



Cross-Class Coalition as a Force in Revolution: A Case Study of Tunisia's Arab Spring

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Abstract

This article considers the causal mechanisms which allowed the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution, a movement which was the catalyst of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, were able to create transformative change and to overthrow former Tunisian President Ben Ali. It explores the relationships between class, urban citizenship, and protest, especially regarding the differences between middle and lower class movements. Further, it scrutinizes the less studied effects of movements collaboratively involving multiple classes – referred to as ‘cross-class coalitions’ – through analysing the presence of differing protest strategies and demands, which, by drawing on prior scholarship, are used to represent the involvement of lower and middle class groups in this case study. The paper concludes that a cross-class coalition cannot be determined as a causal factor through the presence of differing protest strategies, but it is confirmed as a causal mechanism through the initial presence of different protest demands and later consolidation of these demands. In making these conclusions, this article contributes to critical urban geography discussion of class, citizenship, and protest, in evaluating the involvement of multiple classes in a revolution as allies rather than individuals.

Keywords: Urban Geography, Urban Citizenship, Activism, Class, Jasmine Revolution, Tunisia, Arab Spring

Introduction

Revolutions can transform the course of our world's history. However, what marks the difference between those which change our world and those that fail to? There is little consensus among both academics and activists regarding which aspects of revolution are the most responsible for how influential these movements are in making transformative change to a society or inducing change in a regime. The protests which eventually caught fire and led to Tunisia's Arab Spring Uprisings, also referred to as the Jasmine Revolution, were by no means the first events of activism to occur in modern Tunisia. Asef Bayat (2017, 8), in his in-depth study of the Arab Spring uprisings, reflects that Tunisia had seen many acts of protest in the years prior to the Arab Spring, and yet, it only took the 'self-immolation of a poor street vendor in the hinterlands of Tunisia to reveal the scope of mass discontent and the fragility of the elites.' Furthermore, this chain of events resulted in President Ben Ali's dramatic fleeing of the country he once authoritatively controlled. Likewise, the transformative nature of Tunisia's Arab Spring was unprecedented and shocking to the rest of the world. However, most of the other countries who experienced Arab Spring uprisings faced less transformative success than that of Tunisia, with some ending in increased repression or even total civil war. This discrepancy heeds the question: What was the difference between these uprisings, and how was Ben Ali able to be overthrown as a result? How were the Arab Spring Uprisings in Tunisia able to create transformative democratic change?

Tunisia's Arab Spring uprisings are striking due to the variance of populations that participated in the protests. The revolution began with protests from jobless college graduates and street vendors spurred by frustrations with Tunisia's high unemployment rates, but later came to include both trade unions and the professional middle class that enjoyed a 'comfortable material and social life under Ben Ali's police state' (Bayat 2017, 8). There is a large amount of pre-existing scholarship which examines individual class participation in activism, but very little regarding activist movements with a variety of involved classes. In the desire to build on this literature, I conduct a case study on the Tunisian Arab Spring uprisings, also referred to as the Jasmine Revolution, in efforts to analyse the significance of the involvement of multiple classes and cross-class coalitions in the movement.

Theoretical Framework

Class and Citizenship

I first discuss the importance of class distinctions in activism, specifically in the Global South, within existing scholarship. In examining divisions in Indian society based on differing relationships with the state, Chatterjee (2004, 4) separates the population into two main groups: 'civil society' and 'political society.' Civil society refers to 'the close association of modern elite groups...walled up within enclaves of civic freedom and rational laws,' who experience the rights they were promised by their political system (Chatterjee 2004, 37). Members of 'political society' constitutionally have the same rights but are not 'proper members of civil society' because the state does not recognize them as such (Chatterjee 2004, 38). The difference between these members is explained by property, or 'the regulation by law of relations between individuals,' and community, or 'conferred legitimacy within the domain of the modern state'; these two concepts together establish an individual's 'citizenship' in a society (Chatterjee 2004, 74-75). For example, poorer residents make up 'political society' because they are often perceived as breaking the law, not paying taxes, and therefore not having attained citizenship. I find Chatterjee's division of society into these two groups to be an oversimplification of class structure, but it lays a strong foundation for class-based studies in the Global South, especially regarding the significance of citizenship and its inherent relationship to class categorizations.

James Holston (2008, 34) effectively links citizenship's role in resistance in his 'insurgent citizenship.' His research on the urban periphery of São Paulo notes that insurgence, or radical resistance, is based in struggles regarding the relationship between citizens and the state, and insurgent acts are always aimed to somehow affect state agendas (Holston 2008, 32). His findings also explain more complex class divisions through the analysis of the 'urban periphery' and insurgent citizenship's involvement of lower class citizens forming organized collectives, which are often then used to maintain hierarchy among other informal citizens (Holston 2008, 8). This 'urban periphery,' also known as the 'lumpen middle class,' 'peripheralized middle class,' and 'missing middle,' does not fit into the class binary of elite or poor, or even within civil and political societies (Bayat 2000; Ranganathan 2014; Lemanski and Tawa Lama-Rewal 2012). The peripheralized middle class, who are more similar to 'political society' in regards to their lack of citizenship, will sometimes choose to abide by unfair laws or taxation with the belief that their ongoing cooperation will result in increased establishment of citizenship and therefore, recognition from the state (Ranganathan 2014). Considering groups who break a binary view of class, such as this peripheralized middle class, provides an understanding of the complexity that defining and circumscribing class presents.

Citizenship and Activism

An individual's citizenship can reflect on their chosen political participation and activism methods. John Harriss (2006) found that middle class populations in Delhi heavily favor methods of activism involving direct interaction with the government, engaging with problems through legal action, or participating in political organizations. However, individuals with lower income and often less education found little utility in and therefore had minimal interaction with any of these problem-solving methods, displaying a discrepancy in the working class' and informal workers' abilities to 'secure effective representation' or 'empowerment' through participation in civil society associations (Harriss 2006, 455). Likewise, Ruchi Chaturvedi (2016, 317) found that Africa's 'urban underclass' had historically been and continued to be 'alienated from such formal legal and political relations with the state.' In order to overcome this disenfranchisement, violence came to play a major role in protest strategies implemented by the underclass. With no citizenship to claim and no expectations for the government to accommodate them, members of political society felt obliged to make their movements jarring so that they were unable to be ignored by the state (Chaturvedi 2016). In this way, citizenship (or lack thereof) provides an explanation for a lower-class disposition to dramatic, violent protest and a middle-class disposition to more conventional methods.

Activism is not only affected by citizenship based on an individual's civil or political relationship with the state. The nature of different class-based protests also stems from the material circumstances of individuals, otherwise known as deprivation, which influence how the state comes to view certain populations. Class inherently reflects individuals' income and welfare, which often dictates what they can provide for themselves and their families, and consequently, their priorities to partake in activism. Branch and Mampilly point out that the protests of poor citizens often appear loud and demanding because they are a 'reaction to "economic deprivation and uncertain livelihoods"' (as cited by Chaturvedi 2016, 315). Bayat's (2000) 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary' concurs that protest by the subaltern, or the urban poor which has been marginalized and excluded from society, is often provoked by desperation for resources for survival need, rather than intentionally political behavior, but characterizes these practices in everyday quiet illegalities instead of any sort of protest demonstration. I still later operationalize lower class protest through identifying violent movements, because it is not mutually exclusive to 'quiet encroachment' (Bayat 2000, 533). Rather, these two methods of lower class obtaining their livelihood, coexist with each other, but these quiet illegalities cannot be identified in the bounds of this research.

A shift in demand priorities is present in the consideration of welfare advocacy associations based in middle class neighborhoods; political engagement of these organizations places

greater importance on 'matters of consumption,' or private, non-essential services, rather than public services (Harriss 2006, 459). Even then, Nair found that associations in lower-middle class areas which claim to represent the interests of the working poor, focus on the aspects of issues that seem to misjudge the needs of these same poor populations (as cited by Harriss 2006, 458). For instance, they focus on the creation of roads rather than accessible public transportation, which inherently calls for the need of owning a car, or they encourage environmental cleanliness rather than the creation of public housing. Further, in activism regarding political demands, Moore (1966, 428-429) notes that the 'bourgeoisie revolution,' in comparison to the 'peasant revolution,' has expectations for individual freedoms such as 'security on the rights of property,' 'freedom of speech,' and 'the right to peaceful assembly.' These findings firstly exhibit that middle class activism interests relate more to the elevation of their quality of life, through demands for improved means for consumption and individual freedoms, compared to the survival demands presented by the working class and subalterns. Secondly, they demonstrate the separation of activism by class interests, and illustrates the point that individuals are unlikely to advocate on issues which do not directly impact them. It also indicates both the difficulty and importance of building cross-class interests, and therefore, cross-class coalitions.

The Importance of Cross-Class Coalitions

There is very little scholarship focusing particularly on effective cross-class cooperation, or what I refer to as a 'cross-class coalition,' especially in the Global South. My interest in pursuing this research was partly based in this lack of literature, despite such rich scholarship regarding citizenship and the contention of class divisions in activism. However, after discussing the differences in strategy and demands among class divisions, it is unsurprising that these commonly seen class contentions are more discussed than the rare cross-class coalition. The little literature that does exist on cross-class coalitions in Global South movements focused on the representation of the poor and disenfranchised by organizations in middle class civil society, similar to the aforementioned welfare advocacy groups, rather than an equitably active cross-class coalition (Mahsun 2017; Harriss 2006). There is scholarship available regarding the existence of cross-class coalitions in Europe and North America, and although I am hesitant to draw comparisons between class structures within the Global North and Global South, I believe that this scholarship can provide some basis to the consideration of cross-class coalitions in the Global South, specifically within Tunisia.

The first step to understanding the importance of cross-class coalitions is understanding what causes their formation. Overall, there is a pattern of cross-class coalitions emerging when more than one class is faced with a similar adversity. As a result, these coalitions often emerge along the lines of minority groups, such as women's movements; members of these minority groups are able to overcome their differences in class to confront a shared affliction, even when the issue does not equally affect all of them (Lebon 2013). Cross-class coalitions are most commonly found in domestic labor politics when the market is being threatened by foreign competition. In several EU countries these coalitions have formed in the construction sector between larger trade unions and small businesses regarding regulations on foreign contractors (Afonso 2011). These trade unions and small businesses domestically would not support the same regulations, but their coalition emerged in the face of a common competitor: unregulated foreign competition in the market.

After understanding why cross-class coalitions emerge, we can begin to discern why their presence in a movement matters. Mendez and Spady (2007, 357) followed a Living Wage Campaign in Williamsburg, Virginia in 2001 which featured a cross-class coalition on a college campus among students, faculty members, and low-level workers; ultimately, the movement was effective in demanding a wage increase, and its strength was bolstered by the diversity of participants who 'hold different stakes' to put simultaneous pressure on the university to reform. Although this study focuses on demands between this coalition of faculty, staff, and students and the school rather than between citizens and a state, it demonstrates how cross-class coalitions' culture of solidarity can improve a movement's strength in making demands. Additionally, while I do not delve into analyzing the long-term equitability of changes resulting from cross-class coalition movements in this research, it is important to note that the change resulting from this campaign also unfairly favored faculty members and students over low-level employees, somewhat reflecting how different levels of 'citizenship' within the university setting are not overcome by cross-class coalition (Mendez and Spady 2007).

Goldstone and Tilly's (2001) writings on contentious politics confront doubt posed by Mendez and Spady (2007) that the change resulting from cross-class coalitions will be insignificant for class members with less citizenship. Their research reveals that in the case of resistance against authoritarian regimes, regimes are likely to 'swing between token concessions and repression,' because challenges to 'their monopoly of power [are] likely to be more costly than repression' (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, 192). By their model, however, an increase in popular support and alliances between specific groups increases the 'opportunity response' to such repression, therefore motivating increased protest rather than resignation to the small

concessions and the repression that follows (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, 193). Consequently, my emphasis on the importance of cross-class coalitions focuses on their ability to make any change in otherwise hopeless situations, more so than making equitable change.

Method

I conducted this study according to the norms of case-centric process tracing, which aims to explain an historical event's result through the creation of a comprehensive narrative (Beach and Pedersen 2013). Detailed analysis of this narrative then provides the basis to evaluate competing hypotheses regarding the core causal mechanisms underlying the event (Beach and Pedersen 2013). Specifically, I look to identify the causal factors that occurred within the Jasmine Revolution in order to explain why former President Ben Ali's regime was able to be overthrown and why a democratic transition was made possible through the two phases of research detailed below. Additionally, I only consider texts which were published during the 28 days of the Tunisian Arab Spring, and therefore I analyze dialogues which actively occurred throughout the revolution, rather than retroactively, in order to build the revolution's narrative most accurately.

Document Selection

First, I collected texts whose information would provide the most accurate and detailed version of the 28-day period's events. Therefore, I chose to use three main categories of documents: articles from the Qatar-based media source AlJazeera, tweets in both English and Arabic, and blogs and posts made directly by activists involved in the protests. I compiled a total of 638 documents into a timeline, placing them chronologically by the day they were published in order to build a narrative temporally and visually of what occurred during the revolution's 28-day span.

Unlike the Arab Spring movements in other countries, Tunisia's protests were largely ignored by the mainstream media; most foreign media ignored the protest's events until its final days and Tunisian media was not allowed to report on the protests due to censorship laws. In contrast, AlJazeera was applauded by many, including protesters, for its extensive reporting on the entirety of the Tunisian Arab Spring despite the Tunisian government's censorship efforts, making documents from this news source an essential aspect in building a cohesive timeline of the revolution (@FrontlineCZCT, Jan 11, 2011). AlJazeera's archives can only be

explored through entering relevant search terms. Therefore, I separately entered six search terms which cohesively cover phrases that would have been used in articles written about the revolution: 'Tunisia Arab Spring, Jasmine Revolution, Tunisia Protests, Bouazizi, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, and Tunisia democracy.' These searches yielded a total of 46 articles written within the timeline's bounds, which I then reduced to 42 by removing articles with insufficient relevance to the Tunisian protests.

Apart from AlJazeera, I also found social media outlets to be important sources, especially for conveying first-person accounts of the revolution. Twitter's relevancy in building the Jasmine Revolution's narrative lies within both its function as a platform to spread new information and its ability to give activists a voice. Twitter can be accessed through a 'net client.' The ability to access Twitter in this way is significant because as the government was only able to block specific <http://> addresses, the social media platform acted as a way for Tunisian people to receive news about the protests even at the height of governmental internet censorship. Similarly, many Tunisian activists made use of the platform to spread their message and communicate with each other. The revolution's coverage on Twitter was framed around the use of a single hashtag: #sidibouzig. This hashtag, named after the town in which the protests began, was adopted by activists, journalists, and people watching abroad in order to streamline posts regarding the revolution.

I created a dummy account, or a new Twitter account which followed no one, had not engaged with any other Tweets, and had not searched any other terms, in order to limit the process of data algorithms in the search results. Additionally, I disabled location services, to avoid geographical bias. I then searched the #sidibouzig hashtag under 'Top Tweets' which shows the Tweets with the most engagement, or the highest amount of interaction by users, and collected all of those which were posted within the timeline's dates. I cleaned the data set of Tweets, only keeping those which were directly related to Tunisia's protests. I also ensured that I was not collating Tweets that were not links to articles (especially if these articles were accounted for elsewhere), or were not simply a repost of another Tweet already collected with no additional comment; this process dwindled the starting number of 755 Tweets to 557. It should be noted that the text of Tweets during this time supported right-to-left script, but hashtags during the time of the uprisings were only able to support Latin characters (Tieu 2012). Although I collected and analyzed Tweets in both English and Arabic, the overwhelming majority of them were in English; therefore, this design may have underrepresented the communications of non-English speakers. In addition, I collected 40 total available blog posts that were frequently engaged with by viewers and mentioned by AlJazeera writers and

Tweeters, including publications by Anonymous, Wikileaks, Azyz Amamy's Mon Autre Autre Blog, and Lina Ben Mhenni's A Tunisian Girl. Unfortunately, I faced some limitations in that many of the once highly influential blog posts and online publications are no longer online or are not publicly available 10 years afterward.

Process Tracing

After selecting and collecting these documents, I construct a timeline that describes the sequence of events between December 17, 2010, the day that Mohamed Bouazizi's momentous public act of self-immolation sparked the revolution, to January 14, 2011, the day that President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali fled Tunisia, by chronologically ordering the documents (Beach and Pedersen 2013). This allowed me to create a temporal map of the revolution's events, analyze the data on a chronological level, and focus on Mahoney's emphasis on 'careful description' of each of the 28 days (as cited by Collier 2011, 823). After the construction of this original timeline, I analyse the sequences of events that occurred within this narrative in order to evaluate my two hypotheses, formulated based on the aforementioned theoretical framework:

H1: The interacting combination of violent and civil protest techniques in the Jasmine Revolution was a causal factor in the overthrowing of Ben Ali's regime.

H2: The variation, and then consolidation of demands by protestors across both lower and middle class—what I refer to as a 'cross-class coalition'— in the Jasmine Revolution was a causal factor in the overthrowing of Ben Ali's regime.

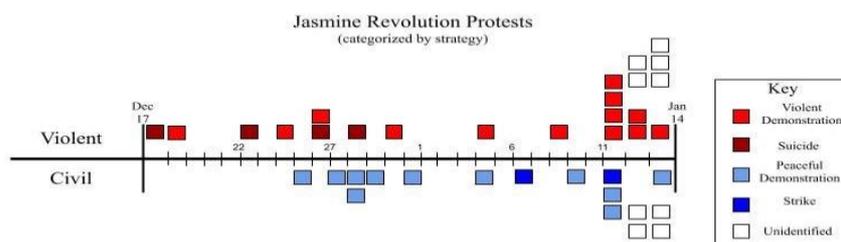
Hypotheses in process tracing can be tested under four different tests, all holding different strengths of prevalence affirmation or causation confirmation as well as implications for rival hypotheses (Collier 2011). Although process tracing methods pride themselves on their ability to identify causal mechanisms, they also advise the caution researchers should take in the confirmation of causal factors. I follow this advice seriously, carefully considering the details of each analysis and hypothesis test in order to correctly identify prevalence versus causation. Through following this method, I extensively analyse the series of actors, actions, and reactions which occurred in the Jasmine Revolution, test my hypothesized causal mechanisms based on these analyses, and produce the following findings.

Analysis

Protest Strategies

Regarding H1, I focus on a timeline tracking different protests that occurred throughout the revolution and the nature of those demonstrations. More specifically, I sort each protest into two categories – civil and violent protest. Violent protests are signified by demonstrations in which acts of violence were initiated by the protesters, including damaging property, throwing objects at policemen, physically harming authorities, or taking their own lives. Civil protests include strikes as well as demonstrations in which none of the aforementioned violent actions were initiated by protesters. Neither of these categories consider the police response to each protest as a factor for placement. If that were the case, the vast majority of protests would fall into the violent category because the police response to the protests often spurred violence regardless of the initial intentions of the protesters. Instead, in order to focus on the operationalization of cross-class and cross-interest coalitions through the presence of both violent and civil protesting strategies, the categories explicitly consider the actions implemented by protesters. Within the timeline, I am able to identify 39 specific instances of individual protests arising where an initial strategy could be pinpointed. Out of these, I categorize 17 protests as being ‘violent,’ 13 as being ‘civil,’ and 9 as indistinguishable in either category. Figure 1 displays a visual representation of this categorization. Each box represents a new protest that broke out with violent protests, marked by red-shaded boxes placed above the line, and civil protests, marked by blue-shaded boxes falling below the line. Alternatively, protests in which strategy could not be determined are marked by white-shaded boxes.

Figure 1: Jasmine Revolution Protests Categorized by Strategy



unemployed college graduate had been stopped by police several times while attempting to sell vegetables and fruit to make a living, and out of frustration, doused himself in gasoline and set himself alight in front of a local government building. Bouazizi's actions set a precedent for future protests deploying more violent means. Three more confirmed suicides over economic frustrations occurred within ten days of Bouazizi's in equally violent fashion, with one man climbing an electricity pylon and '[electrocuting] himself on the cables' and another man committing suicide by throwing himself under a train (AlJazeera 2010b; Darwish 2010). A theme of setting property on fire also followed, as the burning of government buildings, vehicles, and tires in the street became hallmarks of the violent Tunisian protests; the phrase 'Sidi Bouzid is burning' began to be parroted by activists and journalists alike in response to the fiery protests (Mhenni 2010). This literal firepower allowed Tunisian protesters using violence to inflict material damage to the state while avoiding police forces.

Civil protests, on the other hand, were represented by both peaceful demonstrations and strikes. By my rough approximation, whereas violent protests were the measure of desperation for survival needs by poorer groups, civil protests were undertaken by salaried groups more characteristic of the middle class. For instance, many were organized by labor unions or professional organizations. At the same time, this approximation is based on tendencies as there is no hard and fast divide between these groups and their strategies; peaceful demonstrations also occurred on college campuses with student populations and in low-income areas, so the class-standing of all those within violent movements cannot be ensured. This reluctance to approximate strategies as the protest of specific classes is challenged by the consistent presence of both violent and civil protests, as well as the nature of their interactions.

The nature of the interactions between violent and civil protest comes to light in noting that the first civil protest erupted as a response in solidarity with the initial violent protests. Afterward, the violent and civil protests occurred in a back-and-forth iterative sequence, almost in dialogue with one another. As this analysis aims to represent a cross-class coalition through the presence of both violent and civil protest, the dialogic relationship between them reveals an intimate exchange of solidarity throughout the majority of the uprisings. When the revolution reached its final days before the resignation of President Ben Ali, the occurrences of civil and violent protests became more condensed due to the escalation of the conflict. This chaos, beginning on January 11th, 2011 until the 14th, made it impossible to continue to identify a conversational relationship between protesting classes since the protests effectively merged into one face. However, the cross-class collaboration that was born out of differing strategies

and demands showed a merging and redoubling of shared thinking among dissidents of different class standings more than an erosion of the prior relationship. This convergence made it impossible to distinguish the strategies of the majority of protests which occurred in the final two days before Ben Ali's resignation. This inability weakens the hypothesis' strength, but the presence of both violent and civil protest throughout the course of the revolution acted as a causal mechanism for this eventual hybrid of protest strategies, which was a more direct causal factor for Ben Ali's overthrow. Therefore, my first hypothesis passes a Hoop Test, meaning it affirms its relevance in the Jasmine Revolution's transformative result, but fails to confirm it as a causal mechanism (Collier 2011). However, I believe the shortcomings of this hypothesis stemmed more from the binary language I constructed it with rather than its actual merit; in hindsight, refocusing this hypothesis on the consolidation of protest strategies during the revolution's most crucial days, rather than simply the presence of both strategies during the movement, could have produced a stronger confirmation.

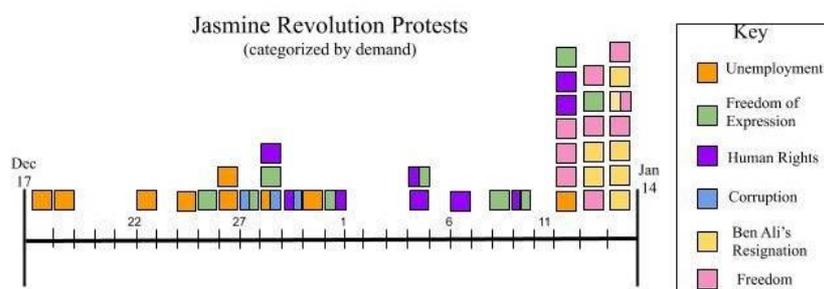
Protest Demands

Regarding H2, I focus on a similar protest timeline as the first, but I look to categorize protests by the nature of demands by protesters rather than the nature of demonstration strategies. I determine these demands by examining official statements from organizers as well as chants and statement information from demonstrators available for each protest. Therefore, some protests include sentiments regarding more than one demand. I identify four main areas of demand: an end to unemployment, freedom of expression, human rights, and an end to corruption. The beginnings of the movement exclusively urged for reform regarding Tunisia's rampant unemployment rates and resulting economic distress, especially for young university graduates and informal workers (AlJazeera 2010a). Unemployment was not an issue that necessarily resonated with protesters of other class standings in Tunisia since it was largely voiced by poorer and informal groups such as street vendors. However, the unemployment protests brought other issues and demands to the forefront that appealed to a more diverse Tunisian audience, including the salaried middle class. The government's response to these initial demonstrations was aggressive, and as videos and news about law enforcement beating and even fatally shooting demonstrators surfaced, two more demands rose.

The demand for freedom of expression became relevant because not only were citizens being punished for expressing their concerns about the government, but also the Tunisian government had implemented Internet blackouts and censorship of media coverage of the

bloody clashes between demonstrators and policemen (Levasseur 2010). This demand's weight increased throughout the revolution as prominent activist bloggers, anti-government musicians, and journalists went missing, were censored, had their accounts stolen, or were arrested by the Tunisian government (Mhenni 2011). The demand for human rights called for the government to stop beating and killing their own people for protesting. Freedom of expression and human rights were often demanded together by protests, as seen on Figure 2. The fourth main demand, an end to corruption, was similarly enabled by the same groups calling for an end to unemployment, but was mainly represented by middle-class groups protesting the government's freedom of expression constraints and human rights violations. Members of Ben Ali's political opposition pointed out that the Tunisian government had claimed that the national GDP had been steadily rising each year despite the country's worsening unemployment problem (AlJazeera 2010c). One month earlier, a series of documents had been released on the WikiLeaks whistleblowing website explaining the details of low-level corruption being executed by Ben Ali's family (U.S. Embassy Tunis 2008). These documents seemed to offer a clear explanation for the economic discrepancies, and protesters expressed newfound anger in their realization of the 'deeply corrupt & repressive police state' they lived under (@AfriNomad, Dec 27, 2010). This demand was not significant on its own; instead, it enabled protests regarding the already discussed demands to increase anger towards the state. A visual of these protests can be seen in Figure 2. Each box represents a new protest which broke out, with different shades symbolizing the main demand expressed by each demonstration. Boxes with more than one shade represent protests which expressed more than one main demand.

Figure 2: Jasmine Revolution Protests Categorized by Demand



The presence of all four of these demands was vital to the revolution's unwillingness to back down despite seemingly effective government responses to the demands. President Ben Ali's

regime announced two main policy changes during the revolution which catered to the demands being made. Only five days after Mohamed Bouazizi's suicide and the ensuing unemployment protests, the Tunisian development minister announced the beginning of a new \$10 million employment program (AlJazeera 2010b). Likewise, on January 10th, President Ben Ali issued a \$5 billion allocation for various development programs as well as the creation of 300,000 extra jobs (Randeree 2011b; Randeree 2011a). These policy changes failed to slow the revolution's momentum, and both of these announcements were followed by a large-scale protest focused on a different demand than the demand attempted to be mitigated by the policy change. In this way, the presence of multiple demands allowed for differing protesting groups to energize each other and therefore the movement as a whole. This phenomenon is apparent through the words of influential texts following both of these policy announcements. After the release of the \$10 million employment program, reputable activist Azyz Amamy (2010a) wrote a reminder of the other reasons to protest, metaphorically spitting on the police abuse of the Tunisian people and thievery and corruption being implemented by government officials. Ben Ali's second major policy announcement regarding mitigating unemployment received a more hostile reminder of the prominent demands for his resignation: 'Ben Ali, we don't need your speeches, we want your silence, forever!' (@Astrubaal, Jan 10, 2011). Additionally, the protesters' unwillingness to let up during the revolution despite policy change revealed a national understanding that neither the middle nor lower classes' demands would be met while the Ben Ali regime was still in power, and the authoritarian regime needed to be held accountable. Tunisian activists emphasized that these promises were merely 'the hollow words of a despot of 23 yrs [sic] who'll say anything to cling to power' (@monaeltahawy, Jan 13, 2011). These statements were significant in the uprisings' transition from demanding policy change to proclaiming that the only acceptable response from President Ben Ali was his resignation.

Two more clear demands, a more general idea of 'freedom' and the resignation of President Ben Ali, emerged within the final days of the movement's narrative. As these two demands began to be more vociferously expressed, they replaced the four which had been prevalent throughout the length of the movement up to this point. These latter demands differ from those already discussed in two main ways. Firstly, they appeal for changes larger than policy within the current regime. A shift occurred in the attitude of protesters regarding the basis of the rights they deserved and if the regime had the authority to determine this merit. Activist Azyz Amamy (2010b) prefaced this shift by discussing Tunisian freedom in terms of 'رزق,' or the nation as a whole which the people are entitled to by God. Soon after, the chants of protesters altered drastically; the once-policy specific shouts had transformed into 'No to Ben Ali even if

we die,' and 'We are not afraid, we are only afraid of God' (Habibi 2011; AlJazeera 2011). These statements are not to be interpreted in a literal religious meaning. Instead, they capture the belief that what the Tunisian people deserve can only be satisfied by something bigger than the Ben Ali regime. Secondly, these demands were no longer based in meeting the different specific 'needs' of classes; instead, the concepts of 'freedom' and the riddance of Ben Ali's regime reflect universal change for the Tunisian people, regardless of class.

This change in perspective displays a true cross-class coalition, rather than just cross-class cooperation. Within my process tracing, I identify that within two days of this demand consolidation, President Ben Ali began to succumb to the increasingly pressing masses, announcing that he would not run for the presidency again, and then fleeing the country less than 24 hours later (Ryan 2011b). Due to this sequence of events, my second hypothesis passes a Smoking-Gun Test, meaning it confirms the causal relationship between demand consolidation and the Jasmine Revolution's transformative result while still acknowledging that other causal factors could also be confirmed (Collier 2011). Therefore, while I concede that demand consolidation, representing cross-class coalition, is not the sole explanation for the uprisings' abilities to overthrow the regime, it was a significant causal factor in pressuring President Ben Ali into surrendering in the case of the Tunisian Arab Spring.

Alternative Hypothesis

While I have confirmed cross-class coalition as a significant causal factor in the Tunisian Arab Spring's transformative outcome, the tests performed by no means confirm cross-class coalition as the sole causal mechanism, or even as a sufficient causal factor. During my analysis, I also note several other factors that plausibly contributed to the Tunisian protesters' ability to overthrow the Ben Ali regime. Therefore, I will further outline two alternative hypotheses based on my process tracing analysis of the Jasmine Revolution. I have not formally tested either of these hypotheses; instead, they reflect observations I made during my analysis that I believe were significant factors in the revolution and could warrant future research on the topic.

My first alternative hypothesis states that features of the regime which existed during Ben Ali's rule in Tunisia enabled the uprising's transformative ability. I make this speculation based on two aspects of the Ben Ali regime which I observed in my analysis. While Ben Ali's regime was an authoritarian dictatorship and the Tunisian people suffered from limited political freedoms, the regime also had some democratic features which enabled the movement.

Tunisia had a rich civil society, especially professional-based organizations, which played a large role in protests, as earlier discussed. The Tunisian General Work Union, the Tunisian Bar Association, and unions within the Tunisian information sector were particularly involved in organizing demonstrations and strikes. This observation brings me to reflect on Varshney's (2002, 286) findings which argue that an active civil society provides a stable 'self-regulating mechanism, even when the state runs into a crisis'; although he focuses on ethnic conflict specifically, one might think that a similar effect would occur among class divisions. However, in a way, civil society did provide stability in the midst of crisis. The demonstrations coordinated by civil organizations, in terms of strategy, were peaceful. Its stability, in this case, was not meant for the state, but for the rest of the resisting citizens.

Secondly, Tunisia was a police state during Ben Ali's regime. While law enforcement committed a myriad of human rights abuses during the protests, protesters did not experience similar oppression from the Tunisian military. Contrastingly, the military remained on good terms with the Tunisian activists, not getting involved in clashes with protesters and even protecting civilians from police forces at times; Tunisian Activist Youssef Gaigi told AlJazeera that by many protesters, 'the military is seen as the savior' (Ryan 2011a). The significance of the military not backing the state is even clearer when considering that this military loyalty to the people was not seen in Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Bahrain's Arab Springs, which all failed to overturn their ruling regimes (Barany 2011, 34). Had the military's loyalties remained with Ben Ali rather than the Tunisian people, it is likely that the violence inflicted on protesters may have been too much to overcome.

My second alternative hypothesis states that Ben Ali's repressive and violent response to protests led to the escalation of the Jasmine Revolution, and therefore, the regime's overthrow. The police forces under the regime committed various atrocities against protesters, such as using expired tear gas or even shooting and killing demonstrators, often under President Ben Ali's direct orders (Bennamate 2011). As discussed in the protest demands section, the revolution began with protests demanding an end to unemployment, almost exclusively supported by working class citizens. The masses backing the revolution did not exponentially increase until violence was inflicted on protesters by police forces, and demonstrations demanding freedom of expression and human rights arose. If Ben Ali's police state had not reacted as violently to the initial protests, the ensuing demonstrations and the cross-class coalition as a whole may have never occurred. Likewise, the regime's kidnapping and arrests of journalists, Internet activists, dissenting musicians, and student activists caused

the escalation of protests demanding freedom of expression. The presence of these repressive actions were a necessary catalyst in the revolution's narrative.

Conclusion

Although as a case-study, this research can only directly contribute to a discussion of the Jasmine Revolution, I believe the overall implications of this project's method and findings provide new insight to scholars considering the ramifications of class and urban citizenship in revolutionary movements. Firstly, my operationalization of theories identifying class differentiation in activism through protest strategies and demands proposes a new perspective on researching class-based activism, while also challenging the field of critical urban geography's dissenting beliefs about the application of situational research as transcendental knowledge. Secondly, my findings provide a glimpse into scholarship concerning the existence of cross-class coalitions in activism in the Global South, which depicts a field of critical urban geography that is vastly uncharted. Even with the use of process tracing, a method largely considered to be neo-positivist by critical urban geographers, this case study's grounding in critical scholarship and thinking makes it indispensable to the field. In the future, I hope to expand on the concepts that I have explored in this paper, especially through the application of interpretivist methodologies and methods. I would also like to explore the long-term effects of the revolution and how the different classes involved in the described coalitions experienced those developments. Despite all this, researchers conduct research because they care about the real-life implications of their studies; similarly, I hope to highlight the bravery of the Jasmine Revolution's revolutionaries and understand the factors which made their efforts fruitful. To quote Asef Bayat's (2017, 227) words regarding the Arab Spring, 'Indeed, the long revolution may have to begin even when the short revolution ends.' Indeed, these findings about the importance of class and citizenship in revolutions marks only the beginning of many battles of both lower and middle classes to have their needs met and their voices heard.

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