

Review article

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A Comparison of Democratic Transformations of Tunisia and Indonesia: Lessons Learned

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Summary

The question this paper tries to provide an answer to is, why democratic transformation was successful in Tunisia and Indonesia? The theoretical approach is primarily rooted in descriptive-empirical actor theories, although cultural theories were used as well, as to better understand the political ideas and stances of Islamist actors. The research strategy is a binary comparative study with the same outcome on the dependent variable. Furthermore, the paper utilizes the Most Different Systems Design (MDSD) since both countries are quite different, but the dependent variable is the same – democratic transformation was successful. The aim of the paper is to isolate the independent variables which should be considered as the necessary prerequisites for the democratic transformation in both cases. However, the paper emphasises that further testing and more cases are needed.

Keywords: Democracy, Democratic Transformation, Comparative Study, Tunisia, Indonesia

1. Introduction

There used to be a broad consensus that democracy is not possible in the Muslim world as seen both in the works of Francis Fukuyama (1994) and Samuel Huntington (1997). This notion was further reinforced by the creeping islamization and an authoritarian slip of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Turkey. Moreover, the Arab Spring that was supposed to bring democracy to the Arab Middle East failed spectacularly – we even need not take a closer look at the region to realize that the Arab Spring resulted in ethnic and religious conflicts that spread across the region like wildfire (Saideman, 2012). In some cases, the Arab Spring resulted with the restoration of authoritarianism in the end.

However, in this bleak reality there is one shiny beacon of light, a “shiny democratic” star of the Arab Spring, the place where it all started – Tunisia. Tunisia was the country where the Arab Spring originated, and it is the only country where the democratic transformation succeeded – so far. Alas, there are still many trials and tribulations of Tunisia’s young democracy on its road to democratic consolidation. This paper addresses why democratic transformation succeeded in the first place. In the paper, using an MDS design, Tunisia will be compared with another “success story”, the so-called Rising Democratic Star in the Far East – Indonesia (Weber, 2006).

The main question this paper tries to answer is, why was democratic transformation successful in Tunisia and Indonesia despite their differences? The theoretical approach is primarily rooted in descriptive-empirical actor theories, although cultural theories are used as well, as to better understand the political ideas and stances of Islamist actors. The research strategy is a binary comparative study with the same outcome on the dependent variable. The aim of the paper will be to isolate the independent variables which should be considered as the necessary prerequisites for the democratic transformation in both cases. The paper will be divided as follows: the second and the third sections will lay down the theoretical and methodological groundwork for the paper; the sections that follow will examine the two cases variable by variable; and in the final section an interpretation of the results will be provided.

2. Theoretical Framework

This paper utilizes the descriptive-empirical actor theory since the modernization theories are not quite applicable in these two cases. According to the modernization theories Tunisia and Indonesia have not reached the economic thresholds needed for transition into democracy, and yet they have transitioned into democracies nonetheless. Thus, the works of O’Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986a; 1986b), and O’Donnell and Schmitter (2006) will be utilized for the theoretical framework of the paper. The main logic behind their theoretical thinking is that democratization is not linear. Political elites of the old regime (softliners) usually start the process of democratization in order to save the regime. It is pure mathematics – adapt to survive. However, the patterns of cooperation and/or conflict between the softliners and the new elites (previous opposition to the regime) can make or break the new democracy. If the former opposition elites are too radical the softliners will turn into hardliners and probably stage a coup, thus restoring authoritarian rule. On the other hand, if the former opposition elites are moderates, they can work together with the softliners of the old regime reaching a pact and thus negotiating toward the agreement to continue with the democratic experiment.

For this to succeed we also need to understand the nature of the previous authoritarian regime – was it a civilian or a military one or was it something entirely different. According to Linz and Stepan (1998) military regimes produce a powerful hardliner (veto) actor – namely the military itself. Military regimes, in comparison with civilian autocracies, are thus less likely to democratize.

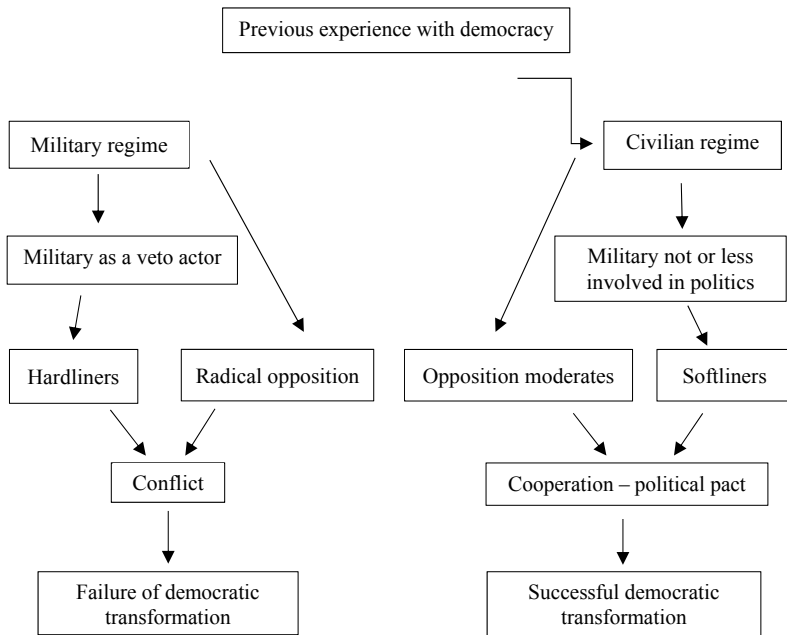
When it comes to Muslim societies, Islamists are usually the most influential, or one of the most influential opposition forces. Some, such as Bassam Tibi (2012; 2013), consider them to be totalitarian, and thus unable to produce democratic outcomes in given societies. In his theoretical reasoning they are close to monolithic in their political agenda – the creation of the Islamic state. Others, like Hamid and McCants (2017), Mandaville (2017) or Yildirim (2016), do agree that Islamists are prone to desiring the islamization of politics and society, however they are far from monolithic. In specific contexts of different countries, they have gone through a process of moderation in order to adapt to mostly secular political systems. Some believe that this is nothing more than a survival strategy, but nevertheless their strategy of adaptation has influenced their political behavior. However, in adapting to their political surroundings some of the Islamist actors will be more radical while others will become more moderate opposition forces. Of course, this is only a simplification of cultural theories about democratization. However, to better understand Islamists' motives and actions, this paper also subscribes to the “culture matters” approach.

Furthermore, according to Merkel (2011), if a country had a previous experience with democracy, that should facilitate its transition to democracy. Thusly, that experience should be interwoven, not just in the memory of the population, but in the fabric of the (authoritarian) political institutions as well. This would later, during the transitional phase, make the political elites (both members of the old regime and opposition forces) more susceptible to democratic norms and building new democratic institutions.

Thus, the paper will utilize the following variables to test the theories that have previously been mentioned: the dependent variable in both cases is a successful democratic transformation; the independent variables are: the character of the previous authoritarian regime, the role of the military, the type of opposition and government, patterns of interaction between opposition forces and government; and, lastly, the auxiliary variable is previous experience with democracy.

3. Research Strategy

The research strategy applied in this paper is a comparative one – a comparative binary study. Small *n* studies are also called focused comparisons since they are more intense and focus on more “details”. Simply put they examine more variables in

Diagram 1. Theoretical Model Applied in This Article

Source: made by the author

more detail than large N studies (Landman, 2008, pp. 40-46). So, the main method utilized here is the comparative method (Lijphart, 1971; 1975; Przeworski & Teune, 1982). Furthermore, it is a comparative study that utilizes the Most Different Systems Design (MDS). MDS is a type of comparison in which the main “strategy is to choose units of research which are as different as possible with regard to extraneous variables” (Ankar, 2008, p. 390).

By using this logic, we do not want to just explain what causes the dependent variable, but we also want to isolate the specific common explanatory factors (independent variables) that are shared by the compared cases with the ultimate goal in mind to test the theory/theories (Ibid., p. 392). Simply put, the MDS is used to eliminate the “irrelevant systemic factors” (Faure, 1994, p. 315). Just as in the Most Similar Systems Design, MDS is used to create a “quasi-experimental” situation which is quite common for the comparative method (De Meur and Berg-Schlusser, 1994, p. 198).

4. Democratic Transformation of Tunisia

Some believe that even former experience with democracy has an impact on (successful) democratic transformation (Merkel, 2011). Tunisia had almost no experience with democracy, although it had a long familiarity with constitutionalism. The first Constitution of Tunisia was drafted in 1861, although under extreme pressure of foreign powers such as France. With this Constitution Tunisia was to be a Constitutional Monarchy (Borowiec, 1998, p. 15; Powel & Sadiki, 2010, pp. 17-18). Alas, 20 years later, in 1881, Tunisia came under French colonial control. Nevertheless, a large number of Tunisia's postcolonial political parties bore the name *destour*, which in Arabic means constitution. In 1923, the French decided to share the sovereignty over Tunisia with the Tunisian bey¹ – so called co-sovereignty. This was largely due to the fact that the French wanted to avoid the situation in which they were involved in Algeria, namely an expensive military colonial administration. But truth be told, the French were in reality in charge of Tunisia, while the power of the Tunisian bey was nominal. By doing this, the French integrated Tunisia into the French legal jurisdiction and gave the opportunity to the Tunisians to become naturalized French citizens (Borowiec, 1998; Dewhurst Lewis, 2013).

However, this created a strong wind in the “sails” of the Tunisian nationalist forces. Due to the internal problems caused by the Tunisian nationalists, and more importantly a strong need to keep the neighboring Algeria in its grasp, in 1956, France gave independence to Tunisia and Morocco. Thus, Tunisia became an independent country with a constitutional monarchy as its political system. However, in the following year the most prominent leader of Tunisia's nationalist forces, Habib Bourgiba, overthrew the monarchy and created a new political system with him being in charge (Murphy, 1999, p. 49).

Bourgiba thusly created a personal civilian dictatorship. He was the center of the new political system he crafted into existence (Borowiec, 1998; Murphy, 1999; Alexander, 2010; Willis, 2012). He ruled over Tunisia with the help of civilian, quite often technocratic, political elites who were very much dependent on him. He often used rotations of the political elites and purposely “collided” different political cliques within the regime against each other to make them even more dependent on him (Alexander, 2010; Willis, 2012). Tunisia's party system was a one-party system in its nature – Neo-Destour being the only party allowed in the National Assembly. Furthermore, Bourgiba had very extensive presidential powers that also allowed him the right to appoint and oust prime ministers (Murphy, 1999; King, 2009; Alexander, 2010). He also believed that the armed forces were a threat to his rule, which was probably correct given what occurred in other countries across the

¹ Bey was the formal title of the rulers of Tunisia.

Arab Middle East, hence he kept the military small and outside of politics with the clear purpose of defending the country's borders (Willis, 2012). Since he was a jurist and a political scientist educated at the Sorbonne in Paris, he was also largely influenced by the French political ideas, especially *laïcité*. In this sense his political system was crafted to be a secular one, Islam was the religion of the state, thus being controlled and integrated into the regime, and the (illegal) Islamist opposition was usually seen through the lens of harsh prejudice (Borowiec, 1998).

Ironically in 1987 he was ousted by the prime minister of his own choice, a man from the military milieu, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Ben Ali staged a silent coup against Bourgiba because he was mentally ill, and his condition was worsening. The other reason was that Tunisia was on the verge of civil war due to the regime's repression aimed against the Islamists led by sheik Rached Ghannouchi. Ben Ali simply used the Articles of the Constitution, and with the help of Bourgiba's doctors, proclaimed him incapable of governing (Borowiec, 1998; Murphy, 1999; Willis, 2012). Even though Ben Ali was a man from the military milieu he ruled over Tunisia in a similar fashion as his predecessor (Willis, 2012). In the beginning of his rule he did promise the democratization of the country, and some steps towards democratization were made. Tunisia's political system was liberalized, the one-party system was replaced with a multi-party system, peace with the Islamists was negotiated, and so on. However, things soon took a turn for the worse. Ben Ali restored the civilian personal dictatorship, this time with him in charge. Rached Ghannouchi and his "merry band" of Islamists were again targeted by the state security apparatus. The source of Ben Ali's power became the regime party, the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD) (Powel & Sadiki, 2010; Willis, 2012). Nevertheless, against the odds, Tunisia did not become a military regime. Despite being a military man, Ben Ali kept the military small and outside politics. He was probably thinking the same thing as his predecessor was, that a strong military could be a powerful contender to his rule. It should be mentioned that the security apparatus did grow since Ben Ali took over, however the capabilities and the forces of the Ministry of Interior grew, not the ones of the Ministry of Defence (Barany, 2016).

The role of the military from the birth of the country up until the second decade of the 21st century stayed mostly the same. It was and remained small. It did not have a role in giving birth to the country, unlike in neighboring Algeria, and it had very limited resources while the minister of defense was usually a civilian. The military was forbidden to be politically active, which also meant the absence of the active suffrage for military personnel. This subsequently meant that military figures, active as well as retired, were not part of Tunisia's political elites. As stated before, this was the role for the military that Bourgiba envisioned, the same role that continued during Ben Ali's rule, although it must be mentioned that the num-

ber of military personnel within his regime rose. Still the military was financially under-capacitated and Ben Ali quite often came into conflict with it. In the end, these conflicts resulted with the situation where the main role of the military was to guard the border with Algeria during the Algerian Civil War in the 1990s (Jebnoun, 2014; Barany, 2016). During the Arab Spring, namely the Jasmine Revolution² as it was called in Tunisia, worsening relations between the military and Ben Ali resulted with his flight to Saudi Arabia. Ben Ali was convinced that the military was actually staging a coup against him, which was a false assessment on his part. After his departure the military shortly took control of the country, however they soon proclaimed that they would not deviate from their constitutional role and that they would return to the barracks, which in the end took place (Jebnoun, 2014). The military was mostly inactive during the Jasmine Revolution, it declined to use deadly force against the civilian protesters, thus making the democratic transformation possible, and after it returned to the barracks staying out of politics. That does not mean that the Tunisian military had much love for democracy, it only means that the democratic transformation was less dangerous for it, unlike for the forces of the Ministry of Interior who came out of the Jasmine Revolution with a tarnished reputation (Brooks, 2016). Of course, quite the opposite happened in Egypt where the military in the end restored authoritarian rule.

When it comes to the opposition, the main opposition to the ruling regime in Tunisia was sheik Rached Ghannouchi and his Islamist movement. Of course, there were other political parties in the National Assembly, but they mostly came to be as a result of conflicts and fractionalization within the RCD (Haugbølle & Cavatorta, 2011, p. 330). Naturally, they were not a real opposition to the ruling regime but can be considered more as semi-opposition³ in the sense that they did not want to change how the basics of the regime function, but rather they wanted to take part in it. The main source of the opposition, in lack of other ethnic or linguistic segments of society, was the religious segment. Ghannouchi and his Islamist Ennahda party were both in opposition to Bourgiba's and Ben Ali's rule. During all this time Ennahda was banned. Only after the Jasmine Revolution it became a legal political actor. At the same time, the secular segment of the Tunisian society was afraid that Ennahda's goal was to remake Tunisia into an Islamic State based on Sharia law (Masri, 2017; Murphy, 2013).

² Flowers can sometimes be found as symbols for political revolutions and democratisation; for instance such was the case with Portugal's Carnation Revolution – flowers symbolise spring and new beginnings. However, although Jasmine is one of the symbols of Tunisia, in fact it was the international media who both branded the Tunisian revolts as the "Jasmine Revolution" and popularised the term across the globe (Darwish, 2020, pp. 1, 4).

³ For different types of opposition see Linz, 1973.

However, unlike Islamists in Egypt or Algeria for instance, Rached Ghannouchi and Ennahda were much more moderate as a political actor especially when compared to the much more extremist and violent strains of Islamism that were present in the Arab Middle East. In its essence Ennahda denounced violence as a part of political struggle. When it came to power in Tunisia utilising antiterrorist measures and laws, Ennahda clashed with the more violent Salafī groups. Salafists, of course, saw that as betrayal. Furthermore, Ennahda even denounced Sharia law as a state law as well as God's sovereignty, which were one of the main tenants of most Islamist organisations. Not only that, Ennahda in the end denounced the whole idea that "Islam is the solution" when it comes to forming and implementing public policies, by denouncing Islamism altogether. On its 10th party Congress in 2016 Ennahda declared itself as a party of Muslim democrats (Ghannouchi, 2016; Marzo, 2018). This moderation can be viewed as a survival strategy, however in the past Ennahda was prone to cooperate with Tunisia's secular parties, and the same is true even in the second decade of the 21st century.

When it comes to the regime's softliners it can be said that the military played this role, but not just the military. The "remnants" of the RCD, after Ben Ali's departure, facilitated the democratic transformation as well by allowing democratic elections. In such interaction with the opposition the new democratic Tunisia was born. Needless to say, this interaction was not without conflict, on the contrary. However, some sort of cooperation in the end prevailed which led to a political pact (agreement) between new and old political elites. Remnants of the old regime governed the country after Ben Ali fled, up until the elections for the Constitutional Assembly in 2011. As expected Ennahda won the plurality of votes in those elections, but not enough to form the government on its own. Thusly a coalition government with two other secular parties – the so-called Troika – was formed (Masri, 2017). For the first time in its history Tunisia was governed by former opposition forces. However, the struggle between the two segments of society, the secular and Islamist ones, continued over the future Constitution of the country. This was especially true for Article 1 of the Constitution, which was to define the form of government and religion of the state (Dalmasso & Cavatorta, 2013). On top of that the extremist Salafists, who believed that Ennahda had betrayed them, started a new cycle of violence (Donker, 2013). Since the Troika was not able to handle these problems in 2012 a new party, comprised of former members of the RCD, was formed – Nidaa Tounes. Nidaa Tounes was led by former prime minister of Tunisia Beji Caid Essebsi⁴ and it started, collaborating with some other secular political parties, demanding the dissolution of the Constitutional Assembly and for the Troika-led

⁴ He was the prime minister of Tunisia from February till December of 2011.

government to step down. At the same time Ennahda came into a conflict with the largest workers syndicate in Tunisia from Bourgiba's time, namely the Tunisian General Labor Union (*Union Générale Tunisienne de Travail* – UGTT), due to the UGTT's dissatisfaction on how the Troika handled Tunisia's economic problems. For the same reason the UGTT started a series of strikes aimed against the Troika government (Henneberg, 2018; Masri, 2017).

In this manner Tunisia ended up in a situation of being bogged down. The new opposition, led by Nidaa Tounes, asked the government to step down and for the dissolution of the Constitutional Assembly, without really giving any concrete solutions to the country's problems, while the Troika government did all it could to stay in charge of Tunisia. The UGTT, with other three organizations of civil society, was the political actor who finally put an end to this stalemate. They formed a Quartet to "make peace" between old and new political elites. The Troika government stepped down, and was succeeded by a technocratic government in 2013, while all Tunisia's political actors participated in negotiations, mediated by the Quartet, in which all the articles of the future Constitution were discussed until all the involved parties were satisfied with the final product (Brownlee et al., 2015, pp. 145-146; Yousfi, 2015, p. 329; Masri, 2017, p. 66; Henneberg, 2018, p. 2). The new Constitution was finally drafted in 2014, the same year new parliamentary elections were held. Again, the elections did not produce a clear winner, so Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes formed a coalition government (Masri, 2017). Essebsi and Ghannouchi continued to cooperate until Essebsi's death in 2019.

The Jasmine Revolution abruptly changed the Tunisian political regime and system. Changes of regime and system, according to Merkel (2011), are usually hasty. Regardless, since Ben Ali came to power Tunisia went through a longer phase of liberalization that never resulted in true democratization, at least not until 2011. As stated before, his regime was a civilian form of authoritarianism, one with regular elections, thus making it some sort of hybrid regime, or as King (2009) defines it, a new authoritarianism, which is pretty much the same thing. The Jasmine Revolution, same as the January 25th Revolution in Egypt (Zgurić, 2016), was not the first account of contested politics in Tunisia. Protests had been massing up at least for half a decade prior to the Jasmine Revolution (Aleya-Sghaier, 2012). But unlike in Egypt, they were never that large and in reality, did not pose a threat to the regime. Until Ben Ali fled, the regime functioned normally. It was "business as usual". What crippled the regime was, as stated before, Ben Ali's own fault. The lack of internal communications within the regime and Ben Ali's decision to leave for a short while to avoid a (non-existent) military coup. In this manner the regime was effectively decapitated thus being forced, with some help of the military, to undergo a democratic transformation (Jebnoun, 2014).

The polarization between the secular political elites of the RCD and the Islamists existed prior to the Jasmine Revolution. But as stated before, the regime was quite successful in keeping them in check, usually by implementing violence. After Bel Ali's flight, Rached Ghannouchi, who fled the country sometime after Ben Ali rose to power, returned to Tunisia. The rest is history, as one might say, and it was described in the paragraphs above. Tunisia now faces the challenges of democratic consolidation. The following section will give an account of the democratic transformation of Indonesia.

5. Democratic Transformation of Indonesia

Indonesia's transformation to democracy started in 1998 with General Suharto's resignation, and it can be argued that it ended in 2004 when Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was elected President of Indonesia (Duile & Bens, 2017, p. 3). This made Indonesia the third largest democratic polity in the world, after India and the US, on top of that a democracy where Muslims made up a majority of the population (Crouch, 2017, p. 2). Afterwards Indonesia faced the challenges of democratic consolidation, and some argue that Indonesia consolidated as a patrimonial democracy⁵ (Webber, 2006). However, this is not the topic of this paper, so the variables that are related to Indonesia's transition to democracy will be discussed here.

Unlike Tunisia, Indonesia had previous experience with democracy. In the early 20th century Indonesia was still under Dutch colonial rule – at that time it was known as The Dutch East Indies. This period (1920s-1940s) was also the time of the birth and rise of Indonesian nationalism. There were three different strains of Indonesian nationalism – nationalist in the classical sense of the word arguing in favor of self-determination, democratic polity and modernization; Islamists arguing in favor of creating an Islamic state, or at least implementation of some aspects of Sharia law; and Marxists/communists arguing in favor of a social revolution and implementing a communist program in a new independent state (Bertrand, 2004, p. 30). However, the one that gained the most support was the nationalist strain, or

⁵ Aspinall and Mietzner (2019, p. 295) state: "In recent years, discussion about Indonesia's democratic quality has intensified. After much praise for Indonesia's successful democratic transition in the late 1990s and early 2000s and subsequent concern over the stagnation of democratization in the early 2010s, some authors now assert that the country has entered a period of democratic regression." The quality of Indonesia's democracy has been a "hot topic" in the last decade. The same authors argue that Indonesia is still an electoral democracy, which is the "lowest" form of a democratic polity. According to them democratic deficits include Islamist politics, the rise of illiberalism, a weakening of the parties, and the deepening polarization of the society (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019). Others report the rise of illiberalism as well (Wilson, 2015), but add to it a weakly consolidated democracy (Freedman, 2006), rampant corruption, militant Islamism, abuses of minority rights, abuses by the military and so on (Freedman & Tiburzi, 2012).

rather the Indonesian National Party (*Partai Nasional Indonesia* – PNI), led by Sukarno. His strain of nationalism had the most popular support due to the fact that it was very inclusive, unlike those of some of its “competitors”. The main goals of Sukarno and his PNI were to create an independent democratic Indonesia. During the Second World War Japan occupied Indonesia. After the fall of the Japanese Empire and the withdrawal of the Japanese forces Sukarno and PNI proclaimed the Indonesian Republic based on Pancasila principles.⁶ Alas, the Dutch wanted to regain their control over Indonesia which started another war. Finally, in 1950 the Dutch, pressured by the international community, left the country. Now Indonesia was truly independent, and was envisioned, in spite its many internal differences, as a unitary republic. The newly born republic was not without its flaws and internal strife, however it managed to survive them all and it consolidated as a liberal parliamentary democracy with a weak president (Bertrand, 2004, pp. 30-34). By any means this is not to say that there were no differences in opinion on how the newly born Indonesian state should look like. In the period just after independence there were clashes about whether or not Indonesia should be a federation or a unitary state, about how the economy should look, what was the role of Islam, and should the country be a single- or a multi-party state. Some argued in favor of a federation, however many Indonesians adhered to the idea, as well as Sukarno himself, of a unitary state, wishing to forgo the practices priorly imposed by the Dutch. Communists were pushing for more of a command economy. Sukarno himself was against a western-style multi-party democracy. Others were afraid this would lead to an authoritarian political system (Vickers, 2005, pp. 115-122). Still, a unitary state with a liberal (multi-party) parliamentary democracy prevailed in the end. This era of Indonesia’s history is known as “a liberal-democratic era, characterized by a constitutional and parliamentary democracy (1945-1959)” (Duile & Bens, 2017, p. 6).

However, the “honeymoon” period with democracy did not last too long. Indonesia’s internal strifes and divisions turned into violence. In 1955, the first parliamentary elections were held. They were supposed to create stability in Indonesia; however, they did quite the opposite. Different political parties had different ideas on how Indonesia should be conceptualized – again these ideas ranged from a unitary secular republic to an Islamic state, and all in between. The PNI was in favor of secularist nationalism, while the Communist Party of Indonesia (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* – PKI) was inspired by Maoist China. Islamic organizations, namely

⁶ Pancasila had five principles: 1. nationalism, envisioned as the unity of one nation; 2. internationalism and humanitarianism, envisioned as heaving peaceful relations with other states in the international system; 3. a government of representatives that was given consent by the people; 4. social justice and prosperity; and 5. belief in God. The fifth principle was one that caused much discord among different strains of nationalism, especially the Islamic ones who insisted that the fifth principle must be defined as belief only in Allah (Bertrand, 2004, pp. 31-32).

Masyumi and *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) had a strong base among pious Muslims. Interestingly enough, all of the aforementioned parties wanted to implement socialist economic policies, albeit in different ways and degrees. In the elections, the PNI won over 22 percent of the popular vote, *Masyumi* 20 percent, the NU 18 percent, and the PKI 16 percent. Other parties and independent candidates were less fortunate. Alas, this demonstrated deep political and social cleavages within “newborn” Indonesia (Vickers, 2005, pp. 122-124). These divisions finally led to violence, and when the violence reached the threshold where it was no longer “sustainable” Sukarno and the members of his regime felt that there was no other choice but to transform the Indonesian political system into something more authoritarian – thus the concept and era of “guided democracy” (1959-1966) was born, which marked the “premature” end of constitutional democracy in Indonesia. Within this new political framework the powers of the president and the military grew (Klinken, 2000, p. 92; Bertrand, 2004, pp. 34-37; Duile & Bens, 2017, p. 6).

During the period of “guided democracy” Sukarno ran the country in a coalition with the PKI and the army. Indonesia took a turn to the left. Sukarno was leading a *divide et impera* policy pitching the PKI against the army and trying to consolidate his own power, while at the same time building his cult of personality. However, this did not end well for Sukarno. The military grew more and more in power, and Sukarno grew less and less independent from the military. Simultaneously, the PKI became the third largest communist party in the world and Sukarno became dependent on its popular support. The PKI came into conflict with large landowners, and communism was identified more and more with atheism (Vickers, 2005; Aspinall, 2005, pp. 21-22). There were a lot of conflicts as well between the three actors, which in the end resulted in a coup. In 1965, under “shady” conditions that were never fully explained, soldiers who were allegedly PKI supporters kidnaped and executed six senior army officers. This in the end brought the downfall of the PKI and Sukarno’s regime. A broad coalition of the army and different segments of the society, including the religious segments, turned against the PKI and Sukarno (Aspinall, 2005, pp. 21-22). General Suharto ousted President Sukarno that same year, consolidated his power by 1966, and became the new president, while Sukarno was confined to house arrest where he lived until the end of his days in 1970 (Heryanto, 2018, p. 12). From 1965 onward, the PKI and its supporters, even “suspected” supporters, were brutally annihilated by the military, not just the military, but other organizations and segments of the society as well. For instance, the NU played a substantial role in killing PKI members and supporters in the countryside (Aspinall, 2005, p. 22; Heryanto, 2018, p. 10). It is estimated that between half a million and a million people were killed for being communists or communist supporters in this purge (Klinken, 2000, p. 92; Heryanto, 2018, p. 12). This came to be known as “one of the largest massacres of the twentieth century” (Bourchier, 2019, p. 724).

After the coup, the military was given a much broader role in Indonesian political and society, enshrined by the concept of “dual function” (*dwi fungsi*), where the military was not only tasked in preserving the borders of the state, but also in preserving the integrity of the state as well, which allowed it to meddle in the civil affairs to a much higher degree than before. Thus, the so-called New Order era (1966-1998) came to be (Bertrand, 2004, pp. 37-38; Duile & Bens, 2017, p. 6). The New Order regime was in its basics, which will be explained in more details below, a military regime with just the “right amount” of sultanism (Webber, 2006, p. 405).

The character of General Suharto’s rule was quite similar to developmental ideologies and policies across most of the Third World at that time – the two main objectives were expanding economic growth and increasing the state bureaucracy’s involvement into all spheres of life. Indonesia industrialized beyond recognition, roads were being built, people rushed to the cities, very much due to the help from the income produced by the oil boom. Indonesia was basically a large construction site, especially the island of Java. Soon the new Indonesian middle class began to emerge (Klinken, 2007, p. 16). Parallel to these developments was Suharto’s highly authoritarian regime. Indonesia was still a unitary state, based on five principles of Pancasila. The constitution gave Suharto very extensive powers, although nominally the most powerful institution in the country was the People’s Consultative Assembly; however, Suharto was the one who had control over the Assembly. Furthermore, a party system existed and elections for the Assembly were being held, though political parties had very limited freedom to act (Bertrand, 2004, pp. 38-39). As stated before, the backbone of General Suharto’s regime was the military, and he was not shy to use it to inflict violence in order to remain in power (Viartasiwi, 2018, p. 14). For instance, the military participated fully in the “witch-hunt” against communists and other leftist organizations in 1965-1966. Finally, leftist organizations and communist ideology were banned in Indonesia (Hearman, 2018, pp. 178-179). However, Suharto’s regime was not a pure military authoritarian regime; since so much power was vested in his hands, his regime had elements of sultanism (Webber, 2006, p. 405; see also Merkel, 2011, p. 253).

The role of the military, from the inception of the Indonesian state, was safeguarded in a myth that the military was the key actor without which the Republic, in the struggle with the Dutch, would not even have been born. This was furthermore enshrined during the New Order era in its “dual function” role where the military was not only responsible for guarding the borders of Indonesia, but it was also the guardian of the state. This concept had real political effects for Indonesia during Suharto’s regime when many military figures held high positions in the ruling party, the government, and administration, as well as the economy. The military also had its parliamentary factions both in regional and national assemblies. In effect that meant that in Indonesia civil authorities across the archipelago were second to military

authorities. After the “fall” of Suharto the new civilian authorities tried to put the military under civilian control, however due to the rise of the conflicts within post-1998 Indonesia, the military argued, trying to retain its former prerogatives, that it needed to preserve its powers in order to prevent the so-called balkanization (*balkanisasi*) or disintegration of the state (Heiduk, 2014, pp. 303-305). Due to the military’s involvement in the conflicts in post-1998 Indonesia, and the perception that they were once again responsible for guarding the state, up until today civilian authorities have not been quite successful in their aspirations to reform the military and bring it fully under civilian control (Ibid., pp. 309-311). Still, there have been some steps in the right direction. The military has lost its representation in the legislative body, and the minister of defense has since been a civilian (Davidson, 2009, pp. 293-294). Alas there have been some setbacks as well as no high-ranking military officers were ever charged for abuse of power or atrocities committed during the New Order era (Bourchier, 2019, p. 717). Lately the discussions about the role of the military have again heated up, especially after the emergence of 2012 Law on Social Conflict which many are afraid of as they believe it gives more power to the military than it should (Crouch, 2017).

When it comes to opposition to Suharto’s regime, from the 1970s till the 1990s various human rights organizations were quite vocal in pointing out and criticizing the regime’s human rights infractions (Hearman, 2018, pp. 179-180). Islam, or rather the Islamist opposition was also present. However, it should be noted that in Indonesia “nominal” (*anbangan*) Muslims have been traditionally much more numerous than the “devout” (*santri*). Furthermore, as Abdulkaki states (2008, p. 156), “the two main Muslim mass organisations, the Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, played an important role in facilitating rather than obstructing the democratic process”. This explains why there was no mass support for the Islamist organizations and groups who wanted to remake Indonesia into an Islamic state based on Sharia law. Nevertheless, Islamist organizations and groups did sometimes resort to violence, but this was rather sporadic and mostly localized. Eventually in the 1980s Suharto relaxed his stance on political Islam and allowed some Islamist organizations to participate in formal politics. Some of them, again, in a way facilitated the transformation to democracy. However, democratization opened more free space for practicing religion and more Indonesian Muslims became “devout”. Furthermore, the opening of politics also made space for more radical and extremists’ strains of Islamism. Still, these strains of Islamism did not gain much popular support and they remained rather weak. They do not pose a threat to the central government in Jakarta (Webber, 2006, pp. 403-405). Religious parties (not just the Muslim ones, but Christian, and others as well) did proliferate like “mushrooms after the rain” in post-1998 Indonesia, but they did not, especially not the radical strains, score well enough in the elections of 1999 and 2004 to entirely rework the “fabric” of Indonesia’s politics and society (Klinken, 2007, p. 22).

Despite the fact that the military was the backbone of Suharto's regime, it also played an important role in Suharto's fall by not being able to prevent it. When mass protests against Suharto spread, the "military was unable or unwilling to control them, and this only emboldened the young protesters" (Ibid., p. 25). This then convinced Suharto's inner circle to force him to leave office. After he left, his vice-president Habibie took the mantle of the president of the state and "boldly went where no one has gone before" into a democratic reform (*reformasi*) (Ibid.). Even the military, when they realized "all was lost", played somewhat of a role of softliners by not stepping in and taking political power in their hands instead of Habibie. "The democratic transition process in Indonesia thus corresponded closely to the model of an (in this case, implicit) pact between 'softliners' in regime and opposition 'moderates'" (Webber, 2006, p. 407). The pacted democracy, although not explicit like in Tunisia, was somewhat formalized in Abdurrahman Wahid's⁷ first government which included both the remnants of the New Order regime and former opposition forces. The Ciganjur Group, which was the most powerful opposition force against Suharto, basically played the role of the "modest" opposition. Their claims were very modest and the remnants of the New Order regime alongside the military did not perceive them as a major threat, thusly enabling cooperation between two sides and allowing an (implicit) political pact which made democracy in the end possible (Ibid., pp. 407-408).

But why and how did Suharto's downfall come to be? First and foremost, the Asian financial crisis is to be blamed. In 1997 it hit Indonesia quite hard. As the result of economic grievances people came out into the streets to protest. In May of 1998 these protests, due to the regime's miscalculations in economic policies, escalated. Suharto's regime, quite unsurprisingly, answered with mass violence which caused some 1,200 casualties. This brought Indonesia to the brink, thus making elites around Suharto abandon him. Although the mass protests were important in the beginning, later the transformation turned into a process guided by elites which is in concordance with descriptive-empirical actor theories. In the end, as stated above, he was forced to leave because he lost the support of the elites and was succeeded by President Habibie. Habibie consequently announced elections and completely opened Indonesia's political system. Political changes were fast and comprehensive, which is quite typical for the pattern of transformation of the regime and system (Abdulkaki, 2008, p. 154; Merkel, 2011, pp. 263-265; Freedman & Tiburzi, 2012, pp. 149-150).

However unlike in the case of Tunisia, which only experienced some sporadic violence in the shape of terrorism, Indonesia experienced a much higher degree of violence after its democratic transformation. The violence spread across the archi-

⁷ Abdurrahman Wahid succeeded Habibie as the president of Indonesia from 1999 till 2001.

pelago between different actors and was based on different cleavages. Some of the violence was caused by the Islamist forces trying to reshape the secular republic into an Islamic state, some of the violence was caused by separatist forces trying to leave the republic, and some was caused by local communities who wanted to tip the balance of power within their respective communities (Schulze, 2017, pp. 1-2). It is estimated that from 1999 to 2003 the religious, ethnic, secessionist and communal violence in the end took some 19,000 lives with around 1.3 million people displaced (Klinken, 2007, p. 4). Ultimately the central Government in Jakarta gave more autonomy to other regions of Indonesia and went for fiscal decentralization which caused the violence to end (Bertrand, 2004). It could be argued that these measures were not successful enough since East Timor managed to break away from Indonesia in the end (Schulze, 2017, p. 1).

6. Some Remarks on the Implications Instead of a Conclusion

What do Tunisia and Indonesia have in common? They are both Muslim countries that are at the same time democracies, which goes against the “common logic” which implies that Muslim societies are less likely or outright impossible to democratize. Furthermore, Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world. These two countries both go against the theoretical stipulations of Fukuyama and Huntington. The main question this paper tried to answer is, why is that? To give an answer to this question MDSD was used since both countries are quite different, but the dependent variable is the same – democratic transformation was successful. So far at least. The idea behind this paper was to try to isolate the variables that are necessary for a successful democratic transformation, and to identify a common denominator that represents a necessary condition for a successful democratic transformation for a whole universe of cases.

Table 1. “Relevant” and “Irrelevant” Systemic Factors

COUNTRY	INDEPENDENT VARIABLES				AUXILIARY VARIABLE	DEPENDENT VARIABLE
	Character of the previous authoritarian regime	Role of the military	Type of opposition and government	Patterns of interaction between opposition forces and government	Previous experience with democracy	Successful democratization
TUNISIA	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	
INDONESIA	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	

Source: made by the author

When we look at the previous experience with democracy, Tunisia had almost none. Only some experience with constitutionalism could be traced. Indonesia, on the contrary, had a genuine liberal democracy from 1945 to 1959. Due to internal strife, Sukarno suspended democracy during the era of so-called guided democracy, which was a euphemism for an authoritarian regime. The final nail in the coffin of his rule was driven in by General Suharto and his New Order.

After gaining independence Tunisia became a personal dictatorship under Bourgiba. After Ben Ali ousted him, he merely perpetuated the same type of authoritarian regime. In Indonesia General Suharto managed to build a military bureaucratic regime with elements of sultanism since he succeeded in gathering a great amount of political power in his own hands. And while in Tunisia both Bourgiba and Ben Ali feared the military, thus keeping it small and out of politics, in Indonesia the military was the backbone of Suharto's regime. Why is this important? Because some say that military autocracies are much harder to democratize, in comparison with civilian ones. And still Indonesia managed to transform into a democracy quite fast. One can even say that in both cases the military, in a way, facilitated the transformation.

It is important to note that in both cases softliners and moderates prevailed. In Tunisia post-Ben Ali governments continued with the process of democratic transformation. After the 2011 elections for the Constitutional Assembly the Troika government governed moderately, without antagonising the elites of the old regime. Even Ennahda, which the secular forces tried to depict as hardcore Islamists that wanted to establish a Sharia-based Islamic state, acted quite moderately, even going against more radical elements of Tunisia's Islamist camp with strict antiterrorist laws. Despite the conflicts between elites, old and new, through cooperation and compromise an explicit political pact was reached which preserved Tunisia's young democracy. Indonesian political elites, both old and new, also showed a high level of cooperation among themselves. Both Habibie and Wahid, alongside their governments, made huge steps in the direction of democracy, while the Ciganjur Group's appetites were moderate as well and did not antagonize the old elites, especially the military which could have always played the role of a hardliner, but did not. Indonesia's elites also reached a pact, though an implicit one. Furthermore, in Indonesia Islamism did not pose a true threat to democracy. Some Islamist parties were systemic actors which did not challenge the shape of the state, while anti-systemic Islamist were more marginal and were dealt with militarily.

When it comes to patterns of transformation, both countries experienced a rapid transformation from autocracies to democratic polities. The patterns were similar in both cases, first there were mass protests against the governing elites, especially the presidents of both states, then the regimes used violence, and then when

both countries were galvanized, for different reasons, both regimes collapsed. In later stages, as is stipulated by the descriptive-empirical actor theory, the masses in the streets and public squares became less important and the elites, both old and new, took over the transformation process.

So, what can be concluded from all this, what are the main conditions for a democratic transformation to be successful? Since Indonesia had previous experience with democracy while Tunisia did not, it can be concluded that previous experience with democracy is a less important independent variable. Since Indonesia was a bureaucratic military regime with elements of sultanism, and Tunisia was a civilian personal dictatorship, we can also “dismiss” this independent variable as a necessary precondition for successful democratization. However, what both cases have in common is that the democratization process was led by softliners and moderates, and in both cases a pacted democratization was achieved. This confirms O’Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead’s (1986a; 1986b) research, showing that the success of democratic transformation depends on whether or not a political pact is reached. Still, not to get ahead of ourselves, further testing of the theory is needed with more cases and differing methods.

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