the democratization of Greece, Spain and Portugal.

15 Croatia and Serbia, in comparison to Central European post-communist states, went through transition to democracy later, due to the fact that were entangled in ethnic conflicts which protracted the transition. Macedonia and Albania were even later to join the club. By 2008 Macedonia became a democracy, and Albania was almost a democracy. Their "lateness" can be contributed to several factors such as underdevelopment, weak states, and in the case of Macedonia ethnic strife. However, in all four cases the EU leverage played as important contribution of their democratization (Levitsky and Way 2010, 104, 119).

16 On defective democracies, see Merkel (2004: 2011).

fulfilled by all candidates before becoming full members. In the case of North Africa there is no conditionality. Yet, this does not mean there are no EU programs aimed toward the democratization of North Africa. The EU conducts partnership programs with the Mediterranean belt of Africa and the Middle East<sup>17</sup> (i.e. EUROMED and ENP), in the sense of a long-term process of change, with the goal of economically binding the Mediterranean belt of North Africa and the Middle East, to Western liberal democracies. Although the main emphasis remained on economic cooperation (Attinà 2005, 149), one should keep in mind that Western modernization theories stipulate that economic development will in the end lead to democratization (Merkel 2011, 55–63). However, 9/11 also influenced the EU leaders to change their attitude and, for instance, in the case of Algeria, to accept the formal position of the Algerian government regarding their refusal to negotiate with the Islamists. Up to 9/11, human rights were top priority for the EU. The EU, for example, regularly declined to extradite Islamists taking refuge on its territory. Yet, 9/11 changed everything and the EU became an important partner to Algeria in combating terrorism (Zoubir 2005, 176). It should be mentioned, nonetheless, that the EU's programs for North Africa and the Middle East have continued. Joffé (2008: 311) believes that one of the aims of these programs is achieving soft security by means of economic cooperation. This is expected to result in increasing democratic governance and respect for human rights. Still, the EU never introduced sanctions for the countries in the North Africa because of human rights violations or lack of democracy (Joffé 2008, 314). Boduszyński (2013, 197) has noticed that the EU dealing with this region never used negative conditioning, or in other words there was a “carrot” for advancement but never a “stick” for regression. Another problem is that despite the large financial aid provided by the West to the countries of the region, it was still insufficient during the Arab Spring. The Gulf countries also financed different actors according to their own political agendas (Boduszyński 2013, 199–200).

17 Even the US conducted similar programmes (Greater Middle East Initiative and Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative) with the goal of economic assistance and democratisation of the Middle East and North Africa (Sadiki 2012, 170–171). Yet, these policies were during their implementation in conflict due to the American ambivalent relations with the region. Americans were, similar to the EU, perplexed around the issue of whether they cared more about security or democracy, which can produce further insecurity (Zoubir 2008, 271). They gave up these programmes in 2006 (Boduszyński 2013), which can be correlated with the Muslim brotherhood winning the 2005 parliamentary elections in Egypt and the failure of the democratic experiment enforced by the outside forces and the beginning of the civil war in Iraq in 2006. See more on the correlation between democratisation and the civil war in Iraq in: Zgurić (2013).

#### 4. TRANSFORMATION OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Central America is a sub region of Latin America and it includes traditional states of Central America – Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, as well as Panama which was included later.<sup>18</sup> Historically, the states of Central America share common features with Latin America – European colonial legacy, wars for independence, bloody civil conflicts, authoritarian governments, military rule and democratic transition.

##### 4.1. TRIPLE TRANSFORMATION?

Since the focus of this paper is on democratic transition,<sup>19</sup> or more precisely, the comparison of the political system transformation of the “third” (Central America) and “Arab Spring” (North Africa) wave states, we shall exclude from the analysis Costa Rica, which is a “second” wave democracy and the only consolidated liberal democracy in Central America. The reasons for the fall of the Central American autocratic systems include a legitimacy crisis, military conflicts in the region that lasted throughout the 1980s, and military defeat, in the case of Panama. Of external reasons, the most important is the Central American peace process led by the European Community, the Contadora Group and the Costa Rican president Oscar Arias, as well as the diffusion effect. While transformation in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua was managed by the elites of the old regime, Panama suffered a collapse of the regime. Since Nicaragua is the key state of Central America, to whose history other political system transformations of the traditional countries in the region are connected, we shall start our analysis with Nicaragua.

Merkel (2011: 191) takes Nicaragua as an exemplar of Central American states, in which archaic structures of government lasted until the late 1990s, which was socially backward, ravaged by civil wars and under a strict supervision of the US. The armed resistance against the rule of the Somoza family (1937–1979) began in 1961 under the leadership of the left-wing Sandinista front FSNL (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*).<sup>20</sup>

18 Panama and Belize (independent from 1981) were accepted by the traditional states as part of Central America during the 1990s. Due to using the English language and their heritage, we do not consider Belize to be a part of Latin America.

19 For information on how democracy in Latin America works see Scartascini et.al. (2010).

20 A guerrilla led by Colonel Augusto Cesar Sandino fought for seven years (1927–1933) against American Marines and Nicaragua’s National Guard. The fighting continued after the withdrawal of the Marines. Sandino saw in the National Guard, trained by the Americans, the main threat to Nicaraguan independence, so the National Guard ordered his elimina-



At first, the Sandinistas were small in numbers and without support, yet they gained sympathy from the middle class and the Catholic Church. At the end of the 1970s, FSLN was more fearsome in its attacks; the regime was slowly crumbling, so Somoza fled to Miami on July 17<sup>th</sup> 1979. FSLN took over power and started conducting the Sandinista revolution. There were three main goals: building up a democracy, mobilization of the people and reaching national sovereignty and development. New institutional structures have been created, intensive developmental agricultural policy was being implemented, the economy was being transformed and a new position was taken at the international stage (Martí and Puig 2011, 175). US and the Sandinistas had relatively good relations during the 1970s and 1980s. Change occurred in 1981, when Carter, a Democrat, was replaced in the US by a Republican, Reagan, as the president.<sup>21</sup> In order to prevent the revolution from spilling to neighboring countries, Reagan authorized a clandestine operation in which the contra-revolutionary forces, known as *Contras*, were supposed to topple the Sandinista government. In accordance with his Cold War policy, Reagan also cooperated with right-wing governments of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, and rewarded them in abundance because the *Contras* were trained on their territories (Smith 2012, 88). The era of “Sandinista” transition was prolonged and lasted from 1979 until 1990. With the revolution, the old regime was exchanged for the new one, but the ideas of the new left-wing government were not in junction with liberal democracy. The transition was marked by a civil war in which some 50.000 people perished. The war spilled over to neighboring countries, and international actors had positive (Contadora, EC) and negative influences (US) on its course. Transition started with Somoza’s fall and ended with “constitutive elections” and the Sandinistas’ withdrawal from power in 1990.

To show the world that Latin America can solve its regional problems on its own, a peace process was initiated. Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama created the Contadora Group in 1983, with the aim of pacifying Central America. Costa Rica also actively participated in the conflict resolution, even though *Contras* were trained on its territory, and despite its neutrality. Its President Oscar Arias Sanchez was rewarded with a Nobel peace prize for his efforts. The EC accepted the invitation from Arias and took part as an intermediary in the negotiations. The *Esquipulas* Agree-

tion during the peace treaty negotiations between the guerrilla and the government. With this act, he grew from a national hero to a national martyr, and the resistance against Somoza’s rule was named after him (Skidmore, Smith and Green 2010, 100–102).

21 With the exception of Reagan’s first 4 years in office, the international ideological context has been relatively favorable to democracy in Central America (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2005, 39).

ment was signed on August 7<sup>th</sup> 1987, by five Central American heads of state. The Agreement foresaw holding free elections and the democratization of all the countries of the region, the reduction in the number of soldiers, withdrawal of the military from politics and their submission to civil oversight. The oversight of the implementation of the Agreement was conducted by the UN. In early 1987, a new civil-liberal constitution was adopted, and in August of the same year, the Central American peace treaty was signed. Despite the hegemonic position of the FSLN, constitutive elections in 1990 brought victory to the unified opposition UNO (*Unión Nacional Opositora*), led by Violeto Chamorro. The Sandinistas accepted defeat. The priorities of the Chamorro administration were to pacify and demobilize irregular troops, stabilize and integrate the economy into the global market and transform existing institutions. The government kept the loyalty of the military and the police. Yet, due to the societal division between Sandinistas and contra-Sandinistas, democracy was not consolidated.

Latin American countries had a difficult time abandoning the colonial legacy attitude that, in order to protect national interests, the state should control the economy. Therefore, in 20<sup>th</sup> century Latin America, there is no opposition between capitalism and socialism, but rather between capitalism and semi-feudalism (Lipset and Lakin 2006, 260–261). After WWII, Central American economies were facing economic stagnation and grave poverty, which led to the fears from leftist revolutions. To prevent and secure their stay in power, governments founded a regional economic integration which was supposed to promote capitalist economic growth. At first successful, the Central American regional integration crumbled during the world economic and regional political crisis in the 1970s. Under the pressure of international political and economic actors, Central American countries turned to a new common economic developmental model. Yet, precisely these developmental models created to prevent revolution and regime change, led to uprisings. Poverty was one of the characteristics of the region, even though the poorest (Honduras) and the richest (Costa Rica) countries were the most stable of the region, while other countries, affected by rapid industrialization and economic growth during the 1960s and 1970s, were the least stable (Booth et al. 2010, 16–17). Most scientists described the economic systems of Central America as a dependency – „a complex political, economic and social phenomenon that retards the human development of the majority in certain privilege-dominated Third World countries with heavily externally oriented economies“ (2010: 23). During the era of rapid economic growth in the region, the surpluses did not reach the majority of the poor population, but only the privileged minority.

The capitalist development of Central America differs from the development of industrialized states where, for the economy, key actors are citizens-consumers – in the region citizens were mostly regarded as a potentially cheap labor force. The elite was not ready to share their profits with the rest, so the creation of more socially responsible state-led developmental models had to wait for the end of the violent political conflicts in Nicaragua in 1979 (in Costa Rica in 1948). The changes that affected the countries of Central America during the 1980s were caused by globalization. Economic liberalization came in the same package as democratization. Hence, there was no transition from socialist economy to capitalism; rather, there was a transition from political capitalism to entrepreneurship capitalism. Under the influence of the US and IMF, all states of the region accepted the new neoliberal economic model and started implementing structural adjustments. The formula of peace and democracy, including monetary stability and price stability, led to a partial economic rehabilitation of the region, but at the same time, it diminished the capacity of the transitional governments to increase the wellbeing of the general population and to promote economic growth and invest in human capital (2010: 26–27). In the case of Central American countries, we cannot discuss transition from a socialist economy to a capitalist one, since capitalism already existed in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Panama, it just shifted shape. To enhance the position of most of the poor population, Nicaragua tried to transform the system from capitalist to socialist during the Sandinista revolution. Still, the Sandinistas led a moderate and pragmatic economic policy. They had recognized all the inherited international debts, they only confiscated the property of Somoza and followers, and did not touch the private sector, which still carried 50–60 percent of the GDP (2010: 96). The fact that they transferred a portion of state property into the hands of the Sandinista elite (*la piñata*) before they stepped down from power, is not a fact in their favor.

Civil wars led by guerrilla organizations and military governments in El Salvador and Guatemala did not have a revolutionary phase but led to the transformation of political systems into democracy. El Salvador had a military regime from the 1930s, and the official military party *Partido de Conciliación Nacional* (PCN) from 1948. The rule of the military and the oligarchies prevented the reforms from being implemented, yet the reformist wing of the military made several attempts at modernization. Political mobilization of the peasants (*campesinos*), also joined by the workers and students that demanded political and economic reforms, was met with fierce response from the security forces. The leftist guerrilla, named after the leader of the rebellion from 1932, Augustin Farabundo Martí FMLN (*Farabundo Martí Liberation National*), was gaining more and

more supporters. The government replied to guerrilla activity with increased repression. Dissatisfied with the political situation in the country and in fear of “new Nicaragua”, the Revolutionary junta (*Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno* – JRG) of the younger generation of officers came to power in October 1975. To improve the socio-economic conditions in the country and prevent the victory of the leftists, they declared the implementation of necessary reforms – partial land reform, nationalization of banks and coffee export (Paige 1999, 34). In spring of 1980, the Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, a fierce critic of the socio-political situation, was killed in the San Salvador cathedral. By the beginning of 1981, FMLN launched a fierce offensive against the government. Since the Junta did not have control over the conservative elements within the military and security forces, some 30.000 citizens were killed by military terror during the 1980–1981 period. In these activities, Robert D’Aubisson, a person allegedly responsible for organizing the assassination on Archbishop Romero, especially demonstrated himself. To continue receiving American military and economic help, the civilian-military junta led by the Demo-Christian, José Napoleón Duarte (1980–1982), agreed to liberalize the political system. In the spring of 1982, elections for the Constitutional Assembly were announced in which the right won the majority and Alvara Magaña became the head of government (1982–1984). After the presidential election victory, financed by the CIA with two million dollars to prevent D’Aubisson’s return to power, Duarte returned to power. Despite American help, President Duarte did not succeed to destroy the FMLN, nor to relieve the pressure from the extreme right. Hence, he initiated negotiations with the FMLN and took part in signing the Central American Peace Agreement in 1987. After the *Atlatl* counter-guerrilla death squad killed six Jesuits and their tenants, the American Congressional opposition stopped financing the Salvador army, which led to a change of American policy towards El Salvador. Only then were peace talks taken seriously. They were successfully finalized in 1992 when the president Alfredo Cristiani (1989–1994), member of the moderate faction of the rightist party ARENA, signed a treaty with FMLN, which started the era of the civil democratic regime. The civil war lasting 13 years took 75.000 lives. Guerrilla and counter-guerrilla activities had grave consequences for the economy on this already extremely poor country. Wood (2005: 179–201) believes that El Salvador is an unusual case in which transition was forged from the bottom up. The outcome of transition was a democracy in which both sides gained something. The rebels gained political inclusion and agreed to accept the democratic rules of the game, while the economic elite gained guarantees of property protection in case ex-guerrilla wins the elections. The implementation of the agreement was conducted by the UN observing mission OUNSA, which was present

in El Salvador from 1990 to 1995. Most of the peace agreement decisions were partially implemented by 1995, and in 1994, the first elections were held in which FMLN won 21 out of 84 parliamentary mandates.

Guatemala was the only traditional Central American state which had an experience with democracy (1944–1954) before the change of the political system. With American intervention, the progressive Arbenza regime was toppled and a reactionary military came into power (1954–1996), which did not allow for moderate political opposition and led to the creation of revolutionary guerrilla movements. At the same time, a strengthened military repression toward the indigenous Mayan majority at the end of the 1970s, led to its armed self-defense occurring parallel to the transformation of the Catholic Church grassroots organizations, and a gradual articulation of a liberation theology. In the beginning of 1982, various guerrilla organizations united into the URNG (*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca*). The military's rule was marked by the civil war (1960–1996) between guerrilla movements and the army, which, meanwhile, transformed into the most brutal armed forces in Latin America. Around one million inhabitants were displaced, and some 10 percent emigrated. Around 200 thousand citizens were killed, 100 thousand women were raped, 440 villages were wiped off the face of the Earth and 626 massacres were committed. The victims were mostly Mayans, suffering genocide and culturicide, the fiercest massacres and crimes taking place during Ríos Montt's era of the military-reformist regime (1982–1983). The inability to end the civil war was one of the crucial reasons for the beginning of the end of the authoritarian regime in Guatemala, and the legitimacy crisis was further induced by election frauds. The military-reformist regime led a parallel politics of repression and political system reforms. The 1965 Constitution and election law were revoked, Congress was dismissed, a new election law was adopted and elections for the Constitutional Assembly were announced. The Assembly adopted a new Constitution in 1985 that, on paper, but not in reality, protected basic human rights. The transition was long lasting (1985–1999) and managed by the elites of the old regime led by the military, which took the mantle of a powerful veto actor. The presidential elections of 1985 were semi-competitive and semi-democratic. The most progressive candidate, Demo-Christian Vinicio Cerezo (1986–1991), won. His government failed to put the military under civilian control, to improve the grave socio-economic situation and to start the peace process off the ground. Serious peace talks began only after pressures from the international community and the change of American government and policies. The left-wing parties were not allowed to compete even in the 1990 elections, and MAS's candidate José Serrano was elected for president, who then started direct negotiations with URNG. They were moderated by

Monsignor Rodolfo Quezada Toruño of the Catholic bishop conference, and the UN acted in an observer role, and in January 1994 it took the role of peace mediator. The negotiations ended on December 29<sup>th</sup> 1996 when the *Final peace agreement*<sup>22</sup> was signed. An important role was played by the “Friends of the peace process group” that consisted of Mexico, Spain, Norway and the US, hence, not a single one of the crucial players presumed to boycott the peace process. The peace process was supposed to facilitate the final transition of Guatemala from an autocratic to a democratic state (Jonas 2006, 281–285). The reforms of the Constitution agreed upon by the peace agreement were supposed to be approved by the citizens at a referendum, yet in 1999 it was declined, so there was no institutionalization of democracy (Kos-Stanišić 2012, 263–264).

Honduras did not have significant guerrilla movements that would have fought against authoritarian regimes, yet it was neck deep involved in the Central American conflict. From 1932 to 1980, the state was ruled by authoritarian civilian-military governments. From 1978, the ruling military triumvirate, under pressure from the Carter administration, accepted the idea of democratization. In 1980, the National Assembly<sup>23</sup> convened and in 1981 elections were announced, in which Honduras elected a civilian president for the first time in its history – Roberto Suazo Córdova (1981–1985). During his mandate, the military still intervened into politics and even the new 1982 constitution was subjected to the military doctrine of National security. We do not agree with Booth et al. (2010: 30) when they claim that in 1982 a regime change took place and that a civilian transitional regime came into power. For example, the military forced Suazo to allow the US to use Honduran territory for military bases and camps, in which Nicaraguan Contras were trained. The results of Honduras’s dirty war (1986–

22 *The treaty on the protection of human rights* was signed in March 1994. It foresaw international mechanisms of verifying the state of human rights, and UN’s verification commission (MINUGUA) was formed, which came to Guatemala by the end of the year. The treaty on identity and the rights of the autonomous peoples was signed in March 1995. It was a crucial document, which finally should have provided a constitutional right to Guatemalan majority autochthonous population, after the new constitution had been adopted, to live in a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual state. The crucial *Agreement on strengthening the civilian rule and the role of the armed forces in a democratic society* was signed in September 1996. It anticipated constitutional reforms that should see the military put under civilian control, the role of the military reduced to defence from foreign threats, the size and the budget of the military reduced by 1/3, and self-defence and counter-rebellion forces dismissed. The forming of civilian police forces PNC was also planned, which should deal with internal security, accompanied by a legislative and judiciary reform. Despite the crisis in October 1996, *The Operative Agreement* was signed in December of the same year (the definitive ceasefire was agreed upon, as well as constitutional and election reforms, legal reintegration of URNG, partial amnesty for all the sides in the conflict and the schedule of implementation of all articles of the signed agreements) (see more in Selington 2005).

23 For information on Latin American party systems see Kitschelt et al. (2010).

1989) were “only” 187 persons missing and 100 dead (Calderón 1998). Suazo peacefully transferred power over to Liberal José Azcona del Hoyo (1986–1989), who in 1987 was one of the signees of the peace treaty which, in our opinion, was the beginning of the era of civil democracy.

Civil wars and the Central American conflict did not lead to the breakup of old and creation of new states. It is simple to conclude that there was no triple transformation in Central America; hence, only one element was present, namely, the transition from authoritarian systems to democratic ones. Nicaragua went through a double transition, El Salvador and Guatemala a prolonged one, Honduras rapid and Panama short-lived. In each case, there was only a transition from authoritarian to a democratic political system and from the state of war to a peaceful state.

#### 4.2. FOREIGN POWERS AND THE ALLURE OF INTEGRATION

As stated before, the most important cause of the end of the Central American autocracies, from all the external factors, was the Central American peace process led by the European Community, the Contadora Group and the Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, and the diffusion effect. Transformations and reforms implemented by the Central American countries were not induced because they wished to enter some international integration. All these countries were members of the leading hemispheric Organization of American States (OAS) and during the 1960s, they created the Central American Common Market (CACM) which infamously failed.

Even though their goal was not to enter some regional organization, the Central American peace process gave birth to the Central American Integration System (SICA). At the same time, an era of closer relations between the EC/EU and Central American countries started. The US regarded Latin America as its own sphere of influence, and it was especially active in Central America. Panama represents a Central American state in which the US played and is still playing a role of a very powerful veto actor. The country was created because that corresponded with the US interest to build a canal, that would link the Atlantic with the Pacific Ocean.<sup>24</sup> The US figured that the existence of Panama’s army would represent a threat to the security of the Panama Canal Zone; therefore, the National police (*Policía Nacional*-PN) was created. Soon, it gained more relevance, especially after

24 On November 18<sup>th</sup> 1903 the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Agreement was signed by which USA gained the right of occupation and control over the Canal Zone (10 miles) “forever”. Panama agreed that in the interest of the security of the Canal the US can intervene in its internal affairs, a right which was legalised by the Article VII of The Constitution of Panama. US committed to on a one-time basis payment of \$10 million and an annual \$250 thousand of rent (Schoultz 2001, 152–175).

WWII. It was led by a commander who represented the most influential person in Panama. In the 1947–1955 period, it was José Antonio Remón who reorganized the National police and in 1953, transformed it into a well-trained and armed National Guard (Guardia Nacional). Dissatisfied with the oligarchic rule, the Guard executed a military coup in 1968, which started the era of the rule of the National Guard (1968–1980). A moderate military faction came into power, led by Omar Torrijos (Ropp 1982, 37–41) who implemented political and social reforms, invested into education and social services, and thus demonstrated how Central American governments do not necessarily have to be right-wing orientated.<sup>25</sup>

Despite positive changes, the rule of Torrijos was in fact a military dictatorship (1968–1981). Torrijos succeeded in signing new agreements on the Panama Canal in 1977. With the first one, Panama gained sovereignty over the Canal on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1979, and with the second agreement, the neutrality of the Canal was guaranteed, which Panama and the US had equal rights to defend (still, the US maintained its right to intervene). In December 1982, General Manuel Antonio Noriega Morena became the commander of the National Guard and he ruled Panama through puppet presidents. Although aware of his involvement in drug trafficking and money laundering, the CIA supported its associate Noriega because he helped the US in arming Nicaraguan Contras. When news about Noriega's involvement in drug trafficking became public, the US denounced him. They accused him of drug trafficking, money laundering, election fraud and a series of homicides. They imposed economic sanctions on Panama and asked President Delvalle (1985–1988) to discharge Noriega from the military. Yet, Noriega removed Delvalle from power and then, in 1989, he rigged the elections in which an opposition candidate, Guillermo Endara, should have won. President George Bush concluded that Noriega should be toppled. On November 20<sup>th</sup> 1989, operation "Just Cause" commenced, during which 20.000 American soldiers brought down Noriega's regime in five days.<sup>26</sup> The US justified the intervention by defending Panama's right

25 Military adopted a plan of national development (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 1976–1980*), which had inclusion of the people into the political process (*participation popular*), consolidation of national identity and improvement of the people's standard of living as its main goals (Gandásegui 1989, 40).

26 Noriega found refuge in the Vatican nunciature, yet on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1990, he surrendered and was transferred into the US. At the Miami Federal court he went on trial for drug trafficking and racketeering. In 1992, Noriega was declared guilty and was sentenced to 40 years (later this was reduced to 30 and then to 17 years due to the good behaviour) in prison. Yet, in 2010 the US extradited him to France which, *in absentia*, convicted him for money laundering. At the end of 2011, France extradited him to Panama, demanding his extradition so he would serve three 20 years sentences for the murder of three opposition members in the 1980s. (Panama ex-dictator Manuel Noriega flies home, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/11/panama-manuel-noriega-home>).



to self-determination, rightfully theirs by international law and Article 51 of the UN Charter, which Noriega denied. The goal of invasion was to bring Noriega to justice and replace him with Guillermo Endara's government, therefore, to rebuild democracy and secure the integrity of the Panama Canal agreement (Smith 2000, 293–297). At the end of 1989, the Election tribunal confirmed Endara's victory in the May elections. President Endara abolished Panama's armed forces in 1990, which was afterwards included in the Constitution in 1994. By doing that, Panama became the second Central American and Latin American country, after Costa Rica, with no military. The transition to democracy was short and it was institutionalized in 1990, when a new constitution was delivered.

## 5. CONCLUSION

When we scratch just a bit under the surface, the data indicates entirely different experiences in the transformation of the political systems of Central America and North Africa, during the Arab Spring, on one side and East Europe on the other side. The triple transformation that affected communist Europe simply does not exist in cases of Central America and North Africa. In the case of Central America, we can talk about transition from autocracy to (defective) democracy, while in the case of North Africa it is still questionable. In the last case, perhaps the approach of cyclic transition towards democracy, as described by Sadiki (2012), or first a democratic breakthrough that is followed by a withdrawal of democracy, is more appropriate. The countries of Eastern Europe are now mostly democratic. Yet, as Central America shows, transition can last for a very long time with democratic and counter-democratic waves, which was also the case with North Africa.

From the Monroe doctrine, the US finds Central America as its "backyard" and thus believes it has the right to intervene. This was especially true during the Cold War. It started with the 1954 intervention in Guatemala and culminated during the civil wars and interstate conflicts that affected the region during the 1980s. The US represented a powerful veto actor that in the first phase of the Central American conflict not only financed the Contras, but also obstructed the conclusion of the peace agreement. Thus, the positive international actor's role was taken by the EC. In North Africa, the influence of the international veto actors on democratization was generally low. There was no regional hegemon and the states of the region opportunistically transferred from the Eastern to the Western block, following their own interests and without observable sanctions from the global powers. Furthermore, global powers were very interested in "flirting" and bringing these countries over to their sphere of interest while the use of force was considered dangerous, because it could

have pushed the countries of the region to the enemy camp. The very same countries also participated in the Nonaligned Movement. France, which should have had the role of the hegemon in North Africa, simply did not have the same strength during the Cold War as it did during its “golden age” as a colonial power. The 1990s brought the victory for liberal democracy over communism, which also led to the pressure by the West for the democratization of the region.

However, 9/11 and the war against terror that followed again led the West to change its stance. Even the Americans, after the enflaming of the civil war in Iraq, gradually abandoned their democratization pressure on the region. Yet, the EU carries out more patient long-term policies with the aim to democratize the region. However, due to the absence of conditionality, these policies have limited success. At the same time the EU found itself in the midst of an economic crisis which diminished its ability to economically help North Africa. It neither helps that the citizens of the region are painfully aware that some of the European leaders had good relations with ex-dictators, such as Berlusconi with Gaddafi, which does not instill confidence in the honesty of the West about democratization of North Africa.

Indeed, the West led inconsistent and mutually conflicted policies toward the region, based on security, economic interests and an honest wish for democratization (Zoubir 2008, 266). However, many of these policies depend on the events “in the field” and how the West interprets them.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Sadiki (2012) finds that the US foreign policy, and foreign policies of other Western countries, cannot be looked at through the paradigm of “hard” realism and “idealistic” liberalism, but a more appropriate analytical tool should be provided by constructivism. If we compare the influence of veto actors in the cases of Central America and North Africa, we can conclude that in Central America, the US had a more significant role as a veto actor. The allure of integration into international organizations was not a significant factor in implementing political system reforms in either region. The level of similarities in both regions is considerably high.

27 See the first three chapters of the book *Scripting Middle East Leaders: The Impact of Leadership Perceptions on US and UK foreign policy* on the importance of perception of political leaders on the creation of strategic scripts (Freedman 2013; Stein 2013; Michaels 2013).

**Table 1.** North Africa

Country	Triple Transformation	The Influence of international (veto) actors	Reforms due to the allure of membership in international organizations
Egypt	No	USSR US	No
Libya	No	USSR US EC/EU	No
Tunisia	No	US FR EC/EU	No
Algeria	No	USSR US FR EC/EU	No

Source: made by the authors

**Table 2.** Central America

Country	Triple Transformation	The Influence of international (veto) actors	Reforms due to the allure of membership in international organizations
Guatemala	No	US EC	No
Honduras	No	US EC	No
El Salvador	No	US EC	No
Nicaragua	Maybe?	US EC	No
Panama	No	US	No

Source: made by the authors

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## SAŽETAK

### TRANSFORMACIJA POLITIČKIH SUSTAVA U SJEVERNOJ AFRICI I SREDNJOJ AMERICI

Od samog početka takozvanog Arapskog proljeća u zimu 2010. godine različiti izvori povlače usporedbe s padom komunizma i demokratizacijom Istočne Europe 1989/1991. Čak je i sam naziv ovog političkog fenomena sličan nazivima političkih promjena u komunističkoj Istočnoj Europi. Usporedba s Istočnom Europom bila je snažno naglašavana, a argumenti koji tom toku misli idu u prilog imaju neku težinu. Međutim, članak tvrdi da, zbog iznimne specifičnosti komunističkih režima u Istočnoj Europi, usporedba s Arapskim proljećem nije u potpunosti adekvatna. Istočna Europa prošla je kroz trostruku tranziciju i bila je pod jakim utjecajem želje da se pridruži Europskoj uniji, za razliku od Sjeverne Afrike. Zbog toga članak tvrdi kako je demokratizacija Srednje Amerike daleko adekvatnija za usporedbu sa zemljama Arapskog proljeća.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: demokratizacija, transformacija, politički sustavi, Sjeverna Afrika, Srednja Amerika.