

**T.C.
İSTANBUL KÜLTÜR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**ASSESSING THE NORMATIVE POWER OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON
TUNISIAN DEMOCRACY: NAVIGATING LOCAL CHALLENGES AT MAJOR
CROSSROADS**

MA Thesis by

BEN JENNANA MARWENE

2100001669

Department: International Relations

Programme: International Relations

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Cemal ERTÜRK

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KISA ÖZET

Avrupa Birliği ve Tunus arasındaki ortak tarihin, ortak kültürel mirasın yanı sıra karşılıklı yarara dayalı uzun süreli bir ilişkiyi çağrıştırdığı kabul edilmektedir. Ülke, ekonomik ve askeri işbirliği açısından Avrupa Birliği'nin önemli bir tarihsel müttefiki olarak kabul edilmektedir. İkili ilişkiler, daha stratejik bir yakınlaşma için ek bir teşvik unsuru olarak üçüncü bir unsurun ortaya çıktığı 2010 yılının ardından Arap Baharı'nın meydana gelmesine kadar olumlu bir şekilde değerlendirilmiştir. Bu tez, 2011'den 2022'ye kadar olan dönemde Avrupa Birliği'nin (AB) Tunus'ta demokrasinin gelişimi üzerindeki etkisini araştırmaktadır. Temel araştırma sorusu, AB'nin dış yardımının Tunus demokrasisine ne ölçüde fayda sağladığını ortaya koyarken, 2019 rejiminin Avrupa'nın yerel demokratik çerçeveyi uygulamasına verdiği tepkiye ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu soruyu cevaplamak için araştırmacı, Tunus'ta hem devrim öncesi hem de devrim sonrası dönemde çalışmış ve zaman ayırmış diplomatlar ve devlet personeliyle mülakatlar gerçekleştirmiştir. Çalışma, AB'nin Tunus'a modernleştirici bir parametre getirmeye çalıştığını ve bunun için de ülkeye sağlam bir demokrasi yerleştirmeyi amaçlayan mali, siyasi ve teknik yardımlar sağladığını iddia etmektedir. Ancak araştırmacı, AB'nin çabalarının başlangıçta yetersiz olduğunu ve AB yetkililerinin başlangıçtaki söylemleriyle uyuşmadığını tespit etmiştir. Çalışma ayrıca Tunus'taki demokrasi örneğinin, 25 Temmuz 2021'de yaşanan ve ülkeyi tek adam yönetimine geri dönmek zorunda bırakan olaylar nedeniyle zayıfladığını ve bunun başlıca nedeninin yolsuzluk ve COVID-19 salgınının yol açtığı ekonomik sorunlar nedeniyle ulusal meclisin çalışmalarının dondurulması olduğunu savunuyor.

Anahtar sözcükler: Avrupa Birliği, Tunus istisnacılığı, Demokrasi, Normatif Güç, AB dış politikası, Arap Bahar

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ABSTRACT

The shared history between the European Union and Tunisia is widely deemed to evoke a longstanding relation based on mutual benefit as well as common cultural heritage. The country is considered an important historical ally of the European Union in terms of economic and military collaboration. The bilateral relations have been positively assessed until the occurrence of the arab spring in the wake of the year 2010, the period during which a third element emerged as an additional incentive for more strategic approximation. This thesis investigates the impact of the European Union (EU) on the development of democracy in Tunisia during the period from 2011 to 2022. The central research question seeks to elucidate the extent to which the EU's external aid has benefitted Tunisian democracy while shedding light on the responsiveness of the 2019 regime to the European implementation of the domestic democratic framework. To answer this question, In addition, the researcher conducted interviews with diplomats and state personnel from Tunisia who have vested work and time in both the pre-revolution and post-revolution periods. The study contends that the EU sought to bring a modernizing parameter to Tunisia by providing financial, political, and technical aid that sought to install solid democracy in the country. However, the researcher found that the EU's efforts were originally insufficient and non-conforming the initial rhetoric of EU officials. The study also argues that the Tunisian democratic example has been undermined by the events of July 25, 2021, which obliged the country to regress back into one-man rule primarily spearheaded by the freezing of the work of the national assembly due to corruption and economic issues that preceded it caused mainly by the COVID-19 pandemic

Keywords: European Union, Tunisian exceptionalism, Democracy, Normative Power, EU foreign policy, Arab Spring

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSDP	: Common Security and Defense Policy.
EOM	: Election Observation Mission
EU	: European Union.
EC	: European Community
EUP	: European Union Foreign Policy.
UGTT	: Union Général des Travailleurs Tunisiens.
EEAS	: European External Actions Service.
EPRS	: European Parliament Research Service.
EIDHR	: European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.
ENI	: European Neighbourhood Instrument.
EaP	: Eastern Partnership
MFF	: Multiannual Financial Framework.
ENI	: European Neighbourhood Instrument.
ENP	: European Neighbourhood Policy.
EMP	: Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.
DCI	: Development Cooperation Instrument.
MENA	: Middle East & North Africa.
EC	: European Council / European Commission.
CE	: Council of Europe.
NCA	: National Constituent Assembly.
IcSP	: Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace.
NIF	: Neighbourhood Investment Facility.
SNP	: Southern Neighbourhood Policy.
SSR	: Security Sector Reform.
SPRING	: Support to Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth.
NDICI - GE	: Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global.
ICA	: Audiovisual Communication Authority
ISIE	: The Independent High Authority for Elections.
IDH	: The Human Rights Authority.

IDDDGF : The Authority for Sustainable Development and the Rights of Future Generations.

IBOGOLUCC: The Authority for Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption.

IAI : The Access to Information Authority.

INPT : The National Authority for the Prevention of Torture.

INPDP : The National Personal Data Protection Authority.

INLT : The National Authority against Human Trafficking.

INLUCC : The National Authority against Corruption.

HAICA : The Independent High Authority of audiovisual communication.

MFF : EU's Multiannual Financial Framework

TEU : Treaty on European Union

1. Introduction

By the dawn of 2011, the region of North Africa was gravely shaken by an unprecedented political quake that captured the attention of the entirety of the global as well as the regional powers across the globe. The World Bank's Regional Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa, Ferid Belhaj, a Tunisia national senior diplomat and World Bank Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa explained that "the frustrations that ignited the "Arab Spring" predominate compounded by more violence, social unrest, and—in many instances,—weaker, more corrupt governments" (Belhaj, 2021, para. 19) led to a violent downfall of sets of rigid and well-enclosed regimes that hardly anyone predicted a similar ending for. Hence, it is noteworthy to mention that the Arab Spring is deemed to have naturally followed an unconventional pattern of development.

The first spark of the Arab Spring, as a model of revolt and liberalization, has departed from Tunisia and resulted in bringing to the world a Tunisian Model for democratic growth that serves as a blueprint for other countries with shared cultural and ethnic ties in the Arab world. Nevertheless, The Arab revolt unfolded in a cyclical manner, originating in Tunisia as a beacon of freedom and ultimately culminating in forwarding to the international opinion a “new” Tunisia, a unique symbol of democracy and exceptionalism in the region. Hence, Tunisia stood alone as a triumphant example in a historical moment where other attempts had faltered.

In addition to that, the regional unrest could not be understood as a mere separate historical incident that took place abruptly without solid far-reaching reasons. In actuality, preceding that pivotal epoch, the world was standing within the whereabouts of eloping into a new momentum of yearning subsequent to a period of challenging economic hardships has been barely standing to a novelty in world politics and started to recover from the unpleasant aftermaths of the Great Recession in the world economy in the year 2008. Arguably, this incident is deemed to have triggered an alarming global economic downturn that has been considered threatening to world security since the Great Recession during the 1930s of the previous century (R. McNamara & W. Drezner, 2013, p. 155). That being said, it is plausible to detect an interconnectedness between the Great Recession of the 21st century and the Arab Revolution as one of its well-maintained aftermaths. That being said, The reverberations of the economic downfall cannot be deemed as naturally separated from the political orbital

calculations of the great powers in world politics, exemplified by the intercontinental military and diplomatic prowess of the United States of America and the European Union.

Consequently, the stake to highlight is that the economic depression by the closing interlude of the 2000s was quite predictable from an avant-gardist point of view. To support that argument, it is enough to refer to the theoretical acme of Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaldun in this regard. He allocates a peculiar vision to History in his book "Al Muqaddimah," in which he extrapolates that "the downfall as a usual process and says that states, dynasties, nations, and civilizations are like humans so that they are born, grow, die, and others take over their places, and they face the same results, and this process repeats itself again and again" (Önder & Ulaşan, 2018, p. 234). As asserted by the Tunisian philosopher of the 14th century, History always tends to behave in a cyclical model, enabling the visionary "crème de la crème" to anticipate the correlation uniting the economic affluence to the outbreaking of power politics. Put into practice, the ordeal that spanned a wave of collective awakening throughout the majority of the countries of the region of MENA marked colossal unrest by the boundaries of southern Europe that engendered serious recalculations not only for the European Union but also for others influencing external powers.

This thesis undertakes a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the European Union on the development of liberal democracy in Tunisia in the post-revolution era, assuming that representative democracy is considered the most flourished form of inclusivity-based political systems as put forwards by the scholars in the field of democracy and democratization studies. As a central objective, this study targets examining the influence of European normative values in post-revolution Tunisia by tracing the evolution of the political, economic, and technical assistance provided by the European Union as a form of transformative effect on the country, particularly in terms of modernization. The silhouette of the thesis is primarily anchored throughout the two fundamental chapters, among which a co-dependence has been deliberately planned in order to permit not only drawing a comprehensive analysis of the situation but also to allow one chapter to stand as a vis-à-vis the other. This plan is deemed to enable the reader to easily sail through the study and find linkages to capture the shreds of evidence that support the main argument. Inasmuch as the previous logic stands, the second chapter entitled "The Global Role of the European Union: Promoting Democracy in Foreign Policy" serves as a platform to understand the mechanisms of the European Union's Foreign Policy as well as tracing the plausibility of the post-revolutionary phase of bilateralism between both parties. The Third chapter, however, entitled "Tunisian Responsiveness: Exploring the Dynamics of Compliance and Resistance,"

sheds light on the internal policies and arrangements adopted during the 2019-2022 presidential mandate and pays particular attribution to the event of the 25th of July 2021 as it is deemed to be in the origin of obstructing the genesis of the fledging Tunisian democracy. Consequently, it hinders the European Union's positive impactfulness on the country. In this regard, it is primordial to extrapolate the fact that this study considers only the governmental arrangement standing during the time lapse between the years 2019 and 2022. During that particular period, Tunisian politics underwent a groundbreaking ordeal that constructed the crux of the idea of responsiveness in the thesis. It argues that the local political climate in Tunisia has been marked by a palpable opposition to democratic norms, resulting in the dissolution of the Tunisian parliament in 2021, which was a blow to the nascent Tunisian democracy. This development marked the end of Tunisian exceptionalism, and it signaled the resurgence of authoritarian rule under the administration of Kais Saïed. As Tunisia becomes ensnared in a political crisis, questions are being raised about the Tunisian revolution and the EU's role in the transition. This incident, in turn, raises significant questions about the future of Tunisia and the role of the EU in supporting democratic values in the region.

Moreover, it is crucial to bear in mind that the concept of receptivity in inter-state relations constitutes one of the pillar theoretical frameworks of the elaboration of the analysis scheme. It is represented in the case of the studies on the European Union by the “Principle of Conditionality” which permits the researchers to measure the extent to which the 2019-2022 local governance arrangements were resonating in harmony with the principles diffused within the bilateral agreements of the European Union. Resultantly, The second chapter serves as a linkage by which the study is enabled to reach clarifying its main argument.

To analyze democracy in Tunisia, the researcher employed several theories that assist the study to demonstrate the performance of the democratic transition. First of all, the study employs Robert A. Dahl's theory on Polyarchy in order to explain the governmental behavior between 2019 and 2022 in accordance with the parameters forwarded by Dahl. The theory of Polyarchy was also used to showcase how the decline of democracy is threatening the Tunisian image and position vis-a-vis the European Union. In addition, Fareed Zakaria's extrapolation on the intricacies of the “illiberal democracy” was scrutinized and put into practice in order to highlight the type of democracy needed in modern Tunisia and explore the manner in which it matched the EU's approach to the country in post-revolution times.

To scale the decline of democracy in Tunisia, the researcher used two indices of freedom and democracy: the Freedom House Index and the IDEA Index. The study employed the

theoretical knowledge of these indices with the data provided by the National Statistics Agency in Tunisia, which is considered the only primary source of reliable statistics.

The study results in a number of findings. By the early period of the transition to democracy, the research finds that the EU has had a positive yet unfulfilled impact on advancing democracy in Tunisia. Furthermore, the study also refers to the fact that the EU started to deviate from its initial promises to the country after the terrorist attacks in 2015 and resorted back to the neo-realist approach based on safeguarding security in North Africa, with a remarkable decline in the push for democracy. The thesis contends that the hindrance of the democratic growth of Tunisia jeopardizes the civil-power approach of the EU and puts the country on the path of a security-based collaboration with the EU. Additionally, Kais Saïed's seizure of power in 2021 gradually marked the downfall of democracy in the only successful transition model in the MENA region. Thus, this analysis seeks to highlight the hidden political attributes as far as the Tunisian Revolution is concerned, to analyze their consequences, to study their stakeholders, and to determine their likelihood. By thoroughly scrutinizing this emitter-recipient equation, the study is deemed to result in a number of findings that make a valuable contribution to the literature of European Studies from the portal of the Tunisian partnership.

In conclusion, this study provides a critical analysis of the EU's impact on the development of democracy in Tunisia, highlighting its positive impact as well as the challenges faced by the country throughout its democratic transition.

The literature on Tunisian politics is generally perceived as highly limited in terms of scientific research, and the scholarship existing on post-revolution Tunisia is rarely approached from the lenses of the European Union as a global power promoting modernizing ideals. Actually, this study comes in the context of a considerably limited number of unrealized corners in the literature on Tunisian politics, as the inspection conducted beforehand asserts that the approaches taken on Tunisian politics are hugely limited to either the pre-revolution Tunisia during the Ben Ali era or the earliest stages of statecraft in the 1970s in relation to the European involvement. In addition, even the literature existing on post-revolution Tunisia is barely approached from an EU perspective, and it is usually limited to one instrument/mechanism in the EUFP. Consequently, this thesis projects a fully-comprehensive triplet modal with the aim of providing a holistic approach to the EU's impact on modernizing Tunisian state affairs by means of promoting liberal democracy. It contends that the progressive policies of the EU in Tunisia, including the provision of

financial aid, technical assistance, and capacity-building initiatives, have been instrumental in ushering in a new era of political and economic modernization in the country.

The Tunisian revolution has been appealing, since the inception of the Arab Spring, to many scholars, researchers, and political experts who have sought to identify many political and sociological features of this unprecedented transition that took the European Union aback by means of popular revolt over their long-standing allies in North Africa. In this regard, existing literature on political transitions in the region has focused on a range of issues, including democratization, the state-building process, as well as the contribution of external actors, among others, as a form of drive that dragged Tunisia into a Europeanized atmosphere, at least at the level of formalities. Moreover, an important amount of research on the Arab Spring of the existing literature has focused on the broader region rather than on specific countries, leaving a gap in our understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities that different countries face. This study would, however, take Tunisia as a case study in order to limit the scope of research and allocate more validity to Tunisia. The focus on a single country serves to display a more nuanced understanding of the stakes and pitfalls of political transition in the region of MENA and allows, therefore, a plus in the general literature on the Arab Spring. As a matter of fact, my research relates a critical approach as far as the role of external actors (the EU) is concerned while examining the ramifications of its external models of democracy and local political realities. Despite the abundance of research on the topic of the Arab Spring, it is common to identify significant gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the political transition in Tunisia in the post-revolution era, generally and particularly during the late five years of the process. That being said, This study does not, at any stage of the analysis, adopt the overly-used eurosceptic approach when it concerns the view of the EU as an external supporter of Tunisian political emancipation. Instead, it fills the gap of the modernization aspect that presents the EU as an external driving force to the fulfillment of the Democratization process in the country. One of the fundamental contributions of my thesis can be summarized in the fact that it touches upon the ramifications of the EU investments in the EU's mechanisms of democracy promotion and that it measures their plausibility in accordance with the local government's reaction. This aspect indicates the elasticity of the research by maintaining that the EU's external contribution is true of a modernizing and positive impact to drive the country through the multi-layered challenges. In addition to that, The vast majority of researchers and scholars who have examined the Tunisian case are originally not Tunisians. However, being a Tunisian national and having first-hand vividly lived the transition in the country and

witnessed its implications for the development of liberalism in the Arab countries gives this study a privileged approach in contrast to other case studies. Moreover, the fact that the author is able to fully comprehend and speak natively in not only English but also French, Arabic, and Spanish, in addition to German, gives this research a considerable multitude of sources that commonly define a more comprehensive and sturdy analysis. Throughout The analysis, the researcher has been, in fact, enabled to access many resources with more than one language in order to accustom the study with a non biased View. This feature has been argued to be most valuable in. preserving the rationality and scientific knowledgeableness of the study. Last but not least, one of the most groundbreaking advantages of this study can be summarized in its scientific novelty. In actuality, the literature on the EU-Tunisia relations from quantitative research can be traced to vaguely limited timestamps. Almost all of the scholarship is conducted by non-Tunisian scholars during the period of the pre-revolutionary phase, during which the element of democracy assistantship has been almost absent and out of the equation. Therefore, they approach EU-Tunisian relations from a very narrow perspective. However, This study is not only conducted in a timely manner that responds to the urgent needs of the country and the European Union but also integrates diverse and multi-layered approaches, serving as a platform for extrapolating beyond bilateral relations between the two parties in question.

1. Chapter One: Theoretical Framework & Methodology

1.1. Normative Power of the European Union

1.1.2. The European Union's Normative Power and International Influence

The present section proffers an introduction to the notion of normativity within the sphere of external influence of the European Union as a supranational institution. In order to scrutinize the intricate issue of normativity, this analysis is underpinned by Ian Manners' "NPE theory" as its backbone, which will come in handy afterwards for a nuanced interpretation of the EU's impact on Tunisia, particularly during its transitional phase towards democracy.

In discussing normativity, Ian Manners avows that the term "normative" refers to the act of establishing norms as it involves asserting the ideal state of affairs, guiding human behaviour, and striving for integration and improvement in global practices (Manners, 2006, p. 117). Politically, however, it refers to the capability of a particular political entity or international power to establish and shape what is considered "normal" or common practice in international relations. In essence, normativity is a defining characteristic (*idée force*) of an actor's level of activism. In relation to the European Union, debates originating about its normative capability are attached to the tyrannical conceptualization between its "civilian" or "military" might in world politics.

Before delving into the analysis, it is important to capture the reader's attention to the fact that the concept of normative influence within the global arena is not considered a novelty in international relations (Manners, 2002, p. 239). Actually, the literature on European studies began to allocate more attention to the outsider image of the institution and attribute consideration to the fact that the European Union's power is normative in nature, with the ability to disseminate values of liberty, the rule of law, and political diversity beyond its own borders (Tordjman, 2017, p. 178) in a moment when the EU started to exert influence in its neighbouring regions. Its global impact was invariably perceived as inextricably linked to its normative power and ability to shape the political landscape of its adjacent territories by means of diffusion of a collection of standards more closely aligned with the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) than the majority of other participants in global affairs (Manners, 2002, p. 241). Instead, it is incumbent upon us to assess, at first stance, the illustration of the "actorness" criteria of the European Union and bridges its implications on its defining features, also known as the "identity."

Ian Manners is a prominent political scientist specializing in international relations. He is famous for theorizing on the Normative Power of the European Union. He delves particularly into deciphering the interdependence between the EU's internal governance and its external actions, arguing that the EU's ability to project normative power depends on its ability to maintain legitimacy and coherence at home. Manners' approach is unique in that he views the EU's influence not merely as limited to its economic and military capabilities in the international arena. Instead, he posits that the Union is able to propagate a multitude of ideas and norms to countries. In his works, Manners highlight that he firmly believed that this characteristic of international influence determined fundamentally different ways of

conceiving and understanding the European Union in the international arena. He argues that there are four factors that constitute the normative power of the EU.

Manners identifies historical context, hybrid polity, political-legal constitution, and a commitment to universal norms and principles as the main factors contributing to the EU's normative power.

He argues that several factors contribute to the EU's unique ability to shape and influence global norms. Actually, the historical context of the EU engendered by a post-war environment is chiefly characterized by a severe desire to stand in an astringent challenge to the re-emergence of devastating conflicts and racial genocide exemplified by Nazi Germany's violations of human rights, which has influenced the EU's normative power to a considerable extent and its focus on fostering cooperation and stability over the escalation of power struggle in the continent. Furthermore, the EU represents a new and different form of a political entity, transcending beyond the traditional Westphalian understanding of norms. It is actually crafted, since its inception on the basis of a hybrid of supranational and intergovernmental forms of governance. This unique structure paves the way for greater collaboration and integration among its Member States, enabling the EU to act as a normative power in the international sphere. The EU's legal constitution, an elite-driven, treaty-based legal order, enshrines a bundle of principles such as democracy, the rule of law, social justice, and respect for human rights in its foundational documents, making these constitutional norms central to the EU's international identity and shaping its interactions with other global actors.

Last but not least, Manners highlights the EU's dedication to promoting universal norms and principles in its relations with both its Member States and the wider world, with foreign and development policy objectives focusing on the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The EU pursues these norms in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the principles of the United Nations Charter, making its commitment to universal values a key aspect of its normative power. These factors, working in concert, have allowed the EU to become a unique and influential actor in global politics, shaping and promoting norms and values that foster peace, cooperation, and human rights.

1.1.3. The Imperative of Democracy Promotion in EU Foreign Policy

The institutionalization of democracy promotion within the southern Neighbourhood region is most aptly comprehended as a supple defensive stratagem against the retrogressive currents that encircle the periphery of the European continent. More specifically, the European Union has utilized all available means at its disposal to bolster democratic ideals and the progression towards democratic governance on a global scale (Zamfir, 2018, p. 1) in order to ensure constancy and engender a commensurate degree of economic prosperity that can serve as an assurance of affluence, a specific method is applied to the nations of North Africa. This methodology, as it pertains to the Euro-Southern Mediterranean countries, is chiefly forged as a mutually advantageous approach. Put another way, the Euro-Southern Mediterranean alliance is predominantly governed by a conditional strategy. In this context, it is imperative to differentiate European conditionality from the process of Europeanization concerning Tunisia. By engendering a particular standard of living that would safeguard the region against any pernicious ideals that may jeopardize the supranational position of the EU in the region, the significance of promoting democracy in maintaining a necessary dynamism and cultivating a healthy sense of mutuality between the European Union and the Southern Mediterranean nations, specifically Tunisia, cannot be overstated. In consonance with this overarching vision, the recent statistics on the dissonance between expectation and perception illustrate the imperative for the European Union to adopt a global role as a promoter of peace across the globe.

In theoretical terms, the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty earmarked a monumental milestone in the annals of the European Union. Since 2007, the pursuit of an important milestone that characterizes the Union's rapport with its external associates has been appended to the political agenda of the European Council: namely, the advancement of liberal democracy.

The ultimate objective of advocating such a notion is explicated by the words of Francis Fukuyama, who extrapolates that a global community consisting of liberal democracies would likely have a diminished motivation for conflict, as all states would mutually acknowledge each other's legitimacy (Fukuyama, 1992, p. XX).

In conclusion, the European Union's institutionalization of democracy promotion in Tunisia is a defensive strategy against regressive forces that pose a threat to the stability of the Southern Mediterranean region. By promoting democracy and maintaining shared norms, the EU and Tunisia can work towards ensuring economic prosperity and security in the region. To this end, differentiating European conditionality from the process of Europeanization is allocated

a considerable amount of seriousness by the dint of dissipating the fog around the concept with which the EU maintains a healthy sense of mutuality with Tunisia. In light of these developments, it is crucial for the EU to continue to prioritize the promotion of democracy in Tunisia as a means of safeguarding traditional shared norms between the two parties as well as maintaining security in the Mediterranean region. The EU's conditional strategy towards the Southern Mediterranean alliance must continue to be focused on mutual benefit, ensuring the stability and prosperity of both the EU and Tunisia.

1.2. Democracy Promotion in EU Foreign Policy

1.2.1. Demystifying Democracy: A Definition of the Complex Concept of Democracy

From a theoretical standpoint, the origins of the term can be traced back to the nation-state in the ancient Athenian city-state, where collective decisions were made through an active, inclusive, participatory process, most notably through the "Agora." However, the archaic etymology associated with the term "democracy" is a combination of the Greek words *dêmos* (δῆμος) and *Kratos* (Κράτος), which imply the rule of the people. Consequently, it can be maintained that democracy is a form of government that espouses a profound concept of popular sovereignty, thereby providing a substantive response to the perennial question of "who rules?" (Owen, 2003, p. 105).

Besides, Constitutional democracy derives its legitimacy from the rights it is conferred upon the average citizen as per the dictates of the official gazette that governs the supreme doctrine of each country. As a result, it can also be defined as a political system in which the power and authority are vested in the hands of the people, who exercise their power either directly or indirectly through a system of representation. Perhaps Joseph Schumpeter puts forwards one of the most delicately structured depictions of the minimalist depiction of democracy in his book "Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy". He propels the idea that mere political democracy is of great necessity and that the elimination of that power will result at the end of the "exploitation of man by man" and bring about the "rule of the people (Schumpeter, 1994, p. 235). Put in other words, classic conceptions of democracy are, in fact, archaic in a pejorative understanding in terms of validity. That is to say that the evolution of the concept is deemed to be loaded with multiple inborn disfigurements, exemplified mainly by the fact that it seeks to solely focus on popular participation and representation, which is inherently flawed according to his view.

In more contemporary parlance, however, the literature reveals that modern democracy is accompanied by complimentary parameters that result in offering a more profound understanding of the concept of the "rule of people". In light of that attribution, it is possible to identify a number of core values that advance this unilateral perception. The literature on Democracy studies also advances political equality, popular sovereignty, and the protection of individual rights and freedoms. This perspective demarks a more profound view of

democracy that is not limited to a set of formal institutions and procedures. Instead, it highlights that it encapsulates a set of values, attitudes, and practices that promote the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness. The crux of the idea displays that the latter is not contingent upon particular forms and sets of powers but rather on the fundamental principles upon which political association is founded (Merriam, 1941, p. 309).

In a democratic society, citizens have the right to participate in the decision-making process, hold their leaders accountable, and freely express their opinions without fear of persecution or censorship.

The features of modern democracy stand upon a plethora of characteristics. It requires a vibrant civil society, free and independent media, as well as an educated and engaged citizenry. This view englobes the feasibility of the alternative force of democracy as a mechanism of checks and balances that assures the protection of civil liberties, the rule of law, and equal access to political participation and decision-making by various means, exemplified by the establishment of NGOs and the prominent role of national syndical bodies. Democratic societies are characterized by an open and competitive political scene, a strong and independent judiciary, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Additionally, an independent judiciary branch is of the utmost injunction for a functional democracy to ensure equitable enforcement of laws and safeguard citizens' rights.

In conclusion, democracy is defined as a complex and multifaceted concept that embodies a range of political, social, and cultural values and practices. Although it is not broadly acknowledged to be the epitome of a successful universal model, many of the world's great powers have been dragged into a series of democratization waves as advanced by Huntington. Moreover, democracy is a dynamic and evolving system that has been instigated, promoted, and instituted by a select few, and as such, it cannot be presented in an ideal form during its initial stages (Shuifa & Jinglei, 2008, p. 2) to respond to the changing needs and aspirations of the people. Despite its challenges and limitations, democracy remains the most effective and legitimate form of governance that ensures the protection of individual liberties and the pursuit of the common good.

1.2.2. Exploring the Variations of Democracy: Detecting the Nuanced Disparities between Liberal and Constitutional Democracy

While the term 'democracy' commonly evokes the notion of an election-based system, its true meaning encompasses a plethora of political variations, as understood in the field of political science. Numerous scholars have theorized about democracy and its practical applications, but few have acknowledged that democracy is, in fact, a comprehensive concept that encapsulates different political mainstream variations. The American political scholar Conrad P. Waligorski provides a comprehensive classification of diverse democratic systems that can be tailored to cater to various requirements, including "liberal democracy, constitutional democracy, participatory democracy, direct democracy, representative democracy, economic democracy, social democracy, elite democracy, majoritarian democracy, mass democracy, limited democracy, and people's democracy" (Waligorski, 1990, p. 101). It is a foregone conclusion that the bedrock of democracy lies in the conduct of open, equitable, and impartial elections, which constitute the ineluctable sine qua non, or essential prerequisite, of a democratic system (Huntington, 1991, p. 9) to form a constitutional democracy.

Fareed Zakaria, an esteemed 58-year-old Harvard University alumnus, is an American journalist and highly-regarded scholar of international relations, international trade, and the foreign policy of the United States of America. He postulated a number of academic contributions on the type of democracy espoused by European foreign policy. In 1997, he penned an article titled "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," in which he stressed that the concept of democracy should not be seen as a mere regulatory process that distributes political power across the various branches of the state body. Zakaria argued that our comprehension of democracy must go beyond the traditional unilateral notion that equates it with electoral processes and political representation. Bestowing, thus, upon the inclination of constitutional democracy. He emphasizes that this shortage of liberal approach drags democracy to just be a simple form of governance in which the powerholders are equal consociates and possess a joint capacity to rule, either directly or via intermediaries (Owen, 2003, p. 107). The perplexing and tyrannical understanding of democracy has long posed a significant challenge for political science scholars and philosophers ever since its emergence in world politics following the end of the Cold War in 1991.

Needless to say, the comprehension of the concept of democracy has been subject to the narrow interpretations of the old autocratic government that was distinguished by serious flaws and irrationalities that culminated in their ultimate downfall. It could be argued that

liberal democracy was comparatively devoid of such fundamental internal contradictions (Fukuyama, 1992, p. XI). In opposition to that understanding, the concept of democracy has been taken in third-world countries to infer an elections-based process that guarantees legitimacy for the power-holder. This perception can arguably be deemed as not only illiberal but also unfaithful to the inclusive character that has been put forward by the authenticity of the concept. Its validity is limited to just guaranteeing the electoral body a sense of confidence and reassurance vis-à-vis the ruler's powers. Withall, scholars agree that this approach merely postulates this concept alone, which is inadequate in comprehending the phenomenon of democracy (Fukuyama, 1992, p. XV). This criterion stands in stark contrast to how liberalization in Western philosophy equates political representation with a wave of liberties.

In accordance with the antecedent definition, Fareed Zakaria avers that the application of a conventional democracy which exclusively adheres to a few cardinal elements can constitute a disquieting phenomenon in the realm of international affairs (Zakaria, 1997, p. 22) as it counterpoises the emphasized characteristics of what he terms a "liberal democracy". In a broad understanding, liberal democracy is traced back rooted in the rich history of the Western tradition that aims to safeguard a person's self-determination and respect against any form of force, whether it stems from the government, religious institutions, or the community at large (Zakaria, 1997, p. 26).

Fareed Zakaria dissects the historical correlation between democracy and constitutional liberalism, highlighting the nuanced interplay between the two. In order to attain that level of comprehensiveness, the notion of democracy is more aptly perceived as a political framework distinguished not solely by democratic elections but additionally by the rule of law, the division of powers, and the safeguarding of fundamental liberties, including freedom of expression, assembly, religion, and property (Zakaria, 1997, p. 22). The issue of liberalism in the context of democratic governance is a complex calculus of power dynamics between the ruling elites and the common masses who fall within the purview of the state's jurisdiction. Nonetheless, this election-focused conception of democracy is flawed for its limiting character as it overlooks the crucial cluster of entitlements that span various aspects of civil liberties and rights, elevating the average citizen from the position of a mere participant in the policymaking procedure to a privileged status of citizenship. Consequently, this perception can be observed whereby the term "democracy" is transformed from a descriptive category to a symbol of prestige or distinction (Zakaria, 1997, p. 25) for political agenda.

In Summation, the scrutiny bestowed upon the various views on democracy reveals one essential point of dissemblance that make each variation discussed above navigate a crossroads of differences. Whilst Liberal Democracy places a strong emphasis on individual rights and freedoms, Constitutional democracy allocates more focus on the rule of law and the separation of powers.

1.2.3. Participatory democracy: an alternative or a solution?

Participatory democracy is ubiquitously defined as a political system that puts particular emphasis on the straightforwardness characteristic of inclusive politics. In actuality, The voluminous literature about this type of inclusive governing system suggests that it is now a widely ideal (**Wolfe, 1985, p. 370**). In essence, the concept is centralised on the elements of direct participation of the citizenry in government decisions throughout various forms with the aim of gaining an impulse for development (**Council of Europe, n.d, para. 1**). In addition, it draws inspiration from ancient democratic practices like the aforementioned Athenian modal of democracy (Agora). Breadthwise, participatory democracy is still hanging upon the downfall of the representative democracy. Actually, it is deemed to be less widespread form of inclusive governance compared to the other variations of inclusive systems. However, it provides a solid alternative to other forms of inclusive affiliations that cannot rest upon defiant characteristics of the common jurisdictional bounds of regular democracy. In this respect, “government regulation should be subject to constitutional scrutiny” (**Post, 2011, p. 478**) in order to ensure the equilibrium between statehood and popular sovereignty as forwarded by the French Political thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his work “The Social Contract”. Actually, it stands in stark contrast to the representative modal of democracy in which elected officials have delegated the power to make decisions and initiate laws on behalf of the citizens in a vivid political network. In this regard, participatory democracy aims at addressing the limitations and challenges imposed by traditional representative democracy, exemplified by the potential for political apathy, disengagement, and a sense of disconnection between the government and its citizens.

Furthermore, “Participatory democracy” is deemed to be accustomed to various forms through which it can be promptly englobed and satisfied at the level of its elementary parameters. Put in simpler terms, the participatory aspect of democracy is applied at different levels of governance, ranging from local, and regional communities as well as the national

governments. In addition to that, it offers a profuse of benefits that contribute to the strengthening of democratic governance and reinforce the principle of citizen empowerment. Scholarships on representative democracy, exemplified by Daniel J. Fiorino (2019), Frank N. Laird (1993) and Thomas C. Beierle and Jerry Cayford (2002) have identified a panoply of advantages of participation for democratic decision-making. The most striking feature of the participatory aspect of democracy is that it allows a greater degree of direct citizen involvement in the political process. Despite the fact that it encompasses a wide range of mechanisms and practices, it, nevertheless, safeguards the principle that the ultimate objective “is always to engage citizens or civil society actors in local, regional, or national decision-making processes” (**Council of Europe, n.d, para. 2**). These features are exemplified by a number of initiatives such as citizen assemblies, town hall meetings, citizen juries and deliberative polls, regional or national budgeting, public consultations, and (more recently) e-participation platforms. Actually, this aspect of heightened citizen involvement leads to a more profound sense of ownership, civic duty, and collective responsibility for the well-being of the community or society. Consequently, participatory democracy is recognized to enhance political inclusivity providing a solid platform for diverse viewpoints to be heard and considered in the existing forms of representation discussed in the previous discussion on forms of participatory democracy. Another potential stake to highlight, at this point, is that participatory democracy is an efficient tool for improving accountability upon the higher authority. Thus, it guarantees more nuanced, innovative, and well-informed policy choices.

However, participatory democracy still encapsulates the sum of constraints and challenges that are hindering its feasibility and adaptability to an international modal of representation are among the hurdles that need to be addressed. The drawbacks of participatory democracy crumble in the constraints imposed by time and resources, the potential inequality, the unbalance between the technocratic acme and popular opinion as well as the diversity of the opinions. To begin with, by definition, participatory democracy demands a viable and engaged citizenry that participates in the decision-making processes via various forms. However, organizing, managing, and implementing these processes require time and resources which are deemed to be one major detected drawback in the literature about participatory democracy. In a complementary understanding, the diversity of opinion can be a major obstacle towards fulfilling the inclusive criterium of participatory democracy as it can enhance time consumption. For instance, the multiplicity of wide range of opinions and interests can obstruct the natural proceeding of the process. While this diversity can be a

strength, it can also make reaching consensus difficult. Balancing conflicting views and ensuring fair representation can be challenging.

In large communities, gathering opinions and reaching a consensus can be time-consuming. Moreover, the logistics, technology, and human resources necessary can also be costly and require logistic needs. Furthermore, when delving into the intricacies, it is crucial to bear in mind that not all citizens have the same capacity or willingness to participate in the democratic process. Hence, multiple factors are exemplified in the level of education, socioeconomic status as well as the level of accessibility to the manifestations of these democratic events. The sum of these parameters can create disparities in who gets to participate and thus make nefast implications on the perception of "Participatory Democracy". Additionally, technical or specialized issues where input from experts is required can go in stark contrast to popular opinion. In this regard, participatory democracy can impose a threat to its core characteristic as it aligns with "populism".

In summation, the scholarship on participatory democracy is considered a major field of study that has been extensively researched. Despite the aforementioned disfigurements, participatory democracy can be a valuable tool for improving democracy. It can help to increase citizen engagement, build trust between citizens and government, and make better decisions.

1.3. Methodology

The present study follows a case study research design to examine the normative power of the EU and its impact on the development of liberal democracy in Tunisia. This pattern has been effective in ensuring the internal validity of the analyses presented as it allows for a comprehensive analysis of complex issues in their real-life context.

As far as the Data collection is concerned, the utilization of a mixed approach (content analysis and statistical analysis.) has been adopted throughout the research. Content analysis is a research method that involves the systematic examination of texts or other forms of communication to identify patterns, themes, and meanings. This method was used to analyze the primary and secondary sources of data, including reports of the European Union's institutions and the assessments of the Freedom House and IDEA Institute, to identify relevant themes and trends. Statistical analysis, on the other hand, is a research method that

involves the use of mathematical models and techniques to analyze and interpret data. In this study, statistical analysis was utilized to analyze the GDP growth rate in Tunisia over time to assess the impact of democracy on economic growth. Microsoft Excel was the tool used to create diagrams that summarize the data from the Freedom House assessment, making it easier to understand and interpret. Moreover, the researcher chiefly employed the concepts of the Normative Power of the European Union as it was the rationale through which the study assumes that multifaceted support for democratic reforms was channeled to post-revolution Tunisia. It is through a range of mechanisms that the EU has actively contributed to the democratic metamorphosis in Tunisia. In addition, the support of the main argument was reached by analyzing and interpreting scholarly papers on European studies, and reports of the EU institutions related to Tunisia. Several academic references, exemplified by the books of Francis Fukuyama's "The End of History and the Last Man", Robert. Alan Dahl's "Polyarchy" were explored in order to explain the intercorrelation between democracy growth and wealth.

By triangulating different data sources and using a mixed-methods approach, the study aims at enhancing the validity and robustness of the findings. This approach minimized potential biases and errors, ensuring that the research findings were both reliable and valid. The operationalization of key concepts and academic theories, including definitions of 'Normative Power' and indicators of 'democracy', are carefully examined and measured based on well-established theories and prior research in the field of European studies.

The researcher also resorted to a quantitative approach via measuring Tunisia's GDP trends and applying the theoretical knowledge provided by the theory of "Polyarchy" and confirming the data according to democracy indices in order to affirm that democracy in Tunisia is falling, and the fall of democracy is directly linked to the dissolution of the parliament in 2021. The democracy index of the Freedom House and IDEA Institute are also utilized to confirm the hindering aspect of the local measurements taken under Saïed's administration concerning the conditionality with the EU. The study opted for conducting semi-structured interviews as one of the methods utilized in the data collection process. The sample group of interviews consisted of three experts in the field: Dr Radwan Masmoudi, a Tunisian political activist and Head of the Center of Research in Political Sciences about Islam and Democracy in the United States of America. Mr Kemal Jendoubi, former Head of the ISIE (the National Organism of Election) in two distinguished historical events the Tunisian democracy (the parliamentary as well as the presidential elections in both years

2011 and 2014). Dr Hatem Nafti, a Tunisian political activist and renowned author on Tunisian model of transition to democracy in particular and Tunisian politics in general.

Furthermore, the research design addressed the ethical considerations and took measures to ensure ethical research practices. Semi-structured interviews were employed on account of allowing for a detailed comprehension of the EU-Tunisia relationship, as well as the factors that have contributed to the evolution of Tunisia's democratic process. The choice of semi-structured interviews was rationalized thanks to its flexibility and provision for an adaptable method of data collection, which permits in-depth exploration of complex topics. In this context, the experts who were interviewed provided valuable insights that dug into the historical context of the EU-Tunisia relationship by which a constructive discussion about the current state of democracy in Tunisia was reached. Additionally, the interviewees' contribution reflected on the general atmosphere that served the hindering democracy in the country and delved extensively into examining the causes as well as the implications of democratic obstruction as put forth by the 2022 amendments. The interviews also provided an opportunity to examine potential sources of bias or limitations in the research design, data collection, and data analysis. In conclusion, semi-structured interviews were an efficient means of data collection throughout this study as they allowed for a deeper understanding of the EU-Tunisia relationship and the factors that have contributed to the evolution of Tunisia's democratic process.

Overall, the use of content analysis and statistical analysis in this study, in conjunction with the application of theoretical frameworks, allowed for a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the data collected, leading to a deeper understanding of the impact of the EU on the development of liberal democracy in Tunisia.

1. Chapter Two: The Global Role of the European Union: Promoting Democracy in Foreign Policy

2.1. The European Union's Foreign Policy and Neighborhood Policy

2.1.1. The European foreign policy: An Overview

It is imperative to commence the analysis at this stage by briefly outlining the relationship between the European Union and its international counterparts. This initial step is crucial as it allows the analysis to swiftly transition from a broad perspective, as discussed above, to a more focused region-based discussion. Thus, this section will first address European foreign policy and its historical development since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 among the founding countries of the European Union.

The role of the European Union (EU) can be initially perceived as an extant supranational institution within the net of international actors, exerting a substantial influence on the evolution of international relations. With that in mind, it is crucial to begin by captivating the reader's attention to the fact that "the collectivity known as the European Union, however, is nowhere near a unified system (with, say, a single European foreign ministry)" (Smith, 2003, p. 240). Hence, the multifaceted role of the EU in the global political arena can be discerned in a multiplicity of scenarios in world politics.

The craft of foreign policy refers to a broad and flexible umbrella term encompassing a variety of potential interpretations (Davidson & Gordon, 1998, p. 184) that denotes a plethora of complex process that has been the result of the inauguration of the EU in 1992. Prior to delving into the diplomatic facet of the EU's imprint in world politics, it is highly important to talk about the European Union as global power of high politics.

The EU can be regarded as a driving force striving to advance peace worldwide through various means. The ramifications of the EU's internal policies are palpable in promoting internal as well as external tranquillity amidst long-standing adversaries. This depiction

encapsulates the peace and stability mission of the EU on a global scale. As a matter of fact, the stabilizing effect of the EU can be traced back even earlier, since the establishment of the European Community and the imposition of economic interests on its members to counteract the propagation of communist ideals in countries such as Greece and Türkiye during the early 1950s. The genesis of the European Union (EU) can be traced back to the 1960s when the European Economic Community (EEC) emerged during the latter part of the 1950s. The primary aim was to counter the hyper-militaristic expansion of Germany in Europe, with the primary objective of creating a conglomerate of European resources to obstruct the emergence of new, threatening ideologies on the continent that could align with Nazism. In a similar vein, the process of European integration serves as another exemplar of the promotion of peace and stability. Actually, This institution was established as a reactionary force during the mid-20th century in order to escape the scourge of "total war" and nationalist hysteria (Lenz, 2018, p. 3). In fact, the EU has been a steadfast cornerstone in eradicating the deadly hostilities among European nations. Launching into the process of European integration helped prevent so many tensions between Western European countries and encouraged the integration of former Warsaw Pact nations into the European Union, predicated on both political and economic justifications.

Hence, we can infer that the European Union's most significant imprint on the global stage is perceived to be of a modernizing and peacekeeping nature.

With that in mind, the European Union developed a handful of strategies to permit its structures to conduct affairs with not only its member countries but also to act beyond the confines of its member and aspirant nations (Schimmelfennig, 2009, p. 5) to differentiate a set of tailored measures towards its surrounding regions. At the formal level, it has undergone constant upgrades throughout the multiple phases and crises that have confronted the EU's role in the world on numerous occasions. In light of this fact, it is essential to understand the EU foreign policy as not solely military arrangements, translated by the "Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) but also from a wider range of areas pertaining to what used to be the first pillar" (Aoun et al., 2015, p. 150). Thus, we can affirm that EU measures, considered the dependent factor, encompassing physical safety, financial well-being, and value promotion, make up the EU's Grand Strategy. Four more principles, such as social unity, combating discrimination, sustainable growth, and effective administration, are derived from the *acquis communautaire* (Ekiz, 2022, p. 718)

The foreign policy of the European Union is marked by two fundamental characteristics that give rise to specific dynamics unique to this international power. It is conducted at both

national and institutional levels, resulting in combining the "multilevel" as well as "multifaceted" aspects that facilitate cooperation across a range of fields by means of a particular set of the EU's foreign policy toolbox (Pearce, 2007, p. 7). In this context, the term "multilevel" brings forth to the reader's mind that the EU's might on the European zone as well as the neighbouring regions, while the term "multifaceted" refers to the fact that it conducts many missions of different natures. Notably, the mission of maintaining security through its CSDP, the promotion of its norms in the surrounding regions, the diplomatic mediation, etc.

Consequently, the literature on EU studies extrapolates two different fundamental perspectives that are enshrined within the rationale behind the knitting of the EUFP. The EU traces conducting its foreign affairs from either a "Normative" approach or a "Civilian power" approach. Examining the fundamental difference between these two approaches is essential for understanding the European Union's position towards its partner country and the nature of its cooperation. Based on this assessment, the EU's response to its counterpart can involve the use of coercive instruments such as military action or the application of soft power tools such as diplomacy and financial assistance.

In terms of the European Union's approach to the Southern Mediterranean region, there have been several initiatives and agreements over the years that provide a comprehensive overview of the evolution of Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Date	Initiative/Agreement	Interpretation
1992	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)	Aims to foster political, social, and economic cooperation
1995	Barcelona Agreement	Creating a free trade area and promoting political and social cooperation between the European Union and 12 Southern Mediterranean countries.
2003	European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)	Aims to deepen relations with 16 neighboring countries
2004	EU-Morocco Action Plan	Deepens political cooperation and economic integration
2005	EU-Tunisia Action Plan	Deepens political cooperation and economic integration

2007	Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)	Aims to strengthen regional cooperation and integration
2010	Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean	Supports democratic reforms and economic development
2011	Southern Neighborhood Initiative (part of the SNP)	Aims to strengthen democracy, human rights, and economic development
2015	European Agenda on Migration	Aims to manage migration flows and improve cooperation on migration issues
2020	New Agenda for the Mediterranean	Aims to strengthen cooperation on climate change, energy, digitalization, and socio-economic development

Table 1: Key Initiatives and Agreements in Euro-Mediterranean Relations: 1992-2020
(Author's own elaboration)

2.1.2. The European Neighbourhood Policy: Balancing Normative Power and Realist Constraints

Ensuring the fifth enlargement in 2004, the elaboration of the European Neighbourhood Policy originally emanates from the elaboration of the concept of "proximity policy," initially coined by Britain in 2003 in the context of extending the European influence to the neighbouring regions while avoiding the political and economic challenges of full membership. The British discourse highlighted the need to construct the "European Ring of Friends" pertaining to a set of security-oriented purposes. In this context, it is fundamental to refer to the fact that the adoption of the ENP was conceived a mere eight years following the adoption of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Barcelona Process in November 1995 (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 170). It came as an extension to the instrument of the EMP, which Merely incorporates enticements set within an environment of constructive conditionality, demonstrating a more proactive involvement from the EU (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 172)

Prior to conducting assessments on the promises and pitfalls of the implications of the Barcelona process on the development of the EU-Mediterranean relations, it is vital to extrapolate on the historical circumstances concerning its ratification in order to easily track the shift in Foreign policy between the two parties afterward.

Commonly referred to by its acronym ENP, it functions under the auspices of the European Union in a theoretical capacity within the field of international relations. It was inaugurated in the year 2004 with the primary objective of nurturing and advancing stability, security, and affluence in the EU's neighbouring regions, encompassing both the southern and eastern peripheries (Strategic Communications, 2021, para. 1). Situated under the aegis of the European Foreign and Security Policy, the European Neighbourhood Policy constitutes one of the tools that function under the jurisdiction of the European External Action Service (EEAS), enabling the Union to carry out its affairs and encompasses an intricate nexus of diplomatic, economic, and social linkages that interconnect the European Union's twenty-seven constituent member states with a cluster of neighbouring countries positioned in its immediate external periphery (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 169). Whilst the primal objective of the ENP is determined to foster stability, security as well as prosperity, it is also evident that promoting universal values. The principles ingrained in EU legislation and strategies include peace, freedom, democratic governance, adherence to legal standards, and the observance of human rights (Ekiz, 2022, p. 718)

are classified on the agenda of the EUFP. Regarding this matter, European studies literature contends that there is a correlation between the aforementioned instrument and the extent of clout it affords the European Union.

In this vein, the theoretical approach to the ENP intrigues a set of debatable features, compounded by the recurring scrutiny of the EU's normativity in world politics, that may wither its capacity to fulfill the EU's objectives in both the long and short runs.

To begin with, the instrument of the European Neighbourhood Policy is often taken by reviewers to need more funds, and this aspect can control the level of its positive impactfulness in the long term. It is sustained by means of a combination of financial resources stemming from the European Union budget as well as relying on funds derived from individual member states with varying levels of funding over time. Thus, even though the budget allocated to empower the ENP is comprised of various donors, it may not be enough to endure the regional challenges it is supposed to fix. This shortcoming often generates debates among EU member states and lessens the reliability of the instrument to challenge regional pressures. Therefore, the issue of adaptability arises from that reading.

Due to its recurrent unstable funding, the European Neighbourhood Policy has undergone a number of revisions since its launch in the year 2004. The incapacity of the policy to acclimatize to evolving circumstances or efficaciously grapple with hurdles in the neighbouring countries holds the potential to erode the European Union's normative might while sabotaging its endeavours to advance stability, security, and affluence in these regions. The core concept of the EU's openness to its surroundings brings to the table the problem of equity and differentiation as well. Taking into account that the EU's approach to its neighbouring regions is distinct from its strategies in the broader international arena and internally within the EU (Ekiz, 2022, p. 718), we can affirm that such a predicament, in turn, may wield deleterious repercussions on the Union's rapport with its neighbours and its faculty to sway the trajectory of events in these nations. Moreover, the scholarship on European study detects an additional defect that can be drawn out of the extension of the ENP. It is frequently regarded as an alternative to EU expansion, given that it provides the prospect of a privileged partnership with the European Union in place of complete accession. Conversely, some scholars in the field of international relations contend that the merits of the new instrument far outweigh its drawbacks, especially in terms of modernization for the regions concerned.

Withall, Despite the avant-gardist logic behind the construction of the European Neighbourhood Policy, we can maintain that a number of geopolitical, financial as well as adaptability salient hurdles arise in the depiction of the limitation of its multi-layered aspect. Upon a thorough analysis of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its historical context, this section will shift the focus from theoretical interpretations to a closer examination of one of its sub-instruments - the Southern Neighbourhood Policy (SNP).

Several instruments of different natures can be identified that serve as a linkage between the European Union and its adjacent regions. For instance, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), Association Agreements, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs), Mobility Partnerships, Eastern Partnership (EaP), as well as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Consequently, The following section will address the transition from the ENP to SNP.

As a subset of the early-established ENP, the SNP ensures a high degree of interconnectivity between Europe and Mediterranean neighbours. Therefore, the Southern Neighbourhood Policy inscribes a deep level of codependency between Europe and North Africa, particularly for security-related concerns. The term SNP refers to the Southern European Policy that was launched in 2011 as a result of the geopolitical ordeal provoked by the popular uprising in the

region of North Africa, more minutely in Tunisia. As an extension to the ENP, The Southern Neighborhood Policy (SNP) covers ten countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region that can be divided into two main flanks. The first category is composed of three Maghreb countries, namely Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, and five Mashreq countries, namely Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, Lebanon, and Syria (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 169).

Regarding the integratory aspect, The SNP builds upon the legacies of the aforementioned European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). It is labelled as an integral component of the EU's broader efforts to encourage its partners to align with making European choices (Pearce, 2007, p. 3) per the indications set in the *acquis communautaire*.

Insofar, we can draw a conclusion highlighting that the SNP serves as a two-pronged approach, functioning both as a *modus operandi* of cooperation and a tool for the EU to exercise its normative power through "Europeanization."

2.1.3. Europeanization as a Tool for Normative Power: Implications for EU Member States and Non-Members

At this juncture, the emphasis has been redirected towards deciphering the most potent tool of the EU in terms of external action. Even though Europeanization is considered a nuanced subset of a multifaceted and interdisciplinary realm of scholarship, namely the domain of European Studies (Radaelli, 2004, p. 1), the allusion to this process is imperative to harmonize the literature of the EU's extrinsic policies in its eastern vicinal domain. The peculiarity of Europeanization lies in the fact that it is not a concrete instrument of the EU's foreign policy but rather a comprehensive process of influence that enhances the EU's position over the countries in question. Hence, the investigation would expound upon it only in passing as a pivotal constituent of European foreign policy, with the intent of illuminating the efficacy of the means of coercion.

Commencing, the "*acquis communautaire*" propounds a particular set of prerequisites on the website of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions that delineate Europeanization as a French expression denoting the total body of European Community legislation, encompassing the EC's objectives, material regulations, policies, as well as the primary and secondary legislative enactments and legal precedents. (*Acquis Communautaire*, 2007, para. 1). The expression "Europeanization" originated in the literature

of European studies as an umbrella term for the influence that the European Union bestows upon its member states from a superior stance. Derived from that conventional allusion, we may infer that Europeanization primarily denotes the course of action by which the European Union, functioning as a supranational entity, lays down distinct contours for EU member states and scrutinizes the repercussions of European integration and governance on the constituent nations within the European Union (Schimmelfennig, 2009, p. 5). In alternative phraseology, Europeanization constitutes an interactive and dynamic formula in which the European Union assumes a role without encompassing the entirety of power acquisition. From a historical perspective, however, literature on the European Union denotes that "Europeanization" emerged by the finishing of the second world war as the outcome of an unprecedented magnitude of interconnection, which has arisen in response to the devastation wrought by the two World Wars of the current century and the dissolution of the Cold War schism of Europe into an Eastern and Western bloc (Borneman & Fowler, 1997, p. 487), eschewing the antiquated marginalizing effects of 20th-century Europe. This traditional perception of Europeanization has been rigorously employed to scrutinize the intricacies and modalities by which Europe has exerted its influence on the countries that are either part of the European Union or on the verge of gaining membership (Catalano & Graziano, 2016, p. 364).

When subjected to testing frameworks, Europeanization has been demonstrated to comprise a range of distinctive features. It has been assessed that the notion of impact is somewhat stagnant and automated in nature (Radaelli, 2004, p. 4). the ambit of the process encompasses the eastern European nations that possess significant potential to accede to the European Union, such as Moldova, Ukraine, and Turkiye. Notably, Europeanization constituted a pivotal theme in the determination of the accession of Croatia to the EU in 2013. This subset of countries within the purview of European foreign policy is susceptible to a more potent influence from the European Union on their domestic arrangements. They are perceived as the most concerned with abiding by the normative power of the European Union as their relation hinges on the level to which they are able to comply with the criteria outlined in the 1993 Copenhagen agreement, which prioritize the establishment of democratic governance, adherence to the rule of law, protection of human rights, and safeguarding of minority rights (Börzel & Risse, 2009, p. 9). While the original denotation of the process may convey to the reader's mind a sense of rigidity, modern Europeanisation addresses the manner in which domestic transformation is processed, and the configuration of adjustment may surpass mere responses to Brussels (Radaelli, 2004, p. 4).

In addition to validating Europeanization as a flexible concept that derives its legitimacy from the prevailing political climate, this definition implies that Europeanization embodies two distinct characteristics. Firstly, its ambit of influence is delimited as it is only applicable within a European context. In other words, the traditional conception of Europeanization restricts the influence of the European Union and curtails the supranational status of the EU by positing the member countries of Europe as the outermost boundary of influence that can be leveraged to engage with international actors. Secondly, the process of Europeanization is deemed to be the closest association with displaying the Normative power of the European Union, as it has been theorized by Ian Manners.

Consequently, Europeanization appears to be less efficacious in countries that have no prospect of obtaining EU membership nor have the impetus to undertake the mechanisms of conditionality, or the 'adaptable pressures,' require candidates or potential candidates to assimilate democratic standards and EU regulatory framework (Catalano & Graziano, 2016, p. 364).

2.2. The Institutionalization of democracy promotion in EU foreign policy

2.2.1. The European Union's Trichotomy Approach to Promoting Democracy: Strategies and Priorities in International Relations

The European Union's contribution towards promoting a resilient, democratic system across a broad spectrum of theoretical frameworks can be apprehended through the purview of the European External Action Service (EEAS). The literature on this subject indicates that the EU employs three alternatives aimed at instilling a functional liberal democracy as an incentive to fulfill the pre-tailored agreements. Concerning the global remit of the European Union, the advancement of democracy is commonly acknowledged as a foremost priority in its international agenda.

Insofar as the European Union's global standing is concerned, the advancement of democracy is regarded as a pivotal undertaking of the EU at the international dimension. Actually, the European Union denotes a multifaceted understanding that encompasses a broad spectrum of strategies aimed at fostering democratic ideals (Börzel & Risse, 2009, p. 9). In fact, it pertains to a particular subset of endeavours that are bereft of nonviolent means and entails the distribution of financial resources and specialized technical knowledge via foreign aid and developmental initiatives (Wolff, 2015, p. 221). One of the most eminent hallmarks of the European Union's stance towards democracy pertains to the rationale by which it endeavours to promote a doctrine that stands upon the separation of power into distinct branches and the safeguarding of free expression and the right to assemble (Zakaria, 1997, p. 27) in developing nations. Actually, since its inauguration in the waning months of 1993, the European Union espoused the principle of assuming the mantle of a potential promoter of the liberal mode of democracy that resonates in harmony with the Anglo-Saxon comprehension that constituted the theoretical foundation of liberalism in nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States (Fukuyama, 1992, p. XV III). Indubitably, it is within our purview to assert that the European paradigm and dissemination of liberating principles are profoundly ingrained in the annals of antiquity. Upon the global stage, the amalgamation of EU nations as a grouping of similarly-inclined states (Zamfir & Dobрева, 2019, p. 1) serves to construct a unified discourse towards democracy promotion as a tool of modernization. In this regard, the

adduced empirical evidence stemming from comparative experiences evinces that democracies are significantly less inclined to engage in hostilities with one another. Consequently, democracy, in all its multifarious incarnations, is deemed by the member states of the European Union to be salutary and emerged as the most firmly entrenched and widely accepted system across the globe by the close of 2017 (Zamfir & Dobрева, 2019, p. 2). In the same year, the Copenhagen Council presented the possibility of EU membership to all affiliated Central and Eastern European nations, contingent upon their achievement of stable democratic governance and market-driven economies with the capacity to apply the EU regulatory framework (Grimm, 2019, para. 2). Against the backdrop of this historical paradigm, it is imperative to allude to the verity that since the late 1990s, and particularly after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the reinforcement of democratic values has become an increasingly salient component of the official documentation that guides the actions of the European Union. (Tordjman, 2017, p. 178). By virtue of this sequence of reasoning, The European Union has endeavoured to integrate the propagation of a particular set of European principles into its external engagements in a methodical manner (Börzel & Risse, 2009, p. 35) that would occupy the interstices between its normative benchmarks and the values disseminated in the contiguous regions that impinge upon the overseas interests of Europe. Ultimately, the purview of the European Union in furthering democracy in the Mediterranean realm is underscored as a mechanism to ensure the safeguarding of its interests. The harmonious interaction between Tunisia and the EU stands as a pivotal exemplar of the paramount significance of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in regulating the influx of migrants and preserving stability across the Mediterranean expanse. The pursuit of democracy promotion is also enshrined as a preeminent priority in the EU's international agenda in which it draws on "material capabilities (military force, economic resources spent on democracy assistance, asymmetries in the distribution of material capabilities and vulnerabilities that allow for political conditionality and sanctions)" (Wolff, 2015, p. 223) Additionally, it is underscored that democratic regimes are significantly less disposed to engage in hostilities with each other, thus rendering democracy promotion a crucial implement for upholding international tranquillity and security for the European Union. In this context, the literature about European studies confirms that the European Union often resorts to a trichotomy that enables reaching as maximum goals as possible. Primarily, the European Union avails itself of the tool of political conditionality, with the ideal outcome being accession and new enlargement. Besides, the EU places great reliance on economic remuneration in the form of financial grants, which serve as a sturdy foundation

with the aim of establishing the necessary institutions and contributing to various developmental aspects of the country in question. Last but not least, the EU emphasizes the significance of transnational exchange, with the objective of promoting barter between European institutions and host countries at the levels of administrations, security apparel as well as parliamentary experiences, just to name a few sectors.

These distinct facets function in an interconnected manner, coalescing to form a network of cause-and-effect that propels the growth of modernization. Thus, the trichotomy of EU foreign policy engenders a relation of causality that is best understood within the specific parameters outlined for each mechanism, political conditionality, economic development, and transnational exchange collectively contribute to the overall progress of democracy (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 193).

At this juncture of analysis, the essence of the notion posits that the process of democratic assistance necessitates active cooperation between governments and external benefactors. In this regard, the Tunisian government's endeavours to facilitate European foreign aid serve as a pivotal factor in securing assistance, which can be classified into the ensuing three categories. It is imperative to allude to the fact that the literature on the promotion of democracy and its correlation with power postulates in a frame within which the governments targeted for intervention represents a critical counterpart to those promoting democratic ideals and bolstering and/or overhauling state institutions remains a fundamental facet of democracy assistance.

2.2.1.2. Three axioms of cooperation

The ensuing section will expound upon the manifold expressions of the European Union's involvement in the promotion of democracy across the globe from a theoretical standpoint and also by providing a set of examples to assist for illustration. Delineating scientific data which draws directly from the European Parliament Research Unit's 2018 briefing reports. It is crucial to underscore, at this juncture, that this research's assertions are rooted in an amalgam of treaties and agreements that have been embedded throughout the EU's developmental history, undergirding the Union's cardinal principles and instantiated in the table below. Accordingly, the following table serves to unravel the diverse theoretical frameworks which have proffered democracy promotion as a pivotal facet of the EU's foreign policy.

Against this theoretical backdrop, the European Union's investments can be bifurcated into two distinct categories: the first table expounds upon the EU's theoretical dispositions

towards democracy promotion, whilst the second table identifies a more tangible and pragmatic manifestation of the Union's efforts towards promoting democracy.

Theoretical Framework	Implication
Article J(1) of the Maastricht Treaty	Incorporated the advancement of democratic principles and the preservation of peace as fundamental tenets of its common foreign and security policy, as well as its developmental cooperation efforts.
The Treaty on European Union (TEU)	Recognises democracy as a fundamental value of the Union, and a general objective and a guiding principle of EU external action

Table 2: EU's Democratic Implications in Founding Treaties
Author's own elaboration

Whilst the theoretical precepts of the foundational treaties of the European Union accentuate the internal measures, with democracy held as a preeminent tenet of the European normativity, the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) represents an on-the-ground intervention by the European Union to extirpate the impediments that often impede the advancement of democracy.

2.2.1.2.1. The political conditionality

In a European milieu, the political impetus has a well-established history of prioritizing the EU's proclivity over its counterpart country. Theoretically speaking, the EU's recognition of the inevitable need to incorporate political conditionality in its multilateral undertakings stems from its demonstrated success in ensuring the dissemination of its norms.

Research on the evolution of the EU's data evinces that "The Lomé IV agreement of 1989 between the EU and the so-called ACP countries (African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group, mostly former colonies of Great Britain, France, and Belgium)" (Börzel & Risse, 2009, p. 9) have been the first formal initiative undertaken by the EU, which took into consideration the

criterion of political conditionality. Actually, The utilization of accession conditionality has been of utmost importance (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 188) in regard to the EU's democracy promotion agenda. Coupling political conditionality with accession is a groundbreaking concept that deepens our understanding of the normativity of the EU that enables us to decipher that, by nature, the influence of the EU on aspirant members should be more potent compared to non-candidate countries that are not regarded as potential EU members (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 191).

Hence, the most influential tool employed by the EU for promoting democracy is its recourse to political impetus by engaging in dialogues with countries to instigate a vibrant dynamism between the EU and the concerned country. However, "Since the early 1990s, political conditionality has been a general feature of the EU's external agreements" (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 195).

The incipience of political conditionality has illustrated a number of debatable points that generate a long-standing theoretical tyranny as far as its reliability is concerned.

In this instance, the European Union initiates a protracted process of negotiation with the country in question, during which it offers its most valuable incentive (membership) while simultaneously encouraging the dissemination of its norms through democratic reforms within the target country. This is commonly referred to in the field of European studies as the "positive incentive" approach. However, the European Union's employment of conditionality is not restricted solely to enlargement but rather extends to englobe both positive and negative forms of conditionality, exemplified by advantageous trade concessions, cooperative agreements, development aid, and political conditionality measures (Grabbe, 2002, p. 250).

In terms of accession prospects, it can be seen as the most powerful instrument within the European zone. Nevertheless, the validity of its approach is usually limited in terms of influence. Actually, Political conditionality is taken to be a less potent incentive in the neighbouring regions of Europe as the stakes that can be drawn for a non-European country go beyond the confines of its normativity. Therefore, the first limitation that can be maintained is that the prowess of political conditionality is dependent on the geographical location of the partner country. The allusion to upholding a European bundle of norms can be less important to a non-European country compared to a European country.

Secondly, political conditionality is often understood as being intrinsically linked with the process of EU integration and rooted in the Western understanding of human rights, which embraces pluralistic, multiparty political systems and unfettered market-oriented economies (Del Biondo, 2009, p. 129) which may be perceived as a neo-colonialist approach for the

inter-state relations. Therefore, it can be seen as a form of interference or imposition on the sovereignty of the targeted country. Accordingly, on the scale of influence, "the promise of enlargement should be more powerful than the promise of association or assistance" (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 191). Although this facet of aid provision may be considered inadequate, namely limited, it remains a legitimate approach to European foreign policy. In fact, it shall be discussed separately in the ensuing section under the umbrella of "Europeanisation" to gain a more profound comprehension of the strengths and drawbacks of the EU's foreign policy internally, i.e., within the Eurozone.

As a result, this initial criterion does not diminish the effectiveness of this approach compared to the other two mechanisms for promoting democracy outside of the EU. It is worth noting that countries outside of the Eurozone are not eligible for this strategy. Thusly, we can close up to a reality imposing that the outcomes of conditionality can be significantly distinguished from those of other mechanisms.

2.2.1.2.2. The Financial Stimuli

At the onset of this section, it is paramount to recognize that among the fundamental features that make out of the European Union (EU) a global powerholder is that it serves as a preeminent financial nucleus within the global landscape. To this end, the EU advocated for the introduction of several agreements through various instruments aimed at providing assistance through a diverse array of programs. This includes a range of programs and initiatives such as the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF), and various thematic schemes operating under the auspices of the Development and Cooperation Instrument (DCI). It fosters dynamism in different underdeveloped regions worldwide through its financial instruments, which are dispensed to these nations in the form of financial grants and periodic disbursements. Overall, statistics show that the foreign aid provided by the European Union and managed by the EU Commission constitutes 12% of the total amount of international financial aid (Börzel & Risse, 2009, p. 9).

As far as the financial reimbursement allocated to democracy promotion is concerned, the European Union has adopted a new economy-centric gradual and systematic methodology (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 173) in an effort to promote democratic advancement in neighbouring regions. The observed increase in democratization waves is particularly

prominent among Euro-Mediterranean partners and is evident throughout the period spanning from 2010 to 2021, during which the EU played a crucial role.

Scholarship in the field of democratization has consistently highlighted the strong correlation between the level of affluence and economic prosperity within a society, as measured by the GNP per capita, and the advancement of democratic principles. Specifically, a thriving economy and a thriving middle class are seen as essential prerequisites for democratic growth. In other terms, the comprehensive approach of the European Union to democracy promotion infers that there is a profound interconnectedness between economic prosperity and the flourishing of democratic governance (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 192). Put simply, the financial incentive approach of the EU is employed to engender a significant decrease in trade barriers by partner nations through trade agreements and a gradual yet discerning incorporation into certain elements of the internal market (IM) (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 173), ultimately leading to the growth of the GNP per capita and the flourishing of the middle class in society. This aspect of correlation can be explained as “a mechanism that emphasizes domestic, societal and bottom-up factors of democratization” (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 192) in a way that generates economic thrive in the country to provide the fertile ground for democracy to flourish organically.

In alienation with the theoretical scheme above, the focus of this section would now be directed towards paying attention to putting in practice the financial aid dimension in EUFP as a means of democratic empowerment.

The fiscal aid facet of the European Union represents a pivotal measure that contributes significantly to the establishment of a bona fide and efficacious democracy in third-party nations. With regard to the institutionalization of democracy promotion in the neighbouring southern and eastern European regions, the European Union employs several mechanisms to champion liberal values, as depicted in the schematic diagram presented below. It should be noted that the diagram solely concentrates on the democracy promotion instrument that derives from the European Union budget and excludes the private financial support provided by individual EU member states.

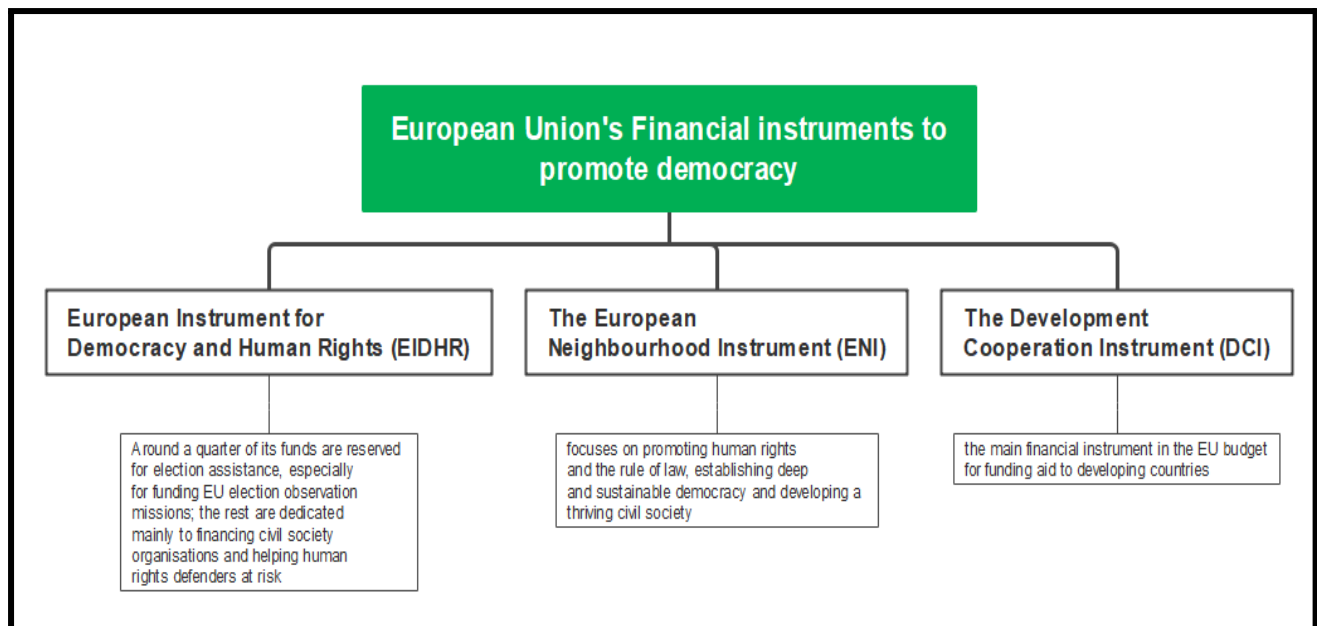


Figure 1: Author’s own elaboration based upon the 2019 briefing entitled “ EU support for democracy and peace in the world”

Drawing upon the 2018 report presented by the European Parliament Research Service, it becomes apparent that a significant proportion of the financial aid granted by the European Union to support third countries is channelled toward fostering democracy within a holistic framework. In fact, The briefing report maintains that a significant proportion, around 13%, of the European Union's total budget for developmental aid is directed towards programs supporting governmental and civil society institutions, with a smaller share allocated to endeavours targeted at securing peace (Zamfir & Dobрева, 2019, p. 5) as displayed in the figure below.

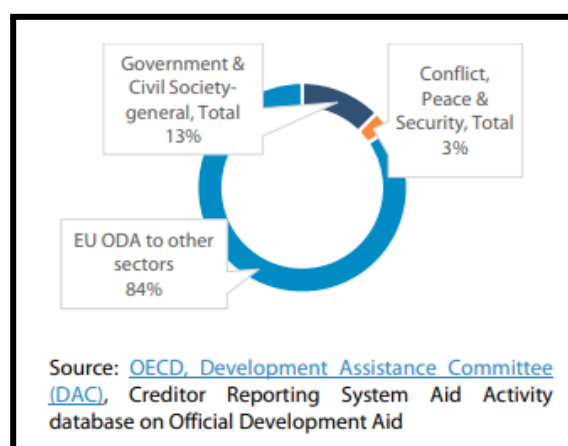


Figure 2: Distribution of EU Budget in external aid based upon 2019 briefing entitled “ EU support for democracy and peace in the world”

The European Union dedicates a plethora of instruments aimed at financing and supporting burgeoning democracies globally and promoting the principles of good governance while reinforcing civil society's endeavors.

2.2.1.2.2.1. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)

Firstly introduced as a mechanism of external aid in EUFP in the year 2006, The EIDHR is a financial and policy tool created primarily to support the growth and consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, and the respect to all fundamental freedoms and human rights in third-world nations across the globe (Dobрева, 2015, p. 1). Its objectives encompass providing support for the advancement of democracy, the rule of law, and the adherence to human rights and fundamental freedoms as these letters conform to the norms enshrined within the Treaty on European Union (TEU). It seeks to consolidate democracy by the means of assisting civil society organizations operating in these spheres, with particular emphasis on safeguarding human rights defenders and aims to empower them to become autonomous actors in the democratic processes of their respective countries. It is noteworthy to also keep in mind that it furnishes support for electoral procedures, such as scrutinizing elections, reinforcing electoral systems, and providing technical assistance to electoral management bodies as well as sending European missions to assist in election observation. One particularity of the EIDHR to highlight here is the fact that it does not necessitate approval from national authorities (Dobрева, 2015, p. 1) to forward its financial and technical grants to civil society NGOs. Thus, it is widely regarded as a powerful instrument that solely allocates importance to people-to-people cooperation.

Through the EIDHR, the European Union aims to cultivate alliances with civil society organizations, augment the capacity of local actors, and contribute to the establishment of an environment conducive to the promotion and protection of human rights and democratic values. In the realm of fiscal discourse, it remains the most meagre of the European Union's external funding mechanisms, amounting to only a total of €1 332.75 million (Dobрева, 2015, p. 1) which nearly makes only (0.12%) of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Approximately a quarter of the funds are specifically allocated to facilitate election endeavours, with a focus on sponsoring European Union election observation missions. The remaining percentage is predominantly apportioned to the financing of civil society organizations and rendering aid to individuals who champion human rights and find themselves in perilous circumstances.

2.2.1.2.2.2. The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)

The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) is an additional tool within the toolbox of the European Union that is centred on the advancement of human rights and the rule of law, fostering the establishment of profound and lasting democracy, and cultivating a flourishing civil society. Its cumulative allotment for the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) amounts to €15.43 billion (European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), n.d, para. 8). Nevertheless, the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) is deemed to be the bridging instrument between the newly established NDICI – Global Europe instrument and the inherent of the successful outcomes of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which ran from 2007 to 2013, covering this time frame. The examination of the definition and impact on democracy promotion via this particular instrument has been deliberately adopted by this study because it matches the view it adopts on the Tunisian democratic performance. Put simply, the study assumes that the data display that the Tunisian Democracy was at its peak within the same period adoption of the ENI from the European Union.

In reality, its adaption constitutes a crucial facet of the European Union's foreign policy, as it strives to create a conducive environment for the realization of a flourishing and prosperous civil society, democratic governance, and the safeguarding of human rights and the rule of law. The ENI recognizes its centrality in enabling sustainable development, social justice, and peacebuilding via the financial reimbursement that it allocates to the recipient government. As a result, the ENI is an intergovernmental approach to democracy promotion contrary to the EIDHR as discussed in the previous section.

ENI's steadfast dedication to the establishment of profound and lasting democracy mirrors, additionally, the commitment to the EU's good neighbourhood policy despite the absence of a long-lasting security-based between the EU and Bel Ali. Hence, the EU's aspirations to build upon the cultural ties of the Euro-Mediterranean legacies stand clear and bright. Moreover, the ENI recognizes the pivotal role played by civil society organizations in promoting human rights and democracy and hence provides ample support to these entities, enabling them to undertake essential activities that strengthen their capacity to foster a culture of human rights and democracy within their respective societies. Its contribution to the creation of an enabling environment for civil society organizations is a reflection of its commitment to supporting

independent and autonomous actors who can advocate for human rights, good governance, and the rule of law.

In conclusion, the ENI represents an indispensable instrument in the EU's pursuit of advancing human rights and democratic governance, fostering a thriving and prosperous civil society, and creating an environment that is conducive to sustainable development, social justice, and peacebuilding. Its significant contribution to these objectives is a testament to the EU's unwavering commitment to fostering democratic values and principles within its neighbourhood.

2.2.1.2.2.3. The Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI)

In addition to the EIDHR and the ENI, the EU relies on a third instrument also that is concerned with focusing on solidifying democracy via financial reimbursement. Within the framework for EU development cooperation, the EU's stance as an international advocator for democracy has been further updated via its Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), established in 2007 (Mekonnen, D. R., & van Reisen, 2012, p. 326). The Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) serves as the primary financial instrument in the European Union's budget, geared towards extending aid to developing countries. Its financial endowment, amounting to €19 661.64 million over the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) makes (up 1.81 %) of the total allocated budget (Parry & Segantini, 2017, p. 1). In terms of geographic circumference, the program covers a multitude of countries beyond the confines of the European Union. Actually, it covers the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) as well as the overseas countries and territories (OCTs) of the EU in addition to the countries eligible for funding under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) (Among which Tunisia) or the Instrument for Pre- Accession Assistance (IPA) (Parry & Segantini, 2017, p. 2).

Furthermore, the DCI recognizes that sustainable development can only be achieved through the creation of an enabling environment that supports and strengthens the capacity of local actors and civil society organizations to participate in the development process. Its financial grants are, therefore, aimed at empowering local actors and civil society organizations to undertake essential projects and initiatives that strengthen their capacity to advocate for human rights, good governance, and sustainable development within their respective societies.

2.2.1.2.3. Transnational exchange

The third and ultimate mechanism utilized by the European Union to reinforce democratic norms and values is through an intergovernmental approach. This approach hinges on a diverse range of outputs aimed at achieving the ultimate goal of promoting democracy. It is essential to refer, first, to the concept and explore its meaning and implication on international relations.

The transnational exchange in the European Union's foreign policy entails a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that involves various actors and dimensions. At its core, it is characterized by the intricate web of interactions, collaborations, and exchanges among the EU and its member states, as well as non-state actors, including civil society organizations, transnational corporations, and international organizations. Actually, the exchange is not limited to economic incentives; rather, the modalities and mechanisms of transnational exchange are characterized by a high degree of heterogeneity and multiplicity (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 192). In fact, they extend to other areas, such as cultural, educational, and scientific exchange, which have become increasingly vital in shaping the Union's external relations.

This involves the facilitation of the exchange and flow of information, resources, and practices across national boundaries, which is enabled by advancements in technology and communication, as well as policies and agreements that foster cross-border cooperation.

This multifaceted process of cross-border exchange highlights the interdependence of nations and the interconnectedness of their societies and economies and underscores the need for global cooperation and collaboration in addressing shared challenges and advancing shared goals (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 192). Among the salient characteristics of transnational exchange is its capacity to engender the interdependent nature of global communities and the paramountcy of cross-border cooperation and collaboration in addressing global challenges and advancing shared objectives.

In essence, the European Union employs an intergovernmental approach as one of its mechanisms to promote democratic norms and values. The transnational exchange in EU foreign policy involves a complex phenomenon that entails interactions, collaborations, and exchanges among various actors, including civil society organizations, transnational corporations, and international organizations. This exchange is not limited to economic incentives but extends to other areas, such as cultural, educational, and scientific exchange. This process highlights the interdependence of nations and the importance of global

cooperation and collaboration in addressing shared challenges and advancing shared goals. The capacity of transnational exchange to engender the interdependent nature of global communities is among its salient characteristics.

3. Chapter Three: Tunisian Responsiveness: Exploring the Dynamics of Compliance and Resistance

3.1. The Tunisian Exceptionalism: the 2011 Revolution

The Tunisian Revolution of 2011, colloquially denoted as the "Jasmine Revolution," engendered an unprecedented maelstrom of sociopolitical transformation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It not only unshackled the Tunisian population from the stranglehold of autocratic rule but also fomented a contagion of dissidence that percolated across the Arab world. The movement, known under the Western labeling of "Arab Spring," started with the self-immolation of a street vendor in the city of Sidi Bouzid in the Republic of Tunisia as a reaction to ignoring his demand not to be fined by the local authorities in December 2010. Needless to say, that served as a representation of the immense frustration and discontent shared by countless Tunisians. It draws attention to the widespread resentment towards a government that appeared unconcerned with addressing its people's hardships (Perkins, 2014, p. 223). The epochal events that transpired in the Republic of Tunisia in late 2010 and early 2011 not only precipitated the downfall of Ben Ali's autocratic regime but also served as the vanguard of a broader movement that would reverberate across the Arab world. Coined as the "Arab Spring" by Western observers, this unprecedented wave of popular uprisings and protests was propelled by the shared aspirations of millions of people yearning for social and political emancipation. The three fundamental tenets of the Tunisian Revolution - Bread, Freedom, and National Dignity - encapsulated the essence of these collective aspirations and provided a unifying impetus for the diverse array of popular movements that emerged in its wake. More specifically, the popular voices called for the dismantling of the RCD, the disintegration of the state security structure, and the creation of a national constituent assembly, which would operate similarly to a parliament and be accountable for crafting a new constitution (Masri, 2019, p. 53). As the Tunisian uprising gained momentum, the conflagration of popular dissent rapidly provided a powerful example and source of inspiration for individuals living under similarly oppressive regimes in countries such as Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain, motivating them to challenge the authoritarian rule and fight for their rights (Perkins, 2014, p. 222). Emboldened by the stunning success of their Tunisian counterparts, the people of these nations took to the streets en masse, demanding an end to the endemic corruption, political repression, and economic

malaise that had plagued their societies for decades. The entrenched autocrats who had ruled these nations with an iron fist were suddenly confronted with an existential challenge to their authority as the tide of popular sentiment turned irrevocably against them. In Egypt, the revolutionary spirit reached a crescendo in the iconic Tahrir Square, where millions of Egyptians from all walks of life congregated to demand the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak. After 18 days of sustained protests, Mubarak's three-decade-long rule came to an abrupt end, ushering in a tumultuous period of political transition and contestation. Similarly, in Libya, the uprising against Muammar Gaddafi's four-decade-long dictatorship rapidly escalated into a full-fledged civil war, with disparate rebel factions coalescing to challenge the regime's military might. The conflict drew the intervention of NATO forces, which provided crucial air support to the rebels and ultimately contributed to the toppling of Gaddafi's regime in October 2011. In Yemen, the Arab Spring-inspired protests precipitated a protracted political crisis that led to the eventual resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2012. However, the political vacuum created by Saleh's departure and the subsequent failure to establish a stable and inclusive government laid the groundwork for the devastating civil war that continues to ravage the country to this day. The revolutionary spirit of the Arab Spring also manifested itself in other nations across the region, albeit with varying degrees of success. In Bahrain, the predominantly Shiite protest movement was violently suppressed by the ruling Sunni monarchy, with the tacit support of its regional allies. In Syria, the initially peaceful protests against President Bashar al-Assad's regime rapidly devolved into a brutal and protracted conflict that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and displaced millions more. In retrospect, the Tunisian Revolution and the broader Arab Spring movement can be seen as a watershed moment in the contemporary history of the Middle East and North Africa. The popular uprisings that emerged in its wake not only challenged the status quo of authoritarian rule but also underscored the latent power of ordinary citizens to effect profound social and political change. While the outcomes of the various Arab Spring-inspired protests have been decidedly mixed, the enduring legacy of these movements lies in their indelible impact on the region's collective consciousness and the enduring quest for Bread, Freedom, and National Dignity. In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, the Tunisian political landscape experienced a remarkable metamorphosis that was crucially reflected in the political landscape, during which the array of ideologies showcased by the emerging Tunisian political parties spanned a wide range from Marxist to right-wing nationalist, Islamist, and pan-Arabist (Masri, 2019, p. 56) and moved aside from the long-standing 30 years of unilateral political representation.

The 2011 Tunisian uprising was precipitated by a complex interplay of direct and indirect factors that converged to create the conditions for a popular revolt against the autocratic regime of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Direct factors included the stark socioeconomic disparities between the more affluent coastal regions and the impoverished interior areas of Tunisia. The lack of economic opportunities, particularly for the youth, gave rise to widespread frustration and discontent, fueling a pervasive sense of disillusionment and despair. The Ben Ali regime's rampant corruption and nepotism exacerbated social and economic inequalities. The ruling family's conspicuous consumption and ostentatious lifestyle, in stark contrast to the impoverishment of the general populace, further incited widespread resentment.

Meanwhile, the indirect factors that contributed to the uprising included Tunisia's historical legacy, characterized by a post-colonial struggle for national identity and political autonomy. The country oscillated between periods of progressive reform and authoritarian rule, with the legacy of its first president, Habib Bourguiba, setting the stage for Ben Ali's autocratic regime. Bourguiba established a modern, secular state but also stifled dissent.

While the Arab Spring movements swept across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the outcomes of the popular uprisings have been mixed. However, one exception stands out: Tunisia. Despite its small size and relatively limited geopolitical influence, Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution of 2011 has been widely regarded as a rare success story amidst the broader upheavals of the Arab Spring.

This relative success is deemed to be coined as 'Tunisian exceptionalism' in this study. Actually, within the context of the Arab Spring due to its successful democratic transition, regional influence, and unifying characteristics. Distinguished by relative stability and peace, Tunisia has held free and fair elections, created a new constitution, and established a representative government that embraces diverse political ideologies. The revolution's grassroots origins, ignited by a single act of desperation by a street vendor, resonated with the Tunisian population and led to a widespread movement for change. Its non-sectarian nature and emphasis on universal values such as dignity, freedom, and social justice facilitated unity among Tunisians from various backgrounds. Additionally, the robust civil society in Tunisia, comprising labor unions, women's groups, and human rights advocates, played a pivotal role in the revolution and its aftermath, ensuring a smooth transition to democracy. Ultimately, the Tunisian Revolution's success has left an indelible mark on the region, serving as a powerful example for other movements in the Middle East and North Africa and inspiring individuals to pursue change in their own circumstances.

In summation, Spurred by unprecedented popular rallies that called for the downfall of the Ben Ali Regime, Tunisia was the sole Arab nation to navigate this tumultuous period peacefully and became the trailblazer in pursuing a process of democratization. The trajectory of local events has been tending towards a modification of the entrenched regime that endured for nearly three successive decades, spanning from 1987 to 2010. One of the earliest denotations of the popular uprising in Tunisia is endorsed with a multinational impact. In fact, the toppling of the ancient regime is deemed to have marked a significant and defining moment, a critical juncture for Tunisia, which has the potential to also shape and transform Euro-Tunisian relations (Krüger & Ratka, 2014, p. 10).

In terms of political stability, the Arab Spring has brought about a significant change in the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. While the EU initially hesitated in its response to the fall of the Ben Ali and Mubarak regimes, it eventually abandoned its cautious approach and acknowledged its responsibility to facilitate a rapid transition to democracy in the region (Catalano & Graziano, 2016, p. 370). Indeed, the European perspective of the comparatively uncharted territory of the Maghreb region gained more pronounced strategic importance since the momentous transformative events of the Arab Spring (Krüger & Ratka, 2014, p. 15).

3.2. Tunisian-EU relations prior to the “Jasmine Revolution”

In this particular section, the primary focus will centre on expounding upon the pre-2011 Jasmine Revolution relations between the European Union and Tunisia while simultaneously framing their bilateral rapport within the context of an appropriate international relations theory. Such a rationale would serve to reinforce the central argument by tracing the fundamental ideals that shaped the European nations' perceptions of Tunisia and, consequently, facilitated the construction of their mutually dependent interrelation.

From the onset, It is vital to signal that in order to understand the feasibility of the Tunisian stance vis-à-vis the European global power. The section shall swiftly begin with glimpsing at the historical framework.

Notwithstanding the fact that the formalization of EU-Tunisia relations traces its origins to 1976, with the Association Agreement inked in 1995 serving as its primary legal foundation (European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), n.d, para. 1). The European Union's decades-long Mediterranean policies were characterized by their

ineffectiveness and questionable nature. In this context, we can argue that the connection between Tunisia and the European Union has not consistently been harmonious. However, by resorting to the scholarship, we can see that the EU's notion of physical security primarily entails managing borders and safeguarding them against unstable regions. Economic prosperity pertains to the EU's efforts to pursue sustainable economic benefits and to promote greater economic integration with Tunisia by offering trade advantages and market access (Ekiz, 2022, p. 719). Thus, the relatively daring approach adopted towards Tunisia confirms that it witnessed, instead, a number of fluctuations throughout the longstanding shared history between the two parties. Despite the official commencement of their affiliation, which was formally established in the year 1995, it is evident that the contour of contemporary relations between Tunisia and European states can be traced back to the colonial legacy of Western European states during the 18th and 19th centuries (Zengin, 2019, p. 379).

theoretical analysis

This underscores the pragmatic and realistic reading of the two-way understanding of the parties involved. The statistics evince that bilateral relations have significantly burgeoned post-2011, following the Arab Uprising. The European Council and the European Commission have expressed a keen interest in the Tunisian model, as evidenced in their numerous reports. The European Union's growing interest in forging robust and comprehensive relations with Tunisia is manifest in various documents of the Council of Europe. For instance, the fact sheet available on the European Neighbourhood Policy's web portal notes that the intensity and depth of cooperation between Tunisia and the EU between 1995 and 2011 paled in comparison to the post-2011 period.

Henceforth, the Barcelona agreement for the Mediterranean countries was deemed largely incredible due to the evident gap between the EU foreign policy and its southern neighbors, namely Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya. Upon conducting a thorough analysis of the available open-source data, it was apparent that the Euro-NorthAfrican relations have undergone a number of relatively successful initiatives that shaped the European approach to the zone as a whole, namely the "Global Mediterranean Policy (1972-1990), the EuroArab Dialogue (EAD, 1973-1989), the Renewed Mediterranean Policy (1990- 1995), the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP –also known as the Barcelona Process of 1995-2008), the European Neighborhood Policy (launched in 2003 and reviewed in 2011 after the Arab Spring) and the Barcelona Process: the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM, launched in 2008 as a continuation of EMP of 1995, which is still valid today)." (Zengin, 2019, p. 382).

It is crucial to bare in mind that Tunisia has been a longstanding, albeit relatively ordinary, partner of the European Union (Krüger & Ratka, 2014, p. 11). This long-term concordance does not necessarily implicate a higher stance of the country with respect to the other countries of North Africa.

In this regard, we can maintain that there have been only four significant milestones in the bilateral relations between these countries since its formal establishment in 1967.

The first and the only station in the pre-revolution period dates back to the signing of the Barcelona agreement in 1995, which endeavours to align Tunisian laws, regulations, and practices in critical governance domains with those of the EU in exchange for grant aid, technical assistance, and additional backing (Burwell et al., 2016, p. 11). While it is true that the formalization of Tunisian-EU relations was established within the framework of the Barcelona agreement in the mid-1990s, particularly in 1995, it can be argued that the Barcelona process only served as the introductory phase to the bilateral agreement. Realistically, it proffered an occasion for the Mediterranean nations to forge an association, irrespective of their modes of governance (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 194).

In conclusion, Upon conducting a comprehensive analysis of the Euro-Mediterranean milestones, it can be deduced that Tunisia's significance in European affairs has intensified following the 2011 emancipatory regime-challenging political incident. Nevertheless, it is inconclusive that the impetus behind this elevation in importance has undergone any significant alteration, despite the revolutionary developments of 2011.

To summarize, the cooperation between Tunisia and the European Union served as a spearhead for bilateral relations within a framework of Euro-Mediterranean collaboration, which has undergone a process of politicization since the early days following the signing of the Barcelona Agreement in 1995. This venture has been implemented owing to the region's strategic significance, considered vital to sustaining the longevity of the EU's foreign interests beyond the Mediterranean maritime boundaries. In fact, the magnitude of the aforementioned region to European interests chiefly emanates from an overwhelmingly dominant increasing flow of both authorized and unauthorized migration from North Africa that engendered a heightened sense of vulnerability to ongoing instability in the Mediterranean region (Hill & Smith, 2017). EU-Tunisia relations hinge, thereby, on the concerted endeavours to regulate the inflow of migrants and ensure the preservation of stability across the Mediterranean divide for the mutual benefit of the respective regions.

3.3. The EU Response to the Tunisian Emancipation between the Collective and National Responses

The reactions of global players to the transformation that was transpiring on the terrain of North Africa after the ousting of the former despot Zain Al Abidine Ben Ali in 2011 initiated a series of grandiose declarations about a fresh beginning in Euro-Mediterranean relations (Krüger & Ratka, 2014, p. 10). While some perceived the Tunisian revolution as an imminent peril that jeopardized their interests and demonstrated the limitations of European influence in North Africa (Zengin, 2019, p. 384), other influential actors conveyed rousing sentiments and swiftly shifted their stance and became ardent proponents of the democratization process (Burwell et al., 2016, p. 10). Amidst a time when the region has become entirely engulfed in a full-scale revolution, tensions continue to mount between the police forces of "Ben Ali" and the opposition forces on the streets of the capital, Tunis. In light of this precarious and pressing situation, the amendments to the power struggle in the region. This approach was reasserted by the statement issued by Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, on the 15th of July, 2015, wherein she vociferously reiterated in her address that a robust and democratic Tunisia is essential for upholding stability in Europe's vicinity (Burwell et al., 2016, p. 10). For that reason, The European Union has been Tunisia's principal collaborator in advancing its transition towards a contemporary democratic system (European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), n.d, para. 2) since 2011. The aftermath of the full-scale tensions avows that the EU's primary objective in projecting its values is to promote and instill the fundamental principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Tunisia, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that these values are upheld and reflected in the country's future (Ekiz, 2022, p. 719). As a result, the European Council has directed EU institutions to undertake a thorough review of the necessary alterations required to adapt to the situation in North Africa, given its direct implications on the stability of Europe. Correspondingly, European nations have adopted contrasting positions regarding the unfolding paradigm shift. The EU's direction concerning the growing tensions in the region was gradually heading in synergy with the Arab Spring, representing a crucial occurrence, or pivotal moment, for Tunisia and, potentially, for relations between Tunisia and Europe (Krüger & Ratka, 2014, p. 10). The European Union warmly embraced the unparalleled socio-political upheaval in Tunisia and seized the momentous opportunity to present amends of timely and ample assistance that Tunisia requires and merits aiming at rectifying past shortcomings (Dennison

et al., 2011, p. 7). Given the exigent and dynamically-evolving geopolitical environment in North Africa, empirical data indicate that shifts in the European Union's strategic economic and security interests and objectives have engendered corresponding changes in its global strategic preferences over the years (Zengin, 2019, p. 373). Hence, the primary objective of the EU was to establish a sense of credibility by translating its official rhetoric into concrete accords and practicable measures that would engender a robust democratic regime. In this respect, many eminent EU officials unequivocally expressed their support for the Tunisian people in their revolutionary aspirations and underscored the urgency for the EU to overhaul its bilateral relationship with the country. As articulated by the EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, in February 2011, "The EU is wholeheartedly behind the Tunisian people's aspirations for freedom and democracy. [...] There is much that the European Union can do to support them. We want to be Tunisia's strongest ally in their move towards democracy." (Laura-Theresa Krüger & Ratka, 2014).

However, the initial response to the uprisings was characterized by bewilderment and uncertainty concerning the liberalization outburst. This evinced that the European Union was not solely cognizant of the pressing necessity to overhaul the neo-realist stability policies but was also mindful of the disconcerting obligation to formulate a novel stability strategy congruous with the liberalization movements. As a result, the Union abandoned its cautious approach and acknowledged its responsibility to facilitate a rapid transition to democracy in the region (Catalano & Graziano, 2016, p. 370).

The aftermath of this engendered a feeling of internal discord between the discrete interests of Member States and the collective identity of the European Union as a global actor.

In fact, the Southern European countries supported the emancipatory revolt in Tunisia and actively promoted the financing of the Tunisian Transition phase through the ENP instrument while urging flexibility in handling the situation. However, Germany opposed the redistribution of funds and preferred to assist Ben Ali's regime in enduring the popular ordeal. The reaction of the French Ministry of Interior Affairs in 2010, Michèle Alliot-Marie, epitomized the realist approach that France. It encouraged the deportation of para-military artillery and light armament weaponry to support the Ben Ali regime against the Tunisian crowds. It is important to note that significant European measures had already been put in place prior to the revolution, including the evolutionary phase of the composition of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and its consequences on the bilateral relations between Europe and its southern counterparts on a larger scale.

Thus, we can observe that European perspectives have exhibited a degree of hesitancy in responding to the transformation taking place in Tunisia, while certain colonial powers have sought to preserve the traditional status quo in the region under the guise of advancing regional security objectives (Zengin, 2019, p. 382).

3.4. Chronological ascertainment of the bilateral growth

On the whole, the cooperative relationship between the EU and Tunisia experienced a noteworthy phase of growth during which the three remaining key milestones, as assessed by the EU, were respectively made in 2014, 2016 as well as in 2018.

In fact, Tunisia signed in 2014 “the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership” (EU Funding, 1995, n.d) while both parties adopted “the Joint Communication «Strengthened EU support for Tunisia» (EU Funding, 1995, n.d) in 2016. Besides, the year 2018 marked the “adoption of the EU-Tunisia Strategic Priorities 2018-2020”.(EU Funding, 1995, n.d).

Year	July 1995	March 2014	September 2016	November 2018
Key Milestones	EU-Tunisia association agreement	EU-Tunisia mobility partnership	Adoption of the joint communication “ strengthened EU support for Tunisia”	Adoption of the EU-Tunisia Strategic priorities 2018-2020

Table 3: Key Milestones in EU-Tunisia Relations

Author’s own elaboration based on the factsheet about “Tunisia- Southern Neighbourhood” (EU Data, 2022, n,d)

According to the data enshrined throughout the table, we can deduce that the EU-Tunisia bilateral cooperation has been stable during the pre-revolution period, and a discernible uptick in interest can be detected during the period ensuing the Arab spring. In this context, it is substantially important to shed light on the fact that during the period preceding the Tunisian revolution, France held a position of preeminence in Euro-Tunisian relations and

was frequently viewed as a representation of Europe and the European Union as a whole (Krüger & Ratka, 2014, p. 23).

The aforementioned information divulges that the ramifications of the 2011 revolution in Tunisia have yielded highly fruitful outcomes in terms of elevating the intensity of the EU-Tunisia bilateral relations, not only qualitatively but also quantitatively. The duration spanning from 2011 to 2020 served as a testament to the EU's unwavering commitment to enhancing its ties with Tunisia, with the bulk of the significant agreements, amounting to 75% of them, being inked within that period. Therefore, The utmost importance of the democratic stamp in the equation of Euro-Tunisian collaboration. Besides, The representation of Europe in Tunisia is no longer beholden to French influence in a particular manner, thanks to the varied institutional approaches of the European nations towards the North African region. Within the circumference of the French dominance, the literature reveals that the Euro-Arab Dialogue, EMP, and UfM serve as notable illustrations that were instigated and spearheaded by the French at the European Union level (Zengin, 2019, p. 383). On the contrary, additional EU member states, along with the European Union as an international actor, have been more prominently involved and actively committed to supporting Tunisia in achieving a successful democratic transition. The Tunisian leap to democracy compared to, for instance, other neighbouring countries has been a determining incentive for the EU. In a time when Morocco was widely considered a *bon élève* of the EU, its levels of mobilization were relatively moderate in comparison to Tunisia, which underwent substantial political transformations despite its prior reluctance to implement reforms sponsored by the EU (Fontana, 2017, p. 365). Statistics show that the number of European actors has gained momentum at the national level, with the emergent role of Eastern European countries such as Poland and the waning influence of France. This shift in power has created a balance between the member states of the European Union, significantly alleviating Tunisia's co-dependency on France and allowing more space for cooperation with other European nations.

Consequently, the European actorness in post-revolution Tunisia appears to have undergone seismic shifts.

Nonetheless, although the European presence during the initial phase of the Tunisian transitional process was potent, it has often been deemed incomplete due to the internal intra-institutional incoherence between the member states of the European Union. Subsequently, the depth of cooperation between the EU and Tunisia has expanded beyond the conventional confines of hard power, encompassing a broader range of areas than economics

and the military. This novelty conveys mainly to which extent the democratic element in the new Euro-Tunisian equation can trace the modernizing impact of the revisited EU perception of the post-revolution Tunisia.

The antecedent Tunisian-EU relations were not regarded as anomalous compared to the wider region, as evidenced by historical records demonstrate that prior to the initiation of the Barcelona Process in 1995, the European Union's interactions with Mediterranean nations were governed by Cooperation Agreements, which offered minimal concrete benefits and lacked political conditionality (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008, p. 195). Notably, it was only in the year following Tunisia's transition to the democratization process that this development became particularly evident a Privileged Partnership was established between the EU and Tunisia in 2012, which was subsequently translated into the 2013-2017 Action Plan with the aim of strengthening the connections between the two entities (European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), n.d, para. 1). The year 2012 witnessed the initiation of a new phase in Europe's official material contribution to aid the country in taking a resolute step towards institutionalizing democracy. Actually, Tunisia was the primary impetus that compelled the EU to abandon its biased foreign policy and accord greater significance to the southern Euro-Mediterranean region.

Upon reflection, both the drawbacks and positive outcomes of European intervention during Tunisia's transitional phase from 2011 are evident. It is an indisputable fact that the European Union played a pivotal role in facilitating Tunisia's genuine and robust democratization process. However, it is important to note that the issue of discord still persists and has been plainly revealed throughout the Tunisian revolution's transitory phase. The unequal responses of the European Union members underscore the lack of a collective and unified stance on the political upheavals in the country. Nevertheless, the European Union embraced the change in Tunisia and based its reappraisals on ad hoc interpretations of the unprecedented situation.

3.5. Three-Dimensional Approach to Promoting Democracy in Tunisia

In this part, the research focalizes on categorizing the EU's efforts to promote democracy in Tunisia into three distinct domains. Arguably, the push for democracy can be viewed as a modernizing force that can be detected as a set of axioms, often referred to as valid in European studies, that apply across three different domains. Actually, the European Union significantly amplified its support to Tunisia through various forms of assistance (European

Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), n.d, para. 6) that can be categorized into three main dimensions. Namely, the Financial stimuli, political collaboration, and transnational exchange.

The Financial stimuli encompass the ways in which economic development and trade that are leveraged to support modernization and development in Tunisia. In this context, the EU research would track the significant financial aid and support to Tunisia with the aim of boosting economic growth, creating jobs, and fostering social progress.

As far as Political collaboration is concerned, the term refers to the role of political reforms and institutional changes that can play a substantial role in promoting modernization and democratic development in Tunisia. In this particular milieu, this section will address the extent to which the EU has worked closely with the Tunisian government and civil society organizations to put forth democratic reforms, human rights, and good governance, which are essential components of the democratization process.

Last but not least, this section will also address democratic promotion from the lenses of the Transnational exchange. In point of fact, the term enfolds the ways in which cultural and social interactions can support modernization and social development in Tunisia. In light of that depiction, the section would shed light, as well, on the manner in which the EU has facilitated people-to-people exchanges, academic and research collaborations, and cultural initiatives, all with the aim of promoting mutual understanding and cooperation between Tunisians and Europeans. These exchanges can be a powerful tool in promoting modernization, as they can facilitate the transfer of knowledge, skills, and perspectives.

Collectively considered, these three dimensions form a comprehensive approach to promoting democracy as a means to promote modernization in Tunisia, with the ultimate goal of creating a stable, prosperous, and democratic society that can serve as a model for the broader region.

3.5.1. The financial assistance chronologically

In the context of the EU's impact on the modernization of Tunisian democracy, Tunisia opted for a strategic path of integration with the European region, and the advancement of a robust and flourishing democratic Tunisia within the EU's vicinity is of reciprocal strategic importance (Official Journal of the European Union, 2018, p. L 293/41). Hence, the initial response to the unique Tunisian situation manifested through various financial aid projects, complemented by the EU's prioritization of Tunisia's framework.

From 2011 onwards, Tunisia has received tangible evidence of encouragement from its international allies through the provision of financial pledges intended to foster the growth of forthcoming regional development endeavours within the country (Meddeb, 2017, p. 9). It is noteworthy, in this regard, to mention that EU's funding is taken to be a novelty in Tunisian history due to Tunisia's previous interactions with foreign funding towards its domestic civil society, particularly with regard to engagement within the political process that was marked by certain limitations (Kausch, 2013, p. 5). It is important to bear in mind that even the EU kept a steady and relatively "sterile" degree of collaboration with Tunisia during the pre-revolutionary period. Hence, the EU capitalized on the political transition in the country in order to demonstrate its readiness to adopt a set of novelty policies towards Tunisia and build upon the 30 years' legacy of frail and fledging economic support to the country.

However, the democratization process brought into the equation a new perception towards the country. Whether as an international actor or as a separate initiative of European countries, the country has consistently been the primary beneficiary of the incentive-driven mechanism each year since 2011 due to notable advancements in the areas of human rights and the enforcement of the rule of law (European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), n.d, para. 6).

Prior to engaging in the analysis, the study would swiftly tackle the significance of the financial element in democracy promotion.

Scholarly literature pinpoints that providing assistantship of financial nature has been deemed the earliest form of responsiveness in the new era of EU-Tunisia collaboration that complies with the need-based tailored scheme towards the region of MENA. Thus, the first significant milestone was marked by an improvement in diplomatic relations on the part of the EU, which subsequently facilitated the development of a new financial policy towards the country.

The initial economic breakthrough in the post-revolution era has been primarily catalyzed by a diplomatic upturn that concerns the nature of the association between the EU and Tunisia. This initiative is perceived as a remarkable advancement at the level of formalities which confirms that the conditions are in place for Tunisia and the European Union to move to a higher and more strategic level of deepening their relations and integration (translated from French source) (European Parliament, 2012, p. 4). The nature of the inter-partite cooperation underwent a significant transformation when the European Union recognized Tunisia as a key partner in the Mediterranean and raised, therefore, the potential feasibility of the partnership status from a pre-revolutionary "Association Agreement" signed in July 1995 to a "Privileged

Partnership Agreement" that was signed in March 2012. In this context, it has been revealed that Tunisia aspires to attain an elevated degree of integration with the European Union, one that is of the utmost level feasible (translated from French source) (European Parliament, 2012, p. 4)

Diplomatically, the elevation of the status between Tunisia and the European Union has multifarious implications for the economic and trade relations between the two entities.

First of all, the privileged partnership implies a more profound and comprehensive association on a multiplicity of domains that cover a vast range of issues such as the electoral processes, human rights, civil society, and the reform of the security sector (SSR) (Burwell et al., 2016, p. 11). Moreover, the augmentation of status signifies a recognition of Tunisia's notable strides in its democratic transition since the 2011 revolution, which mirrors the country's worthiness of trust and fortifies the positive external image by emphasizing its unwavering efforts to consolidate democracy, human rights, and foster economic development. Such support is indicative of a shining image of Tunisia towards its key partners. It can potentially enhance Tunisia's standing as a dependable and secure regional partner, consequently augmenting its attractiveness to foreign investment and support.

On the trading level, the improvement of the status is regarded to connote further accords to Tunisia with increased access to the markets of the European Union, potentially catalyzing an augmentation in its exports and economic growth. In fact, the European Union assumed a prominent position in promoting and urging the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to draw investment and provide financial backing for the nation (Ekiz, 2022, p. 725). Additionally, it presents avenues for technical assistance, training, and capacity-building policies across various sectors, ultimately fostering an elevation in Tunisia's competitiveness and productivity.

In summation, taking into account that abiding by democracy as a pillar of modernization, we can affirm that all the circumstances are ripe for Tunisia and the European Union to advance towards a more elevated and strategic level of deepening their relations and integration, taking into account their mutual, heightened aspirations (translated from French source) (European Parliament, 2012, p. 4). Since its outset, the efforts of the EU in post-revolutionary Tunisia resonate with the incomplete modernization process that started in the 19th century, as Tunisia continues to advance towards economic and political stability through international cooperation and partnerships.

During the following part, the analysis will trace the milestones of financial aid provided by the EU and result in a brief discussion concerning the implications of democracy promotion.

Moreover, It is probable to occasionally draw comparisons with the pre-revolution rhythm of cooperation in order to emphasize the main argument, namely to demonstrate to which extent the post-revolution EU material and immaterial investments in Tunisia helped fill the unachieved modernization movement in the country by fortifying the democracy element.

The initial restitutive measures were allocated to the nation within the timeframe of 2011 to 2014 as a prompt and exigent response to the demonstrations and civil disorder in the form of financial allocation that have been disbursed at the frame of the SPRING Program. In 2011, the EU augmented to double its economic assistance by disbursing two distinct programs worth €110 million and €33 million to support Tunisia's economic recuperation (Ekiz, 2022, p. 724). On a broader scale, within the timeframe spanning from 2011 to 2013, technical and financial aid allocated to Tunisia experienced a notable surge, reaching approximately €485 million. The majority of these funds were designated under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) (Krüger & Ratka, 2014, p. 11). The EU's reaction to support the transition was not, at first, subject to the differentiation principle. Instead, the European Union aimed to direct foreign aid to the five revolting countries of MENA (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, and Syria)

At this stage, it is noteworthy to highlight that Tunisia was a recipient of European foreign aid by means of the ENPI instrument during the pre-2014 period. However, In the context of revision for the ENP in 2014, the European Union shifted the financial aid channel to be newly granted by means of the ENI instrument from 2014 onwards.

As an urgent arrangement for a country on the brink of an economic collapse, EU officials channelled "the SPRING program (Support to Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth), which earmarked an additional €350 million for the countries of the Southern neighbourhood in 2011 and 2012 and of which Tunisia was the primary beneficiary" (Krüger & Ratka, 2014, p. 12). The program was initiated in the outbreaking year of the Arab Spring (2011) to concentrate with particular attention on two of the revitalized EU policies in the region. Its consequences blossomed over the course of two distinct reimbursements. The year 2011 earmarked an early grant of €65 million, while the year 2012 posits the heaviest contribution of the total budget of the program with a sum of €285 million. Therefore, we can maintain that it is evaluated based on the principle of differentiation as forwarded by EU scholarship. At the culmination of 2012, a commitment of €100 million was made towards Tunisia. (Greenfield et al., 2013, p. 28) that serves to heal the unprecedented acute socio-economic predicaments. This implies that the Tunisian position was positively distinguished from the

perspective of the European Union and stood on a higher stance of importance to the interests of the EU than that of the other beneficiary countries of the SPRING Program.

In order to demonstrate the amplitude of the Tunisian model for Europe on a plethora of degrees, it is noteworthy to stress that the 2011-2012 SPRING program can be best understood in the context of the already decreasing level of collaboration even since the last few days of the Ben Ali rule by late 2010. In light of this reference, the following figure sheds light on the percentage of foreign aid that has been channelled to support the economic genesis in the country during the period stemming from 2010 to 2011.

TOP 10 GROSS ODA DONORS TO TUNISIA, (MILLION €)				
Donor	2010		2011	
	Amount	Percentage	Amount	Percentage
France	180	29%	229	34%
Spain	133	18%	97	14%
AFESD*	95	15%	73	11%
Japan	77	12%	87	12%
EU Institutions	77	12%	105	16%
Germany	51	8%	48	7%
Italy	19	3%	17	3%
GEF**	8	1%	n/a	n/a
Global Fund	4	1%	n/a	n/a
Kuwait	3	1%	6	1%
Switzerland	n/a	n/a	5	1%
United Arab Emirates	n/a	n/a	5	1%
TOTAL	647	100%	672	100%

2009-10 and 2010-2011 averages. Source: OECD-DAC;²⁸ authors' calculations. Figures rounded.
 * Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development
 ** Global Environment Facility (World Bank / UN)

Table 4: Distribution of donors to Tunisia from 2010 to 2011 based upon the report of a common report conducted by AFA (Arab Forum for Alternatives), FRIDE (A European think tank for global action) & Hivos (An international development organisation based in the Hague, Netherlands) entitled “‘Foreign funding’ in post-revolution Tunisia”.

By Drawing a comparison on the provided data, we can easily identify the advancement of the European role in maintaining the economic growth in Tunisia. In addition, we notice that the two first foreign donors are France and Spain, with respectively an increasing percentage of 5 and 4 per cent by the occasion of the revolutionary incident, while the supposedly Arabic belonging of the country comes in handy with a significant drop in foreign aid of 4 percent which makes it in the third ranking. Similarly, the contribution of the EU institutions (European Union, European External Action Service, European Commission, European Parliament, European Council, etc.) marked the fifth ranking by an increase of 4 per cent in donations.

In pursuit of closer economic ties with Tunisia, the European Union took a significant step in facilitating its integration into the EU single market by projecting the establishment of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area by the end of 2012 (Ekiz, 2022, p. 725).

The relationship between the EU and Tunisia reached a significant milestone in 2012 with the conclusion of a Privileged Partnership and the approval of a new EU-Tunisia Action Plan for the years 2013 to 2017 (Narbone, 2020, p. 4). In fact, the ongoing analysis requires an imperative bridging between the different agreements in order to track the summation of EU efforts in a chronological manner. In light of this imposition, The 2012-established Privileged Partnership has practically come to meet formal enforcement as a result of the implementation of the 2014-2017 action plan between Tunisia and the European Union. It does not only represent a continuation of the EU's longstanding commitment to supporting Tunisia's development and stability but also comes as an extension to the SPRING Program of 2011, aiming at enhancing their partnership in a comprehensive and strategic manner. In this regard, the 2014-2017 action plan implements a higher level of differentiation (translated from a French source) (European Parliament, 2012, p. 2) and seeks essentially to consolidate the democratic progress in the country as well as stress the necessity to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As far as the economic approach is concerned, the stake in highlighting is the initiation of the program of ALECA. The term stands for the acronym of the French nomenclature of "Accord de Libre Echange Complet et Approfondi (which can be translated into English to "the agricultural free trade agreement"). It seeks to develop the commercial as well as economic ties between the two parties by means of facilitating Tunisian integration in the Common European Space. Per the Tunisia action plan, the French Development Agency extended a loan of €200 million to Tunisia to facilitate the implementation of two components of its

national stimulus plan, specifically aimed at boosting employment and the financial services sector (Ekiz, 2022, p. 727)

Within the 2018-2020 period, the policies of the European Union towards the country kept on sustaining the implementation of socio-economic reforms, particularly the betterment of the business landscape and the finalization of a comprehensive and thorough free trade agreement (DCFTA) of profound nature, have been prioritized by the European Union (Official Journal of the European Union, 2018, p. L 293/41). Actually, the DCFTA agreement is viewed as a significant step up for empowering the local rhythm of trade and competitiveness as well as a prominent genesis for the growth of the private sector as it primarily as a means to enhance critical sectors of the economy, particularly agriculture and services (HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY, 2016, p. 7). In this regard, we can maintain that the trade agreement on DCFTA will provide a structural contribution towards ensuring Tunisia's integration into the European sphere and modernizing the Tunisian economy (Council of the EU, 2018, para. 13). Hence, it contributes to the advancement of the modernizing aspect of the democratic transition by means of trading attributes.

In summation, the European Union has played a significant role in the modernization of Tunisian democracy. The EU's financial aid and diplomatic support towards Tunisia have been instrumental in its post-revolutionary economic growth and political stability. The EU's efforts have shifted from traditional foreign aid to a more comprehensive partnership, including human rights, civil society, and security sector reform. This comprehensive partnership has led to the establishment of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and a significant improvement in the business landscape, trade, and competitiveness. The EU's continuous support has strengthened Tunisia's position as a dependable and secure regional partner, enhancing its attractiveness to foreign investment and support. Overall, the EU's contribution to Tunisia's modernization has been significant and has laid a foundation for a prosperous and stable Tunisian democracy within the neighbourhood of the EU.

3.5.2. The political collaboration

The European Union's unequivocal intentions to buttress the fledgling Democracy in Tunisia were evident from the outset of the transitional process, which marked the transition from a unilateral autocratic regime to a nascent democratic system. As a supranational institution that has the power to channel and advocate universal values, the EU's aspiration to facilitate

Tunisia's democratic evolution was articulated by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Catherine Ashton, who pledged to endow the country with the requisite theoretical and logistical resources to enable it to embark on a bona fide political and transitional phase as she the foremost objective of the European Union in its value projection is to nurture and imbue the fundamental principles of Democracy, human rights, and the rule of law within Tunisia, with the ultimate goal of securing their preservation and manifestation in the country's future (EUROPEAN UNION, 2011, para. 3).

Regarding political support, this initiative has been significantly instrumental in enabling the Tunisian political arena to swiftly move from a unilateral, exclusionist system of governance to a more comprehensive and inclusive political system. In this regard, The EU's bilateral aid program under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) placed particular emphasis on supporting Tunisian efforts to conduct democratic and impartial elections, enhancing the justice sector's effectiveness, rehabilitating and investing in underprivileged areas, strengthening the role of civil society, and providing humanitarian aid to Libyan refugees (Ekiz, 2022, p. 727). In fact, the European Union deemed it vital to upgrade Tunisia's status from a third-country partner to a privileged partner in 2012 in order to facilitate coming up with new agreements of higher values that come to cross the interests of both parties. In this regard, the 2017's report of the European Commission states that the privileged partnership was not only a momentary policy of the EU to benefit from the positive change in its southern border but the initiative also concretizes the mutual aspiration of fortifying the bilateral relationship in every conceivable domain. As far as the political collaboration is concerned, the EU-Tunisia bilateralism underwent a significant shift after the 2011 Revolution, characterized by notable advancements in trade policies with preferential market access for goods and services, grants and loans for aid, as well as migration policies pertaining to visa requirements, readmission arrangements, and temporary migration (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 169).

Arguably, the EU's engagement with the Tunisian transition has been translated into long-term cooperation between the Tunisian governments. It is incremental, at this stage, to draw the reader's attention to the fact that during the initiating years of the Tunisian Revolution, the period was characterized purely by political instability. Thus, Mohamed Ghannouchi, an iconic figure in Tunisian pre-revolution politics and a distinguished representative of the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD), served as the first Prime Minister from January 2011 to February 2011. Subsequently, he was succeeded by Beji Caïd

Essebsi, who took charge of the position of interim Prime Minister until the elections were held later that year as an independent candidate. Even though the first years of the revolutionary movement in the country were instrumental in accurately deciding on the direction of the newly established order to head to establishing a proper democracy, the key figures that were trusted with this mission were none other than the figures of the previous regime. Thus identified the first blurriness of the whole new transition. Besides, Hamadi Jebali became the third post-revolution Prime Minister from December 2011 to March 2013, followed by Ali Laarayedh from March 2013 to January 2014. That period is deemed to mark the beginning of political stability as the right-wing party of "Ennahda" governed by a vast majority from 2011 to 2013. Mehdi Jomaa served as Prime Minister from January 2014 to February 2015, and Habib Essid served from February 2015 to August 2016. Both PMs were identified as independent.

As a matter of fact, the study highlights the evidence that one key area of post-revolution collaboration between the EU and Tunisia at the level of political assistance is exemplified in the technical aid provided by the European Parliament to ensure that Tunisia's elections were free and fair. Actually, The EU provided technical and financial assistance to the High Independent Authority for Elections (ISIE) on more than one occasion. Notwithstanding, the ISIE is the apparel established by Tunisian authorities by the dint of political emancipation subsequent to the 2011 revolution that was responsible for organizing and overseeing the elections. At this juncture, it is deemed crucial to refer to the fact that the European assistance has been firstly in response to the Tunisian demand. This aspect showcases two essential parameters that do not only define the EU's embrace of the Tunisian transition but also emphasise the readiness of the European Union to import modernization to the country after the toppling of the Ben Ali regime. The EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) was initiated in Tunisia in July 2011 played a vital role in monitoring the country's first free and fair elections. However, for the sake of precision, this part of this section would mainly allocate its focus on the example of the 2014's presidential and general elections Tunisia and demonstrate the extent to which the European Union played a positive role bringing forth the elements of modernization from a political perspective.

Nevertheless, the political bilateral included a handful of novelty arrangements such as organizing trainings for ISIE staff, the provision of equipment to the Tunisian authorities, as well as the deployment of EU election observers.

For example, the Final Report conducted by the European parliament on the 2014 elections in Tunisia sheds light on the fact that at the invitation of the Tunisian Government and the ISIE,

the European Union Election Observation Mission was present in the country between 17 September 2014 and 14 January 2015 (Mission d'observation électorale de l'Union Européenne, Tunisie 2014 , 2014, p. 7). The mission was chiefly supervised by a Belgian Member of the European Parliament, Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck. Similarly, the EOM is composed of around 100 observers who came from 28 EU Member States, Canada, Switzerland and Norway (European Union External Action, 2014, para. 2) who were deployed throughout Tunisia in order to monitor the election process and provide the necessary technical assistance in a number of missions including voter registration, campaigning, as well as arranging the voting procedures.

The EOM's findings were published in a comprehensive report that provided an objective assessment of the election process and aided the local authorities to have a concise image about the democratization process. In actuality, the report highlighted areas of concern, such as the need for improved voter education and the need for better training of election officials. It also praised the Tunisian authorities for their efforts to ensure a transparent and inclusive election process.

One of the most intricate characteristics of the EU mission is deemed as a comprehensive approach to assuring the democratic rules. This criterium is demonstrated by the fact that election supervision was not limited to direct contact with people, instead the EU EOM monitoring unit observed four TV channels during the legislative election campaign (Watania 1 and 2, Nessma TV and Hiwar Tounsi). A fifth channel (Hannibal TV) was added to the sample during both rounds of the presidential elections (Mission d'observation électorale de l'Union Européenne, Tunisie 2014 , 2014, p. 21). During the entire reporting period, the EOM made certain that all public broadcast media exhibited unwavering objectivity. Another major example is demonstrated by the fact that The coverage of the campaigns by the private audiovisual media observed shows, naturally, more or less marked differences between the various media. differences between the various media. While Mosaïque FM and Shems FM radios offered almost equal offered almost equal coverage of the two candidates during the campaign for the second round of the presidential elections (Mission d'observation électorale de l'Union Européenne, Tunisie 2014 , 2014, p. 22)

In summation, it is important to acknowledge that even though the EU's support for election observation in Tunisia is considered a novelty that embroidered the new approach to the country, it was only but a part of a wider package of political and technical assistance to the

country to help it forth in landing upon the safe shores of political stability and installing a solid and vivid democratic system.

In addition to that, one of the most significant areas of cooperation between Tunisia and the EU is underlined by the intergovernmental approach that has been intensively conducted with the Commission of Venice from 2011 to nearly the closing period of 2016.

This initiative served the development of new electoral laws and procedures as one of the fundamental modernizing imprints of the efforts in the post-revolution era. It is also considered one major milestone that denotes the EU's investments in post-revolution Tunisia. Hence, it is feasible to maintain that the cooperation between Tunisia and the Commission of Venice has been an important part of Tunisia's democratic transition as it provided legal advice and technical assistance with the aim of assisting in developing and reforming the country's legal and institutional framework.

Prior to delving into a more complex analysis of this stage in the Democratization process, it is very important to highlight the diplomatic association by which the new Tunisian- EU council cooperation took place. To begin with, the new approach to Tunisia has profoundly paved the way only because of the new political emancipation that erupted accidentally. That was the initiating phase, but the evolution of the local Democracy has been heavily shaped by governmental efforts that were accompanied largely by the Commission of Venice. The Venice Commission, also known by the name of the European Commission for Democracy through Law, is an organization dedicated to promoting Democracy, human rights, and the rule of law under the auspices of the Council of Europe (Chêne & al, 2018, p. n,d) has been established in 1990 and comprises 61 Member States Of which it is composed of 45 official Member States with in addition to 15 other Members that are labelled with the status of observers, exemplified by Algeria, Chile and Costa Rica, etc. (Council of Europe, 2014, para. 4)

That being said, the shift in the EU's prioritization of Tunisian affairs was primarily in response to people's power rather than the Tunisian government's appeal or any exceptional measures taken. It reflects a genuine commitment by the EU to support the democratization process in Tunisia and promote political stability in the region. In this context, the Council of Europe asserts that In 2010, Tunisia was granted full membership to the Venice Commission. In 2012, the country involved the Commission in the discussions of the National Constituent Assembly regarding the new Tunisian Constitution. The Constitution was ultimately adopted in January 2014, after the Venice Commission provided an opinion on the matter (Venice

Commission | Council of Europe, n.d "Project to support Independent bodies in Tunisia (PAIIT 2019-2022)", para. 1).

This reading recommends that the Commission's exhortation and technical assistance to Tunisia ought to point to set up and reinforce autonomous democratic institutions that can oversee and ensure different divisions of political, social, as well as economic interface. The autonomy of these institutions is expected to guarantee a high degree of open certainty and contribute to the reinforcement of Democracy in Tunisia. Actually, the bond between the two parties has been frequently highlighted by the European services as in the own words of the president of the Commission, Mr Gianni Buquicchio, who maintained in a statement released on the 26th of August 2021 that The Venice Commission has been supporting Tunisia since the Revolution in 2011 to achieve a fresh start, beginning with the development of a democratic constitution (Buquicchio, 2021, para. 2).

It is vital, at this stage, to capture the reader's attention to the fact that the inauguration of the 2014 constitution in the country coincided with the concluding part of the local political instability. Thus, the Tunisian government in 2014, under the leadership of the party Ennahda, worked on a package of measures that laid the foundation for a strong and solid democracy, at least at the level of formalities. Hence, Tunisians have engaged in a pro-European democratization process by abiding by the indications and taking great inspiration from the different European previous experiences. That being said, the 2014th Constitution established a bundle of checks and balances institutions that were entrusted with ensuring the balance of power in the country, which is deemed to be the most fundamental pillar of a real democracy.

These bodies include the establishment of the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE), the Audiovisual Communication Authority (ICA), the Human Rights Authority (IDH), the Authority for Sustainable Development and the Rights of Future Generations (IDDDGF), as well as the Authority for Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption (IBOGOLUCC). Additionally, Tunisia has also created other institutions via organic laws, such as the Access to Information Authority (IAI), the National Authority for the Prevention of Torture (INPT), the National Personal Data Protection Authority (INPDP), and the National Authority against Human Trafficking (INLT). Furthermore, the country established the National Authority against Corruption (INLUCC) through decree-framework law and the Independent High Authority of audiovisual communication (HAICA) through decree law. This description underscores Tunisia's commitment to strengthening its Democracy by

ensuring transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in various aspects of public life.

Within this novelty in Tunisian politics, the research on the role played by the European Union as an external force that drives Democracy in the country.

Actually, the development of independent Tunisian bodies was supported by the Commission of Venice under the Council of Europe in response to the Democracy needed by the outbreak of 2011 via a number of programs.

Due to the limitations of the data provided on Internet resources enshrine the impact of the European Union through the Venice Commission on democracy development, the focus at this stage will be solely allocated to the work of the Commission in the period starting from 2019 to 2022, as and as an example to illustrate how impactful the European Union's imprint on Tunisian advancement of Democracy had been.

During the period standing from 2019 to 2022, the presence of the EU has been still effective in the Tunisian democratization scene via the Commission of Venice. One such project labelled the "PAII-T" project that, was intended primarily to extrapolate on the democratic advancement of the legacy's first post-revolution constitutional assembly of 2011 and help achieve the indication of the 2014 constitution of the country. This aspect is found to carry a significant amount of truth, as it has been reflected in the published data on the portal of the Council of Europe. The commitment of Europe to continue supporting the process is affirmed through the close involvement of the Venice Commission in ensuring the independence of the independent bodies and drafting an organic law with common standards. In addition, the Commission cooperates with the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE) to establish electoral standards. This shows the strong partnership between the Venice Commission and Tunisia in promoting Democracy and ensuring the integrity of elections (Venice Commission | Council of Europe, n.d "Project to support Independent bodies in Tunisia (PAIIT 2019-2022)", para. 1). Moreover, The tripartite collaboration between the independent bodies of Tunisia, the European Union, and the Council of Europe, forms the basis for this work, which falls under the project to support independent bodies in Tunisia (PAII-T). (Council of Europe, "Projet d'appui aux instances indépendantes en Tunisie (PAII-T) | Tunisie", n.d, para 2) With an allocated budget of a total of €5,556,000, where 90% of the funding comes from the European Union and the remaining 10% comes from the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, "Projet d'appui aux instances indépendantes en Tunisie (PAII-T) | Tunisie," n.d, para 1). the PAII-T project included training and capacity-building activities, as well as technical

assistance to support the development of legal and regulatory frameworks for these independent bodies.

In this context, it is pivotal to reflect on the objectives of this European initiative. In fact, the post-2014-constitution democratic institutions were the entire Tunisian population that will benefit from an enhanced legal framework and improved functioning of civil society and independent bodies (Council of Europe, "Projet d'appui aux instances indépendantes en Tunisie (PAII-T) | Tunisie", n.d, para 2) as the primary beneficiaries of this project in order to strengthen their capacities and to provide the necessary technical assistance. Namely the ISIE, INLUCC, IBOGOLUCC, HAICA, IDH as well as the IDDDGF (Council of Europe, "Projet d'appui aux instances indépendantes en Tunisie (PAII-T) | Tunisie", n.d, para 2).

In conclusion, the political involvement of the EU in the Tunisian transition has played a crucial role in supporting the country's democratization process in terms of providing technical assistance at its earliest nascent stages. By means of various initiatives, such as the PAII-T project and the Commission of Venice's technical assistance, the EU is deemed to have assisted Tunisia in developing and reforming its legal and institutional framework, as well as establishing independent bodies to ensure transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. Seeing, thus, was the initial breed for a solid democracy to thrive. Moreover, the study shed light on the political support provided to Tunisia through bilateral aid programs, trade policies, and migration policies, facilitating the country's transition from an exclusionist system of governance to a more comprehensive and inclusive political system.

3.5.3. The transnational exchange

By monitoring the progressive advancement of the European Union's aid to Tunisia in the subsequent categories, this section allocates a particular focus on the civilian power of the European Union as a moderator for post-revolution change in inter-state relations.

Transnational exchange, a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon, is deemed to have the merit for increasing global interconnectivity, rendering the international local and making the domestic a global trend (Walker, 2014, p. 13). At its core, transnational exchange refers to the diverse interactions between individuals, communities, and organizations from different countries, transcending national boundaries and fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and mutual understanding. One of the most significant aspects of transnational exchange is the proliferation of people-to-people connections. These connections manifest in various forms, such as cultural exchange programs, academic collaborations, and volunteer

initiatives. It can be considered that the collaborative initiatives centred around the exchange of knowledge and technology, with a view to sharing best practices, have emerged as a significant focal point for both established and emerging powers (Walker, 2014, p. 13). All of which contribute to a heightened sense of global citizenship and interconnectedness. The democratic transition, from a transnational perspective, involved a wider array of non-material investments that were grouped together under the overarching concept of democracy, upholding fundamental values such as human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and the concept of "good governance" (Börzel & Risse, 2009, p. 23).

In this final section, the study will focus on the youth exchange programs as well as the civil society pivotal roles as an example to trace the modernizing people-to-people effect of the EU in post-revolution Tunisia.

3.5.3.1. Empowering Civil Society in Tunisia through EU Support

Subsequent to the revolution, bolstering civil society emerged as a primary focus of collaboration between the European Union and Tunisia, signifying a pivotal area of concerted efforts to promote democratic ideals and civil liberties. In fact, the EU frequently expressed its intention to augment the budget for bilateral cooperation in order to aid civil society in constructing a framework of civil liberties and democratic principles devoid of any partiality, even in cases where the government is undemocratic (Ekiz, 2022, p. 728). In this regard, literature enshrines that civil society reactions were among the various forms of responsiveness for the EU. For that reason, a broad more-for-more strategy has been initiated through the establishment of the Civil Society Facility for the neighbourhood (comprising both Southern and Eastern regions) with an aggregate budget of €26.4 million for the year 2011 (MEMO/11/918, 2011, p. 2).

Prior to delving into the examination of the European Union's support for the Tunisian civil society, it is noteworthy to highlight the fact that Tunisia has been seen as a strategic partner for Europe since the inception of the integration process in the 1950s. Even though the country has been marginalized in terms of inter-continental importance vis-à-vis the European stance, it has always been of instrumental importance in other areas of cooperation, such as migration and security. Hence the EU recognizes the importance of supporting democracy and human rights in the country as a pivotal defensive mechanism that complements its diplomatic and economic plans. Therefore, many efforts have been allocated to support civil society in Tunisia are part of a broader strategy to promote stability, prosperity, and democratic values in the region.

That being said, they knew the approach of the European Union to foster the mechanism and texts of cheques and balances. Making a strong emphasis on the role of civil society is considered a novelty in the history of the two parties. In order to trace the European Union's involvement in Tunisian civil society, The study refers to the web portal of the EU's 'EU Neighbors South' initiative as a feasible primary source. The web portal provides the research with a plethora of accurate data from not only primary but also secondary sources as it provides the headings of the projects funded by the EU to boost the national dialogue in the country with reference to secondary resources that verify the vision forwarded by the European Union. The aforementioned criteria are intended to assist the research in tracing the European Union's support for Tunisian democracy from the perspective of civil society. Inasmuch the economic and diplomatic uptick that has been detected in the previous stage of the analysis has been allocated importance and defined as one of the new milestones defining the post-revolution approach, the EU's people-to-people impact is deemed by this study to provide an equally well-defined strategy that ensures the completion of the comprehensiveness of the new approach adopted for the post-revolution Tunisia.

Withal, the main objective of this section is to provide an overview of the EU's involvement in bolstering the Tunisian civil society From the year 2017 onwards because the focus on the Tunisian civil society was not at first allocated. As much as it is powerful in the post, terrorist attacks that have occurred in the Bardo Museum in central Tunis and on the shores of the glamorous beach of the coastal city of Sousse during the summer of 2015. It is mandatory at this stage to state that the European Union's efforts to support the democratization process have worked not only through an Intergovernmental perspective but also from a people to people lenses that support the exchange Between members of the Tunisian Civil society and afford a rapid yet and efficient Contribution of Tunisian friends On the international level

The evidence provided on the web portal proved to be instrumental in the research process in terms of enabling the research to access, in the first place, the formalities and also the intricacies of the programs allocated for civil society. From first sight, it is easy to notice a quantitative as well as a qualitative uptick in the number of initiatives that support the empowerment of civil society and reinforce the mechanism of cheques and balances on governmental measurements in order to foster rapid democratic cultural growth. In this context, it is possible to observe an acute upsurge that concerns civil society, including all its possible buddings in the Tunisian social net. In fact, the web portal indicates that the EU has funded 23 programs that support civil society over the course of just six years, subsequently

to the local needs. Among these 23 programs, 16 of them have already expired, but only seven of them are still now active.

The EU Neighbours program complements and supports the communication work invested by the EU Delegations in the concerned countries and collaborates closely with the communication teams at the European Commission (EU Neighbours South, "About the programme "n.d, para. 2)

As a matter of fact, it has been maintained since 2017 to not only support the local transition and to help the Tunisian population embark on the safe shores of democracy, but it is also believed to embed a futuristic self-centred implication of the European Union's credibility in world politics. As a matter of fact, it also serves to do the necessary Marketing and promoting the local impression of the EU's foreign policy that serves as a solid background to enhance the internal EU's local support and to avoid any risk of the growth of Euroscepticism and to hinder the recurrent separatist movement within the Union. In other words, it is a program that touches, through the means of low politics, the local population in order to make a cultural bond between the European Union as a supranational institution and the Tunisian people in order to improve the internal image of the EU within the country as well as within EU member states, so that it would facilitate the absorption of the values and norms for Tunisia and help maintain the internal stability within the Union. In addition to that, it is crucial to bare in mind that the EU has been among the early respondents to the Tunisian cause, and it has, from its departure, sought to define a well-European-tailored post-revolution culturalism in the country since 2011. In the context of the post-revolution EU-Tunisian case, the principle of asymmetry of interdependence highlights the need for the EU to approach its democracy promotion efforts with sensitivity and awareness of the power dynamics at play. This relationship is characterized by an acute "asymmetry of interdependence," a concept in international relations that refers to the idea that one party is more dependent on the other than vice versa.

At this stage, the analysis would follow a chronological or chronological order that shows and demonstrates the gradual growth of the civic opposition culture in Tunisia by the primary and instrumental push of the European Union. That being said, Detecting the European civilian approach to post-Revolution Tunisia allows the study to insist on the transition in vision from a totally realistic approach to the country that stands on rationality and mere profit in the pre-revolution era and its transition to a more liberal approach that works not only with the Tunisian government but also acts in synergy with the people's interests in order to achieve the achievement of the goals of the revolution, as labelled by the Tunisian

activists. Thus, it would be sensible to come to the conclusion that the European Union tries to implement democracy as a part of a modernization imprint.

The table below summarises The entirety of the expired and also active programs that have been initiated by EU funding in order to foster a sense of engagement in the Tunisian civil society after the revolution of 2011. The data provided within has been taken as is from the available primary sources on the online portal of the EU Neighbors initiative.

Project Name	Objective	Start Date	End Date
Tfanen project	Empower civil society actors in Tunisia	01/01/2014	02/07/2017
Let Us Hear Your Stories!	Promote freedom of expression and media pluralism	01/01/2015	29/09/2017
Tfanen - Tunisie Créative	Promote cultural expression and cultural and creative industries	01/01/2015	02/12/2017
#EU4YOUth “Shoot & Share”	Foster youth participation in the democratic process	01/01/2018	23/04/2018
ASF-ATL STD AIDS	Empower civil society to address STIs/HIV/AIDS	01/01/2018	08/01/2019
MedUp Sub-granting Fund, Tunisia	Provide funding and support for social entrepreneurship	01/01/2019	10/06/2019
Support Tunisian civil society organizations	Empower civil society to play an active role in local development	01/01/2019	07/10/2019
Med Dialogue Fellows: Addressing the Ecological challenge in the Mediterranean	Foster dialogue on environmental issues	01/01/2020	20/11/2019
MAJALAT project	Foster dialogue	01/01/2020	10/03/2020

	between EU and Southern Mediterranean civil society		
Scholarships for university graduates	Provide education opportunities for young people	01/01/2020	13/01/2021
Clean-up Kerkennah	Wetlands Support environmental conservation efforts	01/01/2020	19/06/2021
Call for artistic projects to participate in a collective exhibition around the theme of "Connectivity"	Promote cultural exchange and expression	01/01/2021	15/09/2021
Call for applications for the support of social and solidarity economy structures impacted by covid-19	Support for social and solidarity economy structures	01/01/2021	29/10/2021
Support for the independent monitoring of budgetary and fiscal policies	Promote transparency and accountability in budgetary policies	01/01/2022	04/10/2022
Civil Society Manager, Anna Lindh Foundation	Support the Anna Lindh Foundation's civil society initiatives	01/01/2022	12/12/2022

Table 5: The initiatives of EU's people-to-people direct assistance to Tunisian Democracy. Author's own elaboration based on the web portal of the "EUneighbours - South".

In order to accurately assess and understand the impact of EU-funded initiatives on the empowerment of Tunisian civil society, it is essential to start by examining three essential parameters. The objectives of each initiative, as well as their duration and scope of influence vis-à-vis the internal Tunisian politics. According to the information displayed in the table

above, it is observable that some of the initiatives, exemplified in the "Let Us Hear Your Stories!" project and the "#EU4YOUth "Shoot & Share" project, are away from having a direct impact on solidifying the impact of the Tunisian democratic transition as they are deemed to not be in stark opposition to any supervisory task on the governmental arrangements. They rather focus more on fostering youth engagement and promoting citizen journalism rather than directly addressing issues of democracy and governance.

Moving swiftly on to the specific initiatives analysed in the table, it is evident that the data puts forward the impression that a number of highly intricate features concerning the intercorrelation between the role of civil society and democracy, such as the "Support for the independent monitoring of budgetary and fiscal policies" project and the "Civil Society Manager" project, allocate a more oriented focus on promoting transparency, accountability, and civic engagement. In addition to that, it is important to consider the duration and scope of each initiative. Some of the initiatives, such as the "Scholarships for university graduates coming from European Neighbourhood Policy countries" project, are relatively short-term and may not have a significant impact on the long-term development of Tunisian democracy. Others, such as the "Tfanen - Tunisie Créative" project and the "MedUp Sub-granting Fund, Tunisia," have a broader and more sustained focus on supporting civil society and cultural development.

In order to further illustrate the positive impact of EU-funded initiatives on the role played by the Tunisian civil society, this section of the analysis will focalize on explaining an example of the 2019's EU initiative to "Support Tunisian civil society organizations." The central target of the program is to enhance the role of Tunisian civil society organizations (CSOs) as actors of local economic and social development and to boost the impact of their actions as a means of developing their capacity, notably through the establishment of a set of innovative financing mechanisms. That being said, the program envisioned the improvement of gender equality and also filling the gap of youth unemployment in the country. By addressing these two major issues, societal reform in the country would have been deemed to make a considerable elope in the democratic sphere and levitate the burden off the socioeconomic debts that had been accumulating even before toppling the regime of Ben Ali. The European Union allocated a budget of 1,800,000 (EUR) to support the democratic transition by means of this phase.

Falling short of the data available on the internet, the research can maintain that a significant feature to be taken here is that it represents a concrete example of the EU's commitment to supporting the democratic transition in Tunisia through targeted initiatives. While the specific

impact of this program is unclear due to the unavailable data about its implications, its broader objectives align with the goals of supporting the democratic transition in Tunisia in the first place and promoting stability in the region in the second place. The program's core values stand within the fact that it focuses on two major issues as it aims to contribute to societal reform in the country and alleviate the socioeconomic challenges that have been accumulating over the years and suggest an alternative to the rigidity of the political reality in the country.

In order to gain further insights into the EU's engagement with Tunisian democracy, a Skype interview was conducted with Mr. Kemla Jendoubi, an experienced advocate for human rights and democracy in Tunisia. Mr. Jendoubi's extensive background and expertise make his perspective valuable in assessing the EU's aid to Tunisia. The interview revealed the following insights: "Most of the EU's reimbursements to Tunisia were directed towards government assistance rather than support for Tunisian civil society. The European Union has in fact earmarked a credit of 300,000,000 euros per year for the Tunisian state to use to strengthen democracy, such as the legal sector and parliament. These foundations have also been devoted to ensuring regulations for the interior regions of the state." Mr. Jendoubi pointed out that a significant portion of the EU's financial assistance was aimed at supporting the Tunisian government in strengthening democratic institutions, including the legal sector and parliament. Additionally, efforts were made to address regional disparities within the country. He further explained: "It is true that the European Union has provided financial reimbursements for civil society, but this is still very little, even extremely little compared to the financial assistance received by the state. The financial reimbursements that have been provided to assist civil society have largely been directed to support European NGOs in Tunisia and not Tunisian NGOs in Tunisia." Mr. Jendoubi highlighted the disparity in financial support between the state and civil society, noting that the EU's assistance to Tunisian civil society was limited, with a significant focus on supporting European NGOs rather than local Tunisian NGOs. He concluded by stating: "In conclusion, it is not at all true to say that the European Union has undermined Tunisian democracy primarily through civil society. This is not true."

As a result of the reading provided above, the study deduces that the EU's civic engagement in post-revolution Tunisia is deemed to be of a multifaceted imprint and addresses various aspects of the democratic transition process. Even though the data displayed above indicates that the European Union's push for a strong Tunisian Civil society started in the year 2017, it is indelible that it has been efficient and comprehensive in addressing key elements within the

fledgling Tunisian democratic transition. Its investments varied from promoting youth engagement initiatives to monitoring governmental activities and promoting transparency and accountability, which is a milestone in a nascent Democracy. Hence, it can be concluded that the EU-funded initiatives aimed at the Tunisian civil society have varying levels of impact on solidifying the Tunisian democratic transition.

3.6. Assessing Tunisia's 2019-2023 Measures: Alignment with EU's Democratic Impact

3.6.1. Tunisian Democratic transition: An Englobing Outlook

The Jasmine Revolution of 2010-11, sparked by Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation, a Tunisian street vendor, was a result of widespread dissatisfaction with the socioeconomic and political conditions in Tunisia (Tansel, 2018: 72). Reverberated across the country, the revolution emerged as a reaction to pervasive dissatisfaction, addressing concerns including high unemployment rates, lack of security, gender disparities, human rights abuses, media censorship and systemic corruption. The political unrest that had been brewing in the country reached its climax with the Jasmine Revolution, as Tunisians united and fought together in order to stop the government's control and censorship of the media and demanded the advancement of democratic values and respect for human rights. Tunisian people's main demands during this process were bread, liberty, and national dignity.

This part of the thesis is mainly addressing Tunisian transitology and sheds light on the paramount milestones that shaped the entirety of the process. This section serves as a central point of departure towards a profound look into the complex landscape of Tunisia's post-revolution era, uncovering, hereafter, its progress and setbacks, as well as highlighting the ongoing endeavours to cultivate a comprehensive and robust democratic structure.

Throughout the tumultuous years following the Arab Spring, the democratic transition in Tunisia has been, Nevertheless, initiated with the formation of three interim governments, each of which played a crucial role in establishing and consolidating the nascent democratic framework of the county. Despite the challenges posed by the political and social upheaval, these governments charted a steadfast course towards the establishment of an inclusive and participatory democratic system, yet far from being complete. The remarkable political inclusiveness displayed during this time was a testament to the maturity and resilience of the Tunisian people, who refused to be swayed by the forces of retrogression of the pro-Ben Ali political mainstream.

In 2014, the country held its first free and fair presidential elections, in which Beji Caid Essebsi who served in several ministerial roles in the government of Habib Bourguiba, Tunisia's first President, as President of the parliament under Ben Ali, and as Interim Prime

Minister following Tunisia's revolution (Khan & Mezran, 2015: 3), emerged as the winner, marking a major milestone in the democratic transition. In the following years, the Tunisian government and parliament worked to establish a new constitution that enshrined the rights of citizens and provided a framework for a more representative government. In 2018, Kais Saied, a Constitutional Law professor, won the presidential election by a significant margin.

Despite facing several challenges, such as political and social upheaval, financial hardship, and terrorism, the Tunisian democratic transition was characterized by a high level of political inclusiveness and maturity of the Tunisian people. This is exemplified by the successful holding of free and fair presidential elections and the establishment of a new constitution that protected the rights of citizens. The transition, however, was not without its difficulties and remained far from complete.

The democratic transition has been characterized by being uncertain due to the multiple unbalanced decisions that were taken during the first phase of the democratization process. Ensuing ousting Ben Ali from office on the 14th of January 2011, the speaker of parliament, Fouad Mebazaa, has since assumed the role of Interim President, and an interim government has been formed with the mandate to drive the early phase of political transition (Paciello, 2011: 9).

The formation of the first interim government marked the beginning of the political transition in Tunisia. Its mandate was to steer the initial phase of this process and remain in power until the election of the National Constituent Assembly, which was initially slated for July 24th, 2011, but was later postponed to October 23rd, 2011. The ISIE (Higher Instance of Supervision for Elections) closely monitored the election, ensuring its fairness and transparency.

In the absence of an established political system, the Second Republic represented a new beginning in Tunisia and provided an opportunity to build a democratic system from scratch. One of the critical factors of the Second Republic was the development of a new constitution. The constitution was adopted in January 2014, representing a significant milestone in the country's democratic transition. In this context, the Constitution provided for a system of government based on the principles of separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches. Throughout the era of the Second Republic, there was resolute advocacy for the proliferation of fresh stakeholders in the political sphere, as exemplified by the exponential growth in the number of political factions and the advent of

civil society movements and national associations that significantly contributed to the political discourse within the nation. The political landscape was fragmented, with a large number of political parties competing to gain power within the constitutional assembly of 2011. Even though post-revolution Tunisia has been established on a pan-democratic principle of inclusion, this fragmentation led to political polarization and resulted in creating a lack of consensus on critical issues, which made the transition process characterized by complexity, involving pragmatic concessions, unintended consequences, mistakes, episodes of crisis, and a great deal of historical baggage (McCarthy, 2019: 2). However, civil society organizations played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape and ensuring the democratic transition remained on track.

Furthermore, the Second Republic faced two main challenges; the first one was to strike a balance between democratic governance and security as well as stability. Added to that, the country was dealing with a range of security risks. The economic hardships were exacerbated by a number of challenges to Tunisian security including a difficult domestic security environment, an unstable region, insecure borders, and ineffective security forces, which together constitute fertile ground for jihadi terrorism (Faleg, 2017: 2). However, it is also important to emphasize that the security forces did not become a tool for repression and or a threat to democratic governance. The second challenge was the need for promoting social and economic development. Within this context, the nation experienced an elevated level of joblessness, particularly among the youth demographic, necessitating the creation of employment opportunities and avenues for economic expansion. In that sense, the government implemented several reforms to promote economic development. Still, the progress was slow and the country faced significant social and economic challenges.

The period between the years 2014 and 2019 marked a period of transition. Tunisia's Consensus period was critical in the country's post-revolutionary history. Following the Arab Spring, Tunisia underwent significant political transformations, including establishing a new democratic system. This period was marked by a unique consensus-building process, which helped consolidate democracy and ensure stability in the country.

The Consensus period in Tunisia began in October 2014 when the political elite in Tunis reached a 'historic consensus' (*al-tawafuq al-tarikhi*) of shared policies and interests (McCarthy, 2019: 1). The Carthage Agreement also represents an internal milestone as far as the democratization process in the country is concerned. Actually, during the year 2016,

extended this alliance to other political and social actors and opened the door to the formation of a national unity government, tasked with running an agreed-upon programme aimed at bolstering the economy, government efficiency and the fight against terrorism (Govantes & de Larramendi, 2019: 201).

This agreement aimed to bring stability to the country by establishing a national unity government that would represent all political factions. The deal was brokered by civil society actors and political parties and was signed by all major political parties in Tunisia. The Carthage Agreement set the stage for establishing a Consensus government responsible for implementing key reforms, including adopting a new constitution. Moreover, Consensus has become a buzzword, helping Tunisia attract foreign aid and investment (Hamid & Grewal, 2022: 2). In this respect, the Consensus government successfully implemented significant reforms.

The Consensus period aimed essentially at strengthening political stability which has upheld consensus between the main political parties has failed to improve the economic situation or achieve greater social stability (Govantes & de Larramendi, 2019: 203). However, its potential gradually withered before a number of socio-economic as well as security challenges. Despite concerted efforts to implement economic reforms, the Tunisian economy has persistently demonstrated a predictable pattern of performance, characterized by elevated rates of unemployment and inflation, culminating in pervasive social unrest throughout the disenfranchised regions of the nation.

One notable obstacle confronting the consensus government is the proliferation of radical factions. Tunisia was besieged by three terrorist incidents in metropolitan zones of Bardo as well as Sousse in 2015, introducing, thereby, substantial defects for the economy via the channel of the tourism industry in the country which devastated Tunisia's tourism industry and reduced foreign direct investment (FDI) (Khan & Mezran, 2015: 2). This incident rendered security the foremost priority of the coalition government. To its credit, the government reached a consensus in passing a counterterrorism law in July 2015, and it was able to enhance the capacity and material resources of the military and security forces (Hamid & Grewal, 2022: 8).

Furthermore, the Consensus government has faced significant challenges in implementing key reforms, particularly in the areas of decentralization and anti-corruption. The government

has struggled to provide greater autonomy to local governments, leading to growing frustrations in marginalized regions. Additionally, the government's efforts to combat corruption have been hindered by resistance from powerful elites, leading to a growing sense of disillusionment among the population. Despite these challenges, the Consensus government has addressed the population's concerns. For example, the government has established a Truth and Dignity Commission to investigate human rights violations committed under previous regimes. Additionally, the government has taken steps to address economic and social challenges, such as establishing the National Strategic Plan for Development.

To sum up, the democratic shift in Tunisia was a direct response to the prevailing discontent with the country's socio-economic and political circumstances. Rooted in the aspirations for "bread, liberty and national dignity", the revolution united Tunisians against governmental control and human rights violations. Although confronted with obstacles like political and social turmoil, terrorism and economic struggles, the Transition revealed the Tunisian people's remarkable level of political inclusiveness and maturity. The establishment of three provisional governments proved instrumental in laying the foundations and solidifying the emerging democratic structure. The advent of the Second Republic marked a fresh start accompanied by the crafting of a New constitution that placed significant emphasis on the division of powers. Nevertheless, the process of transition unfolds intricately, marked by political polarization and insufficiency of agreement on vital matters. The era of consensus sought to strengthen democracy and foster stability. The signing of the Carthage Agreement paved the way for a unified national government, resulting in the enactment of significant reforms. However, challenges persisted, encompassing socio-economic volatility, security threats and the proliferation of extremist factions. The government encountered opposition from hurdles, the consensus government addressed the concerns of the populace by establishing truth and dignity commissions and implementing development strategies, yet, The Tunisian economy continued to grapple with persistent difficulties, marked by soaring unemployment rates and inflation which contributed to social unrest.

Tunisia's pursuit of democracy has been complex and ever-changing. Noteworthy achievements encompass fostering political inclusivity and institutionalizing a democratic framework. Nonetheless, this journey is not devoid of hurdles, such as socio-economic hardships, security complexities and opposition to change. Despite these obstacles, the

Tunisian society has exhibited extraordinary resilience and perseverance. However, sustained efforts are imperative to cultivate an inclusive and stable democratic system in the nation.

3.6.2. Presentation of the elements of discussion

The upcoming chapters shall scrutinize the salient events and alterations that have occurred in the Tunisian Democratization process from 2019 to 2022. The analysis shall endeavour to shed light on the pivotal shift in the Tunisian democratic modal and the ensuing mechanisms that have arisen after the 25th of July 2021 concerning the deviation of the Third Republic towards a non-democratic modal. The chapter's central objective shall be to evince how these significant events have served as a catalyst for the European Union to reassess its stance regarding the funding allocated to Tunisian democracy. Primarily, the analysis shall commence by examining the 2022 Constitution Project and its shortcomings, which have had a profound impact on reducing the democratic outcomes of the Tunisian Revolution. Subsequently, the chapter shall delve into the ramifications of the referendum on the image of Tunisia in the international arena and how it has constrained the possibility of future cooperation with the European Union. The research shall primarily rely on the governmental conduct of the post-2019 movement in Tunisia and analyze how Tunisian exceptionalism has fallen short and to what extent it has been weakened. Ultimately, the chapter shall conclude by highlighting how the European Union may rethink its policy towards the Tunisian state, with a shift in focus toward the means of ensuring democratic compliance. Given the paramount importance of the relationship between the Tunisian Republic and the European Union since the Republic's inception in 1956, it is crucial to evaluate the conduct of local governments, given the weight that the element of democracy holds in the equation of Tunisian collaboration and cooperation with the EU. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge that the policies implemented locally have a direct impact on the stability of the region, considering Tunisia's strategic significance as a southern neighbour of the European Union. This impact applies not only to the countries of the Middle East and North Africa that possess long-standing economic and political connections with the EU but also holds relevance for Europe as a whole. As such, the research shall endeavour to measure the results of the post-revolutionary bilateral relations between Tunisia and the European Union by utilizing a multitude of theoretical frameworks, including the imbalance of interdependence between the two parties. To conclude, the chapter shall endeavour to investigate the adherence of the local government to liberal democratic principles, as it is a crucial factor that

has the potential to shape the European Union's future approach towards supporting or revising its support policies towards the country. Thus, the last three years of President Saïed's administration shall be analyzed in two central themes: "The Paradigm Shift in Tunisian Democracy" and "Local Developments and their Impact on the Democratization Process in Tunisia." Ultimately, the chapter shall provide a comprehensive assessment of the democratization landscape in the country over the past three years and offer potential avenues for the European Union's consideration in its decision-making. Additionally, in the next section, the study will open with making a discussion about the concept of democracy and explore the nuances between liberal and illiberal democracy. It is essential to understand the different types of democracies to evaluate the Tunisian democratization process accurately. To measure democracy in Tunisia, this study would resort to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance's (IDEA) assessment. The IDEA has developed an index to measure the quality of democracies worldwide, called the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) Indices. These indices measure the democratic performance of countries across five dimensions: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian. This assessment will provide a comprehensive evaluation of the state of democracy in Tunisia and help determine the country's progress toward a more liberal democratic system. Similarly, In addition to using the IDEA assessment, as mentioned earlier, the study would also rely on the Freedom House Index to assess the state of democracy in Tunisia. The use of the Freedom House Index assessment, in addition to the IDEA assessment, can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the state of democracy in Tunisia. By tracing the decline of democracy in the country using multiple indices, it would be possible to identify specific areas where democratic rights and freedoms have been curtailed and develop strategies to address them. The European Union must reconsider its policy towards Tunisia, focusing on supporting the country's return to a more liberal democratic system that upholds political rights and civil liberties for all its citizens.

In summary, understanding the nuances of different types of democracies is crucial to evaluating the Tunisian democratization process accurately. Additionally, using the IDEA assessment will provide a comprehensive evaluation of the country's democratic performance and help guide the European Union's decision-making process regarding funding for Tunisian democracy.

3.7. The absence of the project and the democratization process

3.7.1. A brief summary of key events and transitions that influenced the Tunisian democratic trajectory

The Tunisian democratic trajectory was shaped by a series of events that unfolded in ascending chronological order. The revolution of 2011 marked the beginning of the country's transition towards a democratic system. Subsequently, Tunisia organized the first fair elections in its history in October 2011, which resulted in the establishment of a constituent assembly tasked with drafting a new constitution. The adoption of the Constitution of 2014 enshrined democratic principles, such as the separation of powers, freedom of speech and assembly, and the right to a fair trial. This paved the way for the establishment of the second republic with the 2011 constitution assembly. In January 2014, the Islamist Ennahda party stepped down from government following a national dialogue, leading to the formation of a technocratic government of independents to lead the country until new elections could be held. Presidential elections were held in December 2014, marking the first time Tunisians had the opportunity to elect their president in a free and fair election. The election was won by Beji Caid Essebsi, a veteran politician and founder of the secularist Nidaa Tounes party. In 2015, the National Dialogue Quartet led the national dialogue between different actors and won the only Nobel Peace Prize in the country's history. Economic challenges hampered Tunisia's transition to democracy, including high unemployment and slow growth. In 2016, the government launched a series of economic reforms aimed at promoting growth and attracting investment. In addition to these challenges, Tunisia faced terrorist attacks in the Bardo museum and beach in the city of Sousse. Nonetheless, the country's commitment to democratic principles remains unwavering. In 2019, Kais Saïed, an independent candidate, was elected to the presidency of Tunisia, marking the beginning of a new era in the country's democratic trajectory. However, his tenure was marked by controversy and political gridlock, culminating in a decisive move on 25 July 2021 to ban the work of parliament and remove its members. This action paved the way for a series of changes and initiatives, including the establishment of a national platform for consultation to guide the country's democratic transition and the organization of a national e-consultation to gather input from citizens. The

Higher Instance of Elections was dissolved, and a new body of self-appointed members was created to oversee the electoral process. Amidst these changes, a constitutional draft was published, and a national consensus was reached on 25 July 2022. This landmark achievement paved the way for the inauguration of Tunisia's Third Republic, based on a new grass-roots democratic modal that promises to usher in a new era of political stability and economic growth.

3.7.2. Saïed's Exceptionalism Contradicts Tunisian Exceptionalism's Trajectory.

Saïed's exceptionalism is a significant event in Tunisian political history that marked a deviation from the continuous thriving of the Tunisian model. This term denotes a set of uncommon political perceptions that first emerged when the political power was wrested away from the Tunisian parliament. The president's prestigious reputation comes mainly from his academic background, spending 30 years as an honest and fair lecturer of constitutional law at the University of Tunis and the University of Sousse. His integrity created a distinction between him and the political classes, which served as the essence of his popularity. In the 2019 presidential elections, he won with 72.71% of the vote, taking office on the 23rd of October, 2019 (translated from Arabic) (Carthagetunis217, 2016, para. 2), and further fortified his popularity during the public debates by impressing his audience with his strength of argument, leaving his opponent trailing far behind. However, during his first presidential term, Saïed's non-democratic policies exceeded international expectations and dismantled essential elements of liberal democratic frameworks. This period from 2019 to 2022 significantly limited the role of mechanisms that assure democratic functioning, and his policies gradually consumed the principles of the long-striven for democratic aspect upon which he gained widespread support. His new regime made oblivion of the primary key concept of the democratic game and took an estranged pattern of democracy. The newly-elected head of state imposed a pre-determined plan that dawned on the 25th of July 2022, which gained popular backing by imposing a pre-determined plan. The new political model proposed an unusual model that opposes universal norms and channels with which liberal democracy demonstrates inclusiveness and gives the opposition a merge of liberty to ensure equity and liberalization. The new political perception made terms of representative democracy and relied instead on grassroots democracy, dodging the historical evolution of the successful Tunisian model. This unconventional approach only legitimized the degrading

outcomes of the new regime, presenting representative democracy as despotic imperialism, where the masses impose their ignorance on the elite, which is separate and distinct from economic relations. Saïed's exceptionalism runs counter to what democratic norms legitimize, and his views on people's will do not match by any means the liberalist view suggested by the democratic model. The global view of democracy does not intersect with the process of This global view of democracy does not cross any path with the process of mobilizing the Tunisian people's trust in a long-standing democratization process. Therefore, the period following Saïed's rise to power saw a deviation from democratic norms, which may have dire consequences for Tunisia's future as a democracy. It is important to note that the Tunisian people have a long history of fighting for their democratic rights and freedoms, and it is vital that their voices continue to be heard. The recent events in Tunisia have shown that democracy is fragile.

In order to gain further insights into the concept of "Saïed's exceptionalism" attributed to President Saïed, the study relied on skype-conducted interview with Dr Masmoudi and Dr Nafti. One of the most reviving aspect of he interview is that it focused on the analysis about the concept of “exceptionalism” attributed to president Said by the author.

In light of this context, Dr. Masmoudi characterized Saïed's exceptionalism by stating, "For me, Saïed represents exceptionalism, but not of the good kind. It was based on the absence of competition and the dissatisfaction with the outcomes of representative democracy from 2015 to 2019, which in turn, led to a lack of legitimacy." He emphasized the underlying issues that provided an opportunity for the rise of populist leaders, particularly among the younger population who remained unemployed and disillusioned with the state of democracy in Tunisia. Dr. Masmoudi pointed out the crisis in the democratic transition, where the country struggled to make sufficient economic and political progress in building the necessary democratic institutions, such as political parties. He further explained, "In a dictatorship, there are no political parties, and even the ruling party is just a group of people looking to gain personal benefits. Political parties are a key component of democracy, as they are able to bring people together around a set of programs." He lamented that Tunisia never reached the point of building robust political parties and how this weakness created a vacuum that populist leaders exploited, spreading messages that undermined democracy and portrayed politicians as self-serving.

Dr. Naftin, on the other hand, shed light on the dynamics of the 2019 presidential elections, stating, "He was elected in 2019 because in front of him, the two main camps, the conservative camp and the so-called progressive camp to go quickly 'Nidaa Tounes' and its

derivatives." did not make consensus on a particular candidate in which all credibility and support are vested, which created the political void in the scene by that time. Dr. Nafti highlighted the divided nature of these political camps, where multiple candidates vied for votes. He further explained, "So there was an oversupply of bodies that are quite identified and Kais Saïed just took advantage of that. That for the first round and in the second round, he took advantage of being a candidate against Nabil Karoui." Dr. Nafti emphasized that Saïed's election was not solely due to being viewed as superior, but rather a result of the specific political context and the presence of "anti-candidates" like Nabil Karoui, who represented the problems of the transition.

In conclusion, Saïed's exceptionalism, while initially viewed as a positive attribute, has led to a deviation from democratic norms and principles.

3.7.3. The Democratic Detour

President Kais Saïed's emergence onto the Tunisian political landscape during the 2019 presidential elections amidst a tumultuous economic climate marked a watershed moment in the nation's history. As a self-proclaimed independent candidate, Saïed's unorthodox political leanings challenged the status quo of traditional democratic norms, garnering support from a motley crew of idiosyncratic backers who eschewed the party system and political representation as a means of remedying the numerous failings of the legislative body since 2014. Saïed's singular vision of a post-revolution political landscape rejected the established power structures of competing political parties, eschewing affiliation with any political organization despite his views aligning with those of the conservative "al Nahdha" party. Saïed's atypical profile and non-partisan legitimacy catapulted him to meteoric popularity, propelled by the destitute state of the Tunisian economy, which had been on the decline since the 2011 revolution. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst for Saïed to tackle the country's political crisis, ushering in a new perception of political life in response to the rampant corruption that had plagued the nation for over a decade. The post-2019 Tunisian democracy marked a paradigm shift from the representative democracy of the past and challenged the conventional understanding of the mechanisms that ensure the balance of power between the authorities. Saïed's staunch rejection of political parties as a conduit for the people's will and his belief that political legitimacy derives solely from the people, not their representatives, encapsulated his unique political vision. In contrast to the previous elections, the transfer of power in 2019 was not subject to competition between political

parties and coalitions, emphasizing Saïed's divergence from the traditional political framework of most nations. His vision centres on the direct empowerment of the average citizen through the "will of the people," rejecting the parliamentary system as the root of corruption that has spread to other state organs, such as the judiciary branch and civil society. Ultimately, Saïed's political exceptionalism in the post-revolution political landscape defied the established democratic norms that had been in place since 2011, marking a seminal moment in Tunisia's history.

When asked about the extent to which he sees Saïed's presidency as an end to democracy in Tunisia, Mr. Jendoubi provided detailed insights: "The 25 July process is not legitimate. First of all, it is not legal, and that is clear. Moreover, it is not only me who says so. The African Court has issued a judgment. Similarly, the opinion of the Venice Commission is clear on this when it was consulted on the decree on the ISIE. As the issue is debated within Tunisia, the question of the legality or otherwise of 25 July, as well as that of Decree 117, is raised. But as we don't have a constitutional court in Tunisia, what do we do in general? So we make a comparative list, and we rely on opinions, including the opinion of the African Court, of which Tunisia is a founding member. And it's not just an opinion, it's a judgment."

Mr. Jendoubi highlighted the involvement of the African Court, which issued a judgment stating that the 25 July process and Decree 117 are unconstitutional and do not comply with Tunisia's commitments under the African Charter on Human Rights. The court called for the situation to be regularized within two years. He also mentioned the opinion of the Venice Commission, a group of experts established by the Council of Europe, which deemed the decree concerning the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE) non-compliant with Tunisia's constitution and international commitments. Mr. Jendoubi explained: "At the request of the opinion, the committee recommends reinstating the ISIE in its previous version, with some modifications that must be in line with Tunisia's commitments. There are things that have been achieved. I mentioned the Higher Council of the Judiciary. Despite the criticisms that we may have of the way these institutions were set up, with many flaws and shortcomings, we must not politicize the matter and instrumentalize everything in a partisan manner, particularly the appointment mechanisms. Nevertheless, institutions such as the Supreme Council of the Judiciary have been set up."

Mr. Jendoubi emphasized the establishment of institutions like the Higher Council of the Judiciary, acknowledging the flaws and shortcomings but urging against partisan politicization. These insights from Mr. Jendoubi provide evidence of legal and institutional

concerns regarding the legitimacy of the 25 July process and Decree 117, further reinforcing the argument about the decline of democracy in Tunisia.

3.8. At the level of formalities.

3.8.1. The Absence of Terminology that Challenges the Conventional Notions of Democracy.

The paucity of the apt lexicon is considered one of the salient shortcomings that deviated this Constitution from its democratic tenets. At the outset, it is evident that the term "authority" is conspicuously absent, nor is there the faintest allusion to the concept it entails in the Constitution. This personal endeavour tacitly manifests the President's intentions to purposely attenuate the powers of the three branches of government to narrow their sway and input in political decision-making. This manoeuvre will engender an asymmetry of power among the three branches of government and take an unanticipated turn towards individualism. Such a measure is comprehended within the framework of the neologist's notion of "sovereignty" as it endeavours to assert the people's will at the expense of the pillars of the rule of law. This move was, consequently, severely censured by commentators who agreed that this action embodies the epitome of the level of populism inherent in the content of the new political conceptualization. As per the words of Dr Abdulrazak al-Mukhtar, the Constitution is usually not a narrative text that narrates the recorded history (Mosaique FM, 2022, 3:50)

Certainly, the extent to which the efficacy of the proposed solution can be trusted is yet to be fully determined. Although it has been presented as a panacea to the current situation, its implementation could potentially exacerbate the underlying issues at hand. One must question whether the solution has been proposed in haste, without the necessary consultation with experts in the field, and without a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of the problem. It is critical to undertake a thorough assessment of the proposed solution, exploring both its potential benefits and its shortcomings. Only then would it be possible to proceed with its implementation, ensuring that it will lead to a positive outcome rather than a detrimental one. Thus, he maintained that he personally believes that the dispute of the duality between "authority" and "function" is not appropriate.

Furthermore, the novel Constitution adheres to the presidential inclination that proclaims that the singular authentic source of authority should solely stem from the "will of the people." Such a policy subscribes to a power-constricting rationale that neglects several fundamental pillars that constitute an integral part of any democratic system worldwide, where authority is traditionally derived from official election outcomes. Dr Zakraoui, thus, concluded that there

is a distortion of the authentic definition of authority according to the conventional common definition of the term (Mosaique FM, 2022, 28:11). Even though Dr Loghmani read this irrelevance from another perspective, it still crosses paths with the populist ideal carried by the President. Dr Loghmani, professor of public law at the University of Tunis, explained that In legal jargon, authority could be defined as a structure that has been endowed with a number of powers by the Constitution. In my opinion, there is no difference in the content between function and authority in this particular Constitution (Mosaique FM, 2022, 1:42). Henceforth, divergent interpretations of the same scenario have resulted in a discernible endeavour to manipulate public opinion in favour of the personal objectives of those in power, rather than cultivating democracy in the country, by exploiting populist sentiments at the level of formalities and concepts. In other words, experts have deduced that distorting the true meaning of "authority" has no practical advantages as it carries an equivalent meaning when substituted with "function." Consequently, the only plausible explanation is a focus on the popular appeal of the President to enhance his legitimacy. Rawdha Garafi, who presides over the Association of Tunisian Magistrates, expounds on the far-reaching implications of such a profound shift in the position of the judiciary in the new state during an interview with Mosaique Fm on August 18th, 2022. She explained that the authority granted to the judge in the state is determinant in people's interest, the political, economic, and the social interest as well as the monetary affairs in a general way (Mosaique FM, 2022, 14:00). Notwithstanding, the endowment of authority to the judiciary is not a prerogative, for the presiding judge must be imbued with an elevated degree of professionalism, coupled with a keen sense of respect for the principles of neutrality and independence that are inherent to the judiciary. Hence, divesting the judiciary of its power is an inconclusive measure enforced by the new regime. The Association of Tunisian Magistrates, led by the esteemed Dr Garfi, expressed deep lamentation about the compromising state of the judiciary in light of the new arbitrary regulations. Dr Garfi has shed light on the fact that the impeachment of judges from their offices is no longer subject to regular procedures. Instead, due to the constitutional mandate, the continuity of the judiciary corps is determined based on their performance, which is evaluated according to the presidential preferences. In a practical sense, the degradation of the status of the judiciary has led to the arbitrary dismissal of 57 judges without prior notice. Dr Garfi stated when a judge is easily removed from their position; it strikes fear throughout the entire sector. It signifies that the judge no longer holds any power, which in turn compromises their rights and duties, making them susceptible to political manipulation in favour of the ruling party (Mosaique FM, 2022, 15:53).

In conclusion, the 2021 constitution has integrated the conventional notion of democracy with a modest neologism relative to the literature on democracy. The central concept of the "authority" criterion within an established regime, confined to a "function," presents a sharp contrast to the Tunisian democracy and lays the foundation for a paradigm shift in the journey towards democratization.

3.8.2. Transitioning from a State with an Islamic Religion to a State within the Islamic Ummah.

Modifying one of the guiding principles of state doctrines presented a stringent challenge to Tunisia's democratic efforts after the revolution. Indeed, the 2021 constitution led to significant perplexity regarding the theoretical comprehension of Tunisia's international relations. The transitional phase entailed a change in the status of the Tunisian Republic from a civil state with an Islamic religion to a neutral state within the realm of the Islamic Ummah. The alteration of the Tunisian state's allegiance has been the subject of severe rebuke from legal and international relations scholars on the local level.

In light of this idea, the professor of constitutional law at the University of Mennouba affirmed that the Constitution has multiple abstract concepts that cannot have a particular definition (Mosaique FM, 2022, 20:55), declared Dr Zakraoui, in reference to the multiple meaningless concepts that were introduced in this Constitution in an unjustifiable manner. As an illustration, the recently enacted supreme code of the state not only omitted the notion of civic dimension but also introduced a nebulous concept that has been subject to intense censure, specifically the "adherence to the Islamic Ummah." Concerning limitations on public liberties, Dr Abdul Razak Al-Mukhtar has voiced apprehension that section 55 of the new Constitution could pose a credible threat to public liberties. He expounded that this section is principally directed towards curtailing public morality, as it endeavours to regulate the shift in attitude from an Arabic state to a state without any religion but affiliated with the Islamic family as a means to get rid of the Islamic communities that once controlled people by the name of religious instructions and it wants now to exercise this power itself (Mosaique FM, 2022, 23:22). In that respect, Dr Al-Mukhtar assessed that an important criterion of the democratic system had been left out of consideration in the new Constitution, which is the civism of the state. He expounded on his analysis by accentuating the alienating facet of the fresh code of the state. The crux of the latter candidly demonstrates how Saïed's exceptionalism is not in sync with the post-revolution Tunisian ideal. In fact, it opposes the

authentic Tunisian comprehension of the Islamic scripture that has always maintained a significant gap between the sacred text and the inflexible implications that can be drawn out of an extremist interpretation. Consequently, the understanding of the "Islamic Ummah" has a regressive impact on the democratization process by failing to preserve a fair balance between the elements of Islam as a faith and the flexible agreement of Tunisian Islamic scholars such as Ben Achour. It is crucial at this juncture to signify the reality that moderate scholars in Tunisia have succeeded in forging a balanced and comprehensive reconciliation between pure Islamic tenets and societal conditions. Thus, the departure from the democratic trajectory commences with deliberately neglecting the civic dimension of the state as well as depriving the Judiciary branch of its potential. This new rule of shifting the state tradition was, in fact, taken in the first edition of the Constitution and was subsequently expounded in the second edition. The aforementioned deviation from democracy augmented the array of the aforementioned fractions, which consolidated the conundrum of identity confusion by adding another equivocal dimension to the Tunisian identity at a time when clarity and the straightforwardness of the political vision are paramount on the agenda towards global reform. The 2014 constitution was insufficiently clear in terms of the identity of the state as it amalgamated the criteria of the state's civism and Islamic identity in the first chapter. Hence, this new procedure exacerbated the elements of vagueness in relation to the identity problem in Tunisia. In this context, Dr Al-Mukhtar affirms that upon reading the fifth article, you can easily understand that we are not living anymore in a civil state with civic intentions that impose equality in terms of rights and duties and non-segregation (Mosaique FM, 2022, 9;19). Additionally, the recently promulgated Constitution has placed a conspicuous emphasis on adhering to the Islamic Ummah without providing any elucidation on the meaning of the term or its implications for the state's foreign relations. Dr Zakraoui conducted an in-depth analysis of the ramifications of such a provision and expounded on how it could undermine the democratization process in the nation. He contended that this provision could result in a regression towards a theocratic system rather than preserving the balance between the religious elements of Islam and the flexible consensus of Tunisian Islamic scholars, such as Ben Achour. Notably, moderate scholars in Tunisia have been able to strike a balanced and comprehensive reconciliation between the tenets of Islam and the exigencies of society. Consequently, any deviation from this democratic path would entail a deliberate disregard for the civic dimension of the state and deprive the judiciary of its potency, resulting in a substantial weakening of the state's democratic framework. This shift in the state's tradition was first introduced in the initial version of the Constitution and was later elaborated upon in

the subsequent version. The defects in the Constitution regarding democratic values were compounded by the factors mentioned above, culminating in a perplexing situation regarding Tunisia's identity at a time when a clear political vision was necessary to achieve comprehensive reforms. The 2014 constitution was inadequate in defining the identity of the state since the first chapter amalgamated the criteria of the civism of the state with the Islamic identity, exacerbating the opacity surrounding the country's identity problem. Dr Al Mukhtar affirmed that the current proposed state order is not a Republican understanding of the state. It revolves around an extreme longing for personification (Mosaique FM, 2022, 30:09). With regard to the editorial process, it is of significant import to note that the Constitution of 2022, which initiated a further epoch of the Tunisian state, was brought forth in two distinct drafts. In this vein, Dr Al-Mukhtar expounded upon various flaws present within the novel Constitution, which can jeopardize not merely the viability of the third republic but also its democratic consequences. At the level of the formalities, literature on constitutional law argues that the Constitution is usually not supposed to be a narrative text that narrates recorded history. However, the first draft of the Constitution was loaded with a tremendous amount of narrative texts deemed unnecessary for the sake of the legal status of the Constitution. The narrative aspect of the 2021 constitution opposes the legal norms upon which constitutions are usually written. He mentioned that the Preamble of the Constitution suggests what in political sciences is known by the name of the symbolic Constitution (Mosaique FM, 2022, 3:59). In addition, he mentioned that the ultimate risk for the democratization process in the countries lies in the fact that the Preamble of the new Constitution sets an individualistic aspect of governing. He explained that the riskiest effect in terms of democracy is that this Preamble was the Preamble of the leader and the person of His Excellency Mr president. In comparison with other democratic constitutions throughout history, this criterion was an unprecedented transgression of the expression of the will of people around the world (Mosaique FM, 2022, 5:47).

In conclusion, Dr Al Mukhtar tackled the individualistic aspect of the personification of the Preamble as it carries a deep unilateral dimension that places severe constraints on freedom of expression, assembly, and even clothing, further reducing the already limited amount of liberty in that nation (Zakaria, 1997, p.23) in addition to the populist aspect of the new Constitution. In this particular context, Dr Sghaier Zakraoui affirms that the new project is a retrograde constitution and not a constructive constitution (Mosaique FM, 2022, 16:37).

3.8.3. The 2021 Constitution: a Blurry political vision

A plethora of distinguished local scholars and experts in the realm of constitutional law and political sciences have probed into the matter of the constitution's publication, which is intended to establish a novel regime founded on stability and economic prosperity, not once but twice. In actuality, two editions of the 2021 constitution were made available for the public's perusal on the 30th of June 2022, and a second revised edition was unveiled on the 8th of July 2022, a mere 17 days before the general referendum, in accordance with Saïed's agenda. The de facto transition engendered a mechanism that counteracts the country's democratization process.

Numerous scholars have identified various infringements upon democracy regarding the cohesion and continuity of the regime. Consequently, many Tunisian scholars and political commentators deemed this operation "a fraud to democracy." In this regard, two major aspects must be illuminated to reveal the two different facets that created this polymeric. Firstly, the element of time and its significance throughout the preparatory phase of the constitution writing will be addressed. Secondly, the general rejection of the first draft of the constitution and the manner in which the authority resonated illustrates a sense of doubtfulness in the entire process. For the sake of the analysis's fluidity, the phase during which the duality of the constitution impacted the democratization process will be addressed separately in the following section.

In summary, two serious problems in the democratization process have been detected at this level. Firstly, the absence of compatibility between the first and second versions of the 2021 constitution at any level. This kind of political blunder demonstrates the new regime's uncertain view of the political project as a whole and mirrors self-doubtfulness, which reflects to what extent the whole process is blurry. Possible interpretations can be taken for the new conceptualization of state affairs and its foreign policy, as there is no unique solid mentality upon which a whole and continuous political view is formulated. In fact, a clear vision does not allow any room for either scepticism or hesitation, which is not the case for the current political process. In that respect, Dr Khaled Dabbebi, a local professor of constitutional law at the University of Manouba in Tunis, elucidated the gravity of this kind of infringement and explained its political weight to the law enforcement community. He explained that the civil state in Tunisia has always been built upon a precise set of norms that cannot be transgressed in such an abrupt manner. Furthermore, he explained that " the readjustments were deep (up to 46 sections were readjusted). As a consequence, we are

dealing with a new constitution that did not respect the deadlines of the decree of exposure of the new constitution that was expected by the 30th of June 2022 (Mosaique FM, 2022, 0:27). Evidently, the constitution is fraught with over 45 grammatical and legal errors at the level of formalities, as clearly observed by those with an astute eye for such matters. The words of Dr Khaled Dabbebi maintained that these kinds of mistakes are not acceptable in the supremest legal code in the country (Mosaique FM, 2022, 2:22) in reference to the paramount magnitude of the formalities when the matter concerns the state of the law as well as the compliance to the international norms of a constitution.

The learned professor expounds upon the fact that committing blunders in the formalities of a document that is intended to be published in the official gazette of the republic constitutes a grave issue that warrants a thorough reconsideration not only of the constitution's capacity to preserve the unity of the Tunisian republic but also of those who authored it. Such a transgression undermines the text's credibility and trustworthiness in its entirety. Hence, making no fewer than 47 errors in drafting the constitution can potentially render the approach toward the Third Republic legally vacuous and untrustworthy.

In summation, the new constitution is founded upon ideas devoid of meaning, which can only obfuscate the country's focus on building upon the revolution's legacies that shaped Tunisia's exceptionalism. Substituting terms with comparable concepts to deceive public opinion and gain trust in a fallacious manner can only discredit the democratization process of the nation and erode the European Union's confidence in the nascent regime's compliance with democratic principles. Thus, embarking upon this path may likely be the initial stride towards forfeiting the European Union's trust in the democratization process in Tunisia.

3.8.4. A Constitution that Fails to Ensure the Sustenance of the Democratization Process.

Considering the context in which the new constitution has been crafted, it evokes a deep deviation from the democratic understanding of the state. The president, in fact, took up the mantle of defending the state from imminent danger during the impasse imposed by the sanitary crisis in 2019 and 2020 in order to initiate his personal project. From a historical vantage point, the novel grassroots democracy stands in stark contrast to the long-standing conduct of the state from the Bourguiba to Ben Ali administrations, which worked in harmony towards continuing the legacy of the independent spirit. Since independence, the Tunisian regimes have consistently relied on a semi-presidential system in which the

president held limited power and collaborated harmoniously with the government. The new situation's peculiarity lies in the fact that the grassroots conceptualization is not only unfamiliar to the state's continuous work of its founding organs but also that this radical shift in democracy may lead the fragile Tunisian democracy to an unpleasant predicament. Despite Tunisia's historical significance in the political arena by taking an exceptionalist stance in the Arabic world, the transition to a stable liberal democracy has not yet been fully achieved as of 2022. In other words, Tunisian democracy has not yet reached the point where it can make an abrupt transition from a representative democracy in a semi-presidential system to a grassroots democracy stemming from a bottom-up model of political decision-making. Theoretically, this transition is expected to occur in a subsequent stage during which the country's democratic effort would have been solidified by experience and democratic practice. Consequently, the political disruption of 2022 may only weaken the Tunisian democratization process in favour of retrogressive development. This viewpoint was further elucidated by Hatem Nafti, an expert in Tunisian political affairs, in an interview he conducted with the esteemed French publication "Le Monde." Dr Nafti explained that Saïed is not actually granting power to the people in a concrete manner. Instead, he exalts the electoral body to manipulate its voice by infantilizing public opinion. Dr Nafti analyzed Saïed's speech and found that he plays on the people's unconscious minds, who lived for over 50 years under the "founding father's" image, by presenting himself in a paternalistic view that would allow him to be entrusted with national affairs. In light of this analysis, Dr Nafti explains that Saïed's perception of power is a blend of populist rhetoric. He does not cease exalting the people who, in theory, ought to be pure and perfect. On the other hand, it is probable to find a more authoritarian vision that is common in the main guidelines of extreme right-wing regimes. Namely, the anti-parliamentarianism (Le Monde Afrique, 2022, 1:06). Once again, the project of the constitution adds another factor that does not comply with the gradual solidification of the democratic endeavor in the country.

3.8.5. The Role of the Constitution in Facilitating the Emergence of an Autocratic Regime

3.8.5.1. A Hyper-presidential System

Moreover, in conjunction with the editorial shortcomings, the substance of the constitution is deemed to be the most formidable impediment to the attainment of liberal democracy in the fledgling republic that is based on an inadequate realization of the two fundamental values of liberty and equality upon which modern democracy is established. (Fukuyama, 1992, p. XI). Furthermore, the newly adopted constitution is considered to operate in a manner that falls far short of being inclusive and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the populace. The issue of inclusiveness will be addressed in a separate section in line with Robert A. Dahl's theory of polyarchy right after the discussion of the "hyper-presidential" system. In its overarching principles, the 2021 constitution evinces no indication of adherence to the democratic tenets that have been established over the past decade of the democratic process, not even a modicum of compliance. As a matter of fact, Dr Selim Loghmani affirms that. In this constitution, it is mentioned that only the president of the republic can identify, end or maintain the case of exception that will delegate all powers to the hands of the president of the republic (Mosaique FM, 2022, 05:25). He proceeds by elucidating that in the absence of a constitutional court, the president of the republic can enjoy absolute autonomy in the exercise of his unlimited powers without any form of hindrance or restraint. In actuality, this constitution breaches, in various aspects, the principle of the rule of law and contravenes the foundations of the democratic regime. Hence, the objective of this chapter is to delve into the principal arrangements of the past three years of Saïed's administration to better comprehend why the European Union is taking increasingly hesitant measures toward financing and backing Tunisian democracy. Regarding the equation that dictates the relationship between Tunisian democracy and the European influence on the process, Dr Amine Mahfoudh highlights a few critical points. Firstly, the European Union has been a vital partner for Tunisia since the beginning of its democratic transition. However, the EU's support for Tunisia's democratic consolidation is linked to specific conditions and requirements that aim to enhance the protection of human rights, the rule of law, and good governance. Moreover, the EU's engagement with Tunisia has been increasingly shaped by its geopolitical priorities and its security agenda. Therefore, the EU is not only interested in promoting democratic values and principles but also in securing its borders and preventing the emergence of

extremism and terrorism. Consequently, the EU's financial support and political leverage over Tunisia are subject to political calculations that are sometimes at odds with Tunisia's democratic aspirations. Furthermore, Dr Mahfoudh stresses the need for a genuine partnership between the EU and Tunisia that is based on mutual respect and shared interests. Such a partnership should prioritize Tunisia's democratic consolidation and socio-economic development while also addressing the EU's security concerns. In this regard, he underlines that "this monopoly and personal favouritism and egocentric tendency over having the last word (and the constitution is one example) can not make the third republic as a whole deriving from the democratic modal that was the main reason to get supported by the European Union during the last ten years of revolution" (Mosaïque FM, 2022, 13:05). Dr Mahfoudh, a member of the consultative committee tasked with preparing the new Tunisian constitution, was appointed by presidential decree number 30 to serve as one of the heads of the committee. This committee was composed of three unions, specifically the Tunisian Union of Industry, Commerce and Handicrafts, the Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries, the National Union of Tunisian Women, and the Human Rights League in Tunisia. According to Dr Mahfoudh, the committee's inclusive aspect ensured that the perspectives of all political actors in the country were taken into consideration. However, when it came to the actual composition of the constitution, only three individuals, including Dr Mahfoudh, had the final say. In so doing, he revealed that the ostensible inclusivity of the new regime was, in reality, but a mere transitory illusion that obscured the president's monopoly over the nation's highest law. Furthermore, given that these three individuals were reputedly in alignment with the objectives of the 25th of July 2022 initiative, the integrity of the committee itself and its decision-making process is dubious at best, for they evidently think and operate in a coordinated manner in accordance with the post-July 25th agenda. Consequently, they did not resist any of the president's guidelines that hindered the process of democratization, which was founded on political pluralism and a parliamentary system that afforded the president no significant powers relative to the Parliament and the Prime Minister. In regard to the aspect of inclusivity as a criterion for the committee's work, Jemal Mesallem, the leader of the human rights league in Tunisia, alluded to the lack of access to the constitution's draft, which is meant to be submitted to the president before the national referendum. This statement seems to underestimate the level of agreement within the committee and implies the presence of self-serving aspirations for dominion over the constitution that contradict Mahfoudh's previous assertions. In an effort to rationalize the committee's persistent alignment with the president's agenda, Mahfoudh expounded that everyone should stick to respect the supremacy

of the constitution. The advocates of the president constructed their efforts based on their reliance on the personage of the president rather than the inherent procedures of statecraft in accordance with democratic tenets. This notion is consistent with the exposition proffered by Dr. Selim Loghmani, as he avers that the main composer of the heart of the constitution is the president of the republic. He is neither responsible nor accountable at either the penal level or the political level (Mosaique FM, 2022, 03:20), which explains the hyper-presidential tendency in the constitution. Despite being confidential and secret, Dr Mahfoudh has divulged the behind-the-scenes workings of the consultatory committee assigned with the arduous task of preparing a draft for the constitution. He has highlighted two fundamental criteria which have the potential to demolish the credibility of the committee's work. He has expounded upon the fact that the time allotted for drafting has been insufficient to produce a truly commendable draft that is worthy of presentation to the president, who would then make it publicly available for voting purposes in a national referendum. He declared that the committee did not have a final text up until its last meeting (Mosaique FM, 2022, 14:33), which discredits the work and the whole process of organizing a consultatory committee that has not been granted adequate circumstances in order to create a solid work. With reference to the aforementioned, Mahfoudh expounded that in the event the consultary committee proved incapable of furnishing the definitive iteration of the constitution to the president, he iterated that the president would have effectively completed the task singlehandedly, contravening any semblance of the democratic process in a manner that makes the president, in that case, put the draft that he prepared for the national referendum (Mosaique FM, 2022, 17:10). The implication of Mahfoudh and his compatriots charged with guiding the nation's fate was that the president was already preoccupied with a personal enterprise, rendering the formulation of the third republic predicated on a unilateralist paradigm. Such a line of reasoning elucidates the consultative committee's reluctance to wholeheartedly shoulder the burden of enforcing their agenda, preferring instead to align with a preordained course of action that cements the hyper-presidential system. In reference to the consultary nature of the committee, Mahfoudh declared that if the readjustments of the president did not modify the sole philosophy of the suggested text, I would prefer that the president consult back the committee before publishing the final project in the official journal of the republic (Mosaique FM, 2022, 20:20). The erudite academic observed with discernment the honourable aspirations of the republic's chief executive, accentuating the ethical and philosophical concurrence between the latter and the members of the consultative committee. This multitude of reflections indicates two salient points. Firstly, the committee encountered no

significant challenge to their authority during the constitution-forming phase, which reflects the emerging "functionality" dogma of the stakeholders in the third republic. Secondly, the ideological consonance highlights that the committee itself will not confer any added value as it remains impervious to the notion of deviating from the hyper-presidential agenda. This analysis underscores the self-centred character of the third republic. When probed on the degree of coherence between the committee and the presidential vision of the state, Mahfoudh avowed that at the level of the political regime, there is compliance [and that they] do not seek an autocratic regime, but the need is for a functioning regime that implements the elections with a meaning [...] the aim is to have a powerful executive body for the general politics of the state and able to take decisions upon that particular conceptualization (Mosaïque FM, 2022, 22;40). He reiterated the cruciality of governmental accountability before both the parliament and the republic's chief executive, thereby reaffirming that the consultative committee's formulation emanated from the robust leadership of a Prime Minister presiding over an able administration committed to its pledges. In this context, Mahfoudh insisted that The parliament has the power to question the government and even direct a motion of censure and can demand the impeachment of the president of the republic in case it is assessed that the president of the republic broke the constitutional text. The aforementioned declaration underscores that the committee's primary blueprint did not even broach the subject of a bicameral system, a notion only later publicized in the proposed new constitution. This act underscores the unilateral character of the third republic and its departure from a parliamentary democracy to a hyper-presidential system. Consequently, in referring to the statements of one of the heads of the consultative committee, it becomes apparent that although the committee's alignment with the republic's chief executive was indeed factual, the egocentric component ultimately triumphed. Antiparliamentarianism prevailed over representative parliamentary democracy. The scholar emphasized that the committee endowed the power to dissolve the parliament in the new constitution sans any precondition. The contravention of the rule of law in the novel constitution has garnered international notoriety, besmirching the country's image on the global stage. Several reliable organizations and advocates of democracy and the rule of law openly expressed their disapproval of the post-25th July political turmoil in Tunisia and highlighted how such a unilateral power grab would undoubtedly impede the democratization process. The president of the Freedom House, Mr Abramowitz, insists that the unrestrained authority to create laws by decree, as asserted by the president, signifies a distressing setback for Tunisia's democratic advancements and cannot effectively tackle the intricate policy dilemmas confronting the

nation (PRESS RELEASE, 2021, para. 2). Likewise, on the 30th of September, 2020, Freedom House released a press statement titled "President's Power Grab Tramples Democracy and Rule of Law," evincing grave concern about the democratic progression in Tunisia, only a year after President Saïed's inauguration. This press release surfaced as an urgent distress signal. It refers to a sum of non-democratic practices committed unilaterally by the president himself, who "represents a shocking rollback of the progress Tunisia has made in building its democracy" (PRESS RELEASE, 2021, para. 2). The release clearly considered that there is a threat to the progress of the process of adoption of democratic principles in the country. This opinion of the escalating events after the 25th of July measures in Tunisia was backed up by Michael J. Abramowitz's perspective as he stated that "President Saïed's antidemocratic actions since the 25th of July are inimical to good governance and must be reversed before further damage is done to the fundamental rights and interests of the Tunisian people,". To sum up, the inclination of the new constitution towards imposing unilateral governance can be readily discerned from a plethora of arrangements that have been formulated by a disingenuous committee. Consequently, the 2021 constitution sets forth a retrograde trajectory that could drag the Tunisian populace back to the autocratic and self-aggrandizing regimes of Ben Ali.

3.8.5.2. The Breach of the Principle of Separation of Powers

With regard to the adherence to democracy and the independence of powers, the new constitution showcases a myriad of instances that evince the president's aspirations to sanction a hyper-presidential regime that supervises the nascent bicameral system. In his own words, Dr Loghmani insists that as far as the separation of powers is concerned, the concept is mentioned only in the Preamble of the constitution, and it is not emphasized in the corpse of the constitution" (Mosaique FM, 2022, 14:25). Likewise, a cursory examination of the constitution-building process reveals that the new political framework not only endows the president with an abundance of power but also undermines the other branches of government that traditionally serve as a check on executive authority. Both the judiciary and legislative branches are no longer independent authorities but rather operate under the constant watch and approval of the president of the republic.

The implementation of this new political approach has engendered commensurate consequences with regard to the equilibrium of power within the state. In actuality, this had culminated in the promulgation of potent executives, feebly functional legislatures and

judiciaries, and an insufficiency of both civil and economic liberties as postulated by Zakaria when he depicted such violations usually result in potent executives, feeble legislative and judicial systems, and limited civil and economic freedoms (Zakaria, 1997, p. 28). This feature can be discerned in various facets.

At the ethical level, the advent of Tunisia's third republic will be indelibly marked by a president-centred process that has systematically marginalized key stakeholders, including civil society and the judiciary. Indeed, the constitution's legitimacy was only conferred by the president, and the extent of debate surrounding its contents was largely circumscribed by his will. Although it was unclear which version of the draft constitution would be put to the people in a referendum, it was the first version published in the state's official journal on June 30, 2022, that drew the most scrutiny and concern. Regrettably, the new constitution disregards the foundational concept of the separation of powers, first introduced by political philosophers from Rousseau to Diderot.

In a recent interview commenting on the new constitution, Dr Zakraoui underscored its fundamental incompatibility with democratic principles based on the separation of powers. Dr Sadek Belaïd, the head of the consultative committee for the third republic, even candidly acknowledged that the rationale for the third republic signalled a shift towards an "authoritarian presidential system" by extrapolating on the idea that the principle of the separation of powers is an archaic theory (Mosaique FM, 2022, 27:37) and that the people is the only holder of sovereignty and the source of authority. It is deemed the ones who delegate the authority to these functions (Mosaique FM, 2022, 27:56). In light of the novelty approach, the study resorted to asking the view of Mr Kemal Jendoubi to assess correctly whether this new approach is indeed a manifestation of hyper-presidentialism and earmarks a serious breach to the process of democratization.

When asked about what does he think about the "coupe de force" exercised by president Saïed, he responded to this question as such: " I agree with the term "coup de force" because there is no more precise term. I think you have asked the question of what the transition does not actually fall into is not just broken. It's a stall at the end, it's a stall. It's a coup de force that results in a coup d'arrêt to the transition. What is called the democratic transition in any case or a process of democratisation there is a whole debate on the transition. Some people say, we've put too much faith in transitionology, it's the passage from a state where there is no state to a state of no freedom and so on. So I use the term "democratic process", so it's a cost, so 25 July is a cost for the democratic process, a stop for this democracy that has been underway since 2011 in Tunisia. This stoppage was translated afterwards, very quickly in

fact, by measures that were more in the direction of a counter-democratisation, in the sense that they eliminated all the objective elements that constitute the whole democratic process. It is a stoppage that has resulted in the questioning of some of the few achievements that the democratic process has had during this period, namely the democratic elections were overtaken in 2011 and in 2014 and in 2019 thereafter. On the other hand, the suspension in addition to the vocations of the Parliament and the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, well in short. Apart from the fact that it is a coup de force, is translated into an institutional state. There is no more state of laws, there are no more laws, there is no more balance of power that they put in the country to be managed in a way that can be called pro-democratic. So this is the power of a person who initially was considered as a provisional power, a state of exception. In reality, very quickly, we realised that it was not a state of exception, it was a state that lasted, that has lasted since 25 July, we are in a state of lawlessness, in a state of force by which Mr Saïd imposed and took all the measures. So it's a blow and it's a hard blow that has resulted in the destruction of the achievements of the previous period. Obviously, the previous period also had other aspects that are not positive in terms of the democratic process, such as the absence of the Constitution, which is an essential element, because I would just remind you that during the previous period, especially since the vote on the election law in 2014, the different governments and different parties that ran the country did not succeed in fact, did not want to put the court in place. Let's imagine for a moment, then we had a constitutional court before July 24 for example, Mr Saïed could not have done without a coup de force on July 25. It would be impossible at least legally. “

In this context, the scholar of international relations Fareed Zakaria expounded in his 1997 article, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," that, on a theoretical basis, a fundamental point of convergence exists between the concept of managing political power and distributing it for the benefit of the nation. This point, according to Zakaria, is a "democratic minimum," and its essence lies in ensuring that the separation of powers is respected, the rule of law is upheld, and individual liberties are protected. However, Zakaria also argued that a flaw in the system of democracy is that it can be undermined by authoritarian leaders who exploit the system's weaknesses to acquire and consolidate power, which in turn threatens the democratic minimum and subverts the very principles on which the system is built. Zakaria argued that constitutional liberalism concerns the confinement of authority, whereas democracy pertains to its gathering and application (Zakaria, 1997, p 30).

Thus, upon scrutinizing the 2019 government's recent arrangement, it becomes apparent that the act of limiting power to a singular centralized authority constitutes a stark divergence from the democratic framework established in liberal democracies worldwide. The fundamental essence of liberal democracy is rooted in the dispersion of power to multiple branches of government to ensure a system of checks and balances where no single entity can monopolize authority. This configuration is in direct opposition to the Tunisian government's current trajectory, where executive power is concentrated in the hands of the president, thereby obliterating the delicate equilibrium of power in a democratic society.

3.8.6. The "State of Imminent Danger": the tip of the iceberg

The anomalies of this constitution have also been brought to light through various chapters that encompass many violations regarding democratic governance. From the outset, the third republic was founded on an anti-parliamentary approach in which all power is concentrated in one person under the guise of the absence of an alternative. This implies that other political actors who usually serve as checks and balances mechanisms in the state are disempowered, if not rendered non-functional. For instance, the entire conceptualization from which the third republic emerged was the state of "imminent danger" that threatened the national security of the nation. The historiographical perspective put forward by Fukuyama in regard to the concentration of power in the executive echoes the Hegelian notion of the individual's pursuit of recognition, which invariably creates an authoritarian inclination. In his book, "The End of History and the Last Man," Fukuyama advances this thesis as an extension of Hegelian philosophy. He posits that the need for self-assertion and public approval of the individual is a fundamental driver of human nature and that when power is concentrated in the hands of a few, particularly in the executive branch, it reinforces the authoritarian tendency and hinders the development of a democratic ethos in order to be recognized as an entity possessing a specific value or dignity (Fukuyama, 1992, p. XVI). Hegel argues that the nature of power seizure is subject to the slave-master relationship. The recurrence of democracy comes in handy in this context as it legitimizes the omission of the unilateral thinking of power and abolishes the master-slave relationship, which has been present throughout history. Hegel believes that the need for recognition drives human beings to possess an authoritarian tendency. In his book "The Phenomenology of Spirit," Hegel suggests that the primary objective of the state is to realize freedom and that democracy provides an opportunity for human beings to achieve their fullest potential. However, this can only be achieved if

democracy is built on the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which are the necessary conditions for the protection of human rights and dignity. However, in the Tunisian case, the emergence of a new regime has exposed the country to an illiberal democracy where the balance of power is shifted towards a highly centralized and authoritarian state, with the president holding unprecedented power. This phenomenon is what Fareed Zakaria calls "illiberal democracy," which is characterized by strong executives, weak legislatures and judiciaries, and limited civil and economic liberties. The current situation in Tunisia is a manifestation of the concentration of power in one central authority, as opposed to the democratic pattern in liberal democracies around the world. The absence of checks and balances, along with the concentration of power, makes the new Tunisian constitution highly abnormal and its democratic credentials highly questionable. The recurrence of democracy comes in this context, handy as it Legitimises the omission of the unilateral thinking of power and abolishes the differentiation between the master and the slave was abolished by empowering individuals to govern themselves and instituting the concepts of popular sovereignty and supremacy of law (Fukuyama, 1992, p. XVI). Fukuyama explains the appetite for a superior position From a purely anthropological angle, as he argued that the yearning for recognition may initially seem like an unfamiliar concept, but it is as ancient as the Western political philosophy tradition (Fukuyama, 1992, p. XVI) to which the endpoint is to guarantee a sense of "pure prestige." In this context, Dr Zakraoui eloquently underscores the power-holder's incapacity to abide by the 2014 constitution, arguing that a more judicious course of action would have been to seek counsel from consultative committees in order to ensure that the constitution is implemented in good faith. This would require adherence to the principle of separation of powers, as well as to the rule of law, which in turn could serve as a bulwark against arbitrary rule and abuses of power. As Hegel noted, the relationship between the slave and the master, in which the latter exercises arbitrary power over the former, is the paradigmatic example of power relations. However, in a democratic society, power must be held in check and distributed in a way that respects the dignity and autonomy of individuals and that recognizes the importance of public deliberation and consensus-building.

The president's blatant disregard for the established constitutional norms and his overextension of his term as a constitutional autocrat signal not only his political misconduct but also a deeper issue at play. This undermines the democratic values that the country has been built upon, and it is essential to address this issue to preserve the legitimacy of democratic governance. As the political philosopher John Rawls argued, the legitimacy of political power ultimately derives from the consent of the governed. By ignoring the

established constitutional procedures and limitations, the president has eroded the trust and legitimacy that the people have vested in him, thereby jeopardizing the very foundation of democracy. Even in comparative law sciences, the period of imminent danger cannot exceed six months. In terms of democracy, the president of the republic did waste the historical opportunity for Tunisia on the 25th of July.

3.9. Infringements upon Freedoms and Rights, and Noncompliance with the Rule of Law.

3.9.1 The moral aspect of judgement and the replacement of tenets

A significant number of constraints on political and civil liberties have been incorporated into the new constitution, which is reflected in the violations of the legacies of the 2011 revolution. Notably, the contents of chapters 55, 27, and 28 are replete with indications that are incompatible with the fundamental principles that underlie any well-functioning democracy across the globe. Upon closer scrutiny, the perplexity surrounding the constitutional provisions can be attributed to the conservative predilections of the individual wielding power. This bias is palpable in nearly every facet of the constitution that pertains to delineating the overarching moralistic dimensions that govern the relationship between the government and the populace. That being said, it is clear that chapter 55 of the new constitution deals clearly with a moralistic perspective as far as civic rights are concerned.

Dr Zakraoui's observations indicate a pervasive and generally unwelcome trend towards conservative advocacy in the realm of civil liberties. The novel cultural interpretation of public liberties runs counter to the cultural legacy of Tunisians, who do not view Islamic conservatism in the same light as their counterparts in Gulf countries, for instance. As a result, the fresh perspective that has engendered a retrograde equipoise between the Islamic identity and the conservative ethics of the native population fails to adequately capture the degree of liberalism that has been steadily accruing over the years at the local level. For that reason, Dr Zakraoui emphasized that there is a clear tendency to channel an ex-post-facto reading of the Islamic instructions as the engine of the social contract in Tunisia (Mosaïque FM, 2022, 11:51). To delve deeper, Professor of Law, Dr Abdul Razak Al-Mukhtar, has expressed grave apprehension regarding a profound legal quandary. This implies, to some extent, a significant regression in operating under a democratic framework between 2014 and 2019, particularly with regard to the level of veneration for public and individual liberties. Thus, it is possible to draw a conclusion indicating that the section concerning "public morality" can restrict public liberties.

The learned Professor of Law, Dr Abdul Razak Al-Mukhtar, has expressed profound apprehension regarding a critical legal conundrum. He has postulated that the omission of two crucial criteria that were employed to ensure the judiciary branch's democratic and

impartial judgment in the 2014 constitution has resulted in a marked regression in the application of a democratic framework between 2014 and 2019. The aforementioned criteria, namely the imperative of a civil and democratic state, and the replacement of the "tenet of relativity" with the "tenet of accordance," share a common objective, as expounded by Dr Al-Mukhtar, of conferring a more individualistic character to the judge in his assessment than an evaluation that is confined by adherence to the legal framework enshrined in the constitution. Essentially, both constitutions vested the judiciary with the authority to evenhandedly adjudicate on those who transgress public codes of morality. The underlying predicament, however, lies in the dearth of the civic and democratic dimension of the state in the current constitution. This signifies that the judge is no longer obliged by law to uphold democratic standards in his estimation of moral infractions. Rather, he is granted the freedom to exercise personal and subjective judgment that may not necessarily align with the laws that safeguard universal human rights. In this regard, Dr Al-Mukhtar indicated that "This modification implemented the authority of the judge with a moralistic dose that enables a judgment according to another moralistic standard of the judge". (Mosaique FM, 2022, 20:35). Effectively, there exists a possibility for two judges to issue distinct sentences in relation to a convict, based on their respective personal inclinations towards either liberalism or conservatism. It is imperative to highlight the fact that judges no longer possess the same level of judicial discretion and autonomy as they were previously afforded by the 2014 constitution. Furthermore, a second critical factor that reinforces the imposition of limitations on civil liberties, according to Dr Al-Mukhtar, is the failure to adhere to the "Tenet of Relativity". He argues that this concept relies heavily on the judge's interpretation of the relative nature of the verdict based on the gravity of the crime committed. "Similarly, a second criterium that is necessary for a fair judgement has been left out which is the "Tenet of relativity" which indicate that in the case of restriction of liberty, the restriction act has to be adequate with the degree of the seriousness of the felony (Mosaique FM, 2022, 19:05). In sum, it is readily apparent that the recent legal provisions entail that adherence to human rights is no longer contingent upon international agreements, but instead is susceptible to interpretations that align with the judge's personal values and ethics. Evidently, there is an exploitation of the judicial apparatus in favour of prioritizing the individualistic facet of the Constitution. As such, the novel moralistic paradigm serves to stymie the democratization trajectory and accentuates the divergent tendencies of the Tunisian model toward a novel form of autocracy.

3.9.2. The violations of the rights and public liberties

One of the consequences of the deliberate distortion of terms and the subsequent bolstering of the populist aspect of the new grassroots democratic model is the curtailment of crucial segments' right to protest or strike. Notably, the judicial apparatus is now stripped of its ability to organize strikes, while the armed forces are empowered by decree to participate in elections. The first measurement demonstrates that 'The abolition of the right of going on a strike for the judges and the judiciary corpse of the state can decrease their value from an authority to a mere function in the state' (Mosaique FM, 2022, 04:14). Whereas the latter brings into focus both the regressive dimension and populist construction of the new regime. Indeed, the inclusion of the Tunisian armed forces in political life represents an unprecedented departure from the state's norms since 1956, counterpoising the principle of military neutrality with respect to political affairs. This measure serves to underscore once again the calamitous consequences of populism on national cohesion, resulting in politicized divisions within the armed forces and the proliferation of ideological rivalries. The new constitution has introduced significant changes, particularly with regard to the promotion of pluralism and political participation. However, numerous transgressions have placed severe limitations on individual freedoms and liberties, fundamentally altering the democratic process from a representative system to a populist one characterized by a hierarchical power dynamic between the ruling elite and the masses. Robert Alan Dahl has provided theoretical prerequisites for determining whether a regime is genuinely democratic based on criteria of participation and opposition. Hence, an allusion to Dahl's theory of Polyarchy is essential to grasp the extent to which the new Tunisian regime is inclusive and the implications this has for the growth of democracy in the country. By referring to the work of American political scientist Robert A. Dahl, it is possible to examine how the exclusionary policies of the new Tunisian political establishment have significantly contributed to the divergence of Tunisian democracy. As a result, this analysis buttresses the central thesis of this chapter. Although the argument is straightforward, it highlights the prospect of the European Union reconsidering its longstanding policies of pacifism towards Tunisia, which have impacted the EU's support for the country and decreased its significance as a vital criterion for Southern Mediterranean countries. In essence, a reference to Robert A. Dahl's theory of PolyarchyPolyarchy can provide fertile ground for advancing the main argument of this chapter. At the outset, I wish to initiate the analysis by prefacing the esteemed scholar in question, along with his theoretical postulations, and subsequently elucidating its pertinence in expounding upon the

potential paradigm shift vis-à-vis the bilateral relations between Tunisia and the European Union. Robert Alan Dahl is a distinguished prominent American political theorist and Sterling Professor of Political Science at Yale University (SOTIROVIC, 2020, para. 1) who has left an indelible mark on the annals of political science, having made an exceptional contribution to the field through the development of theories surrounding democracy and democratization in the aftermath of the Second World War. He devoted a significant portion of his time to studying and postulating the optimal political system for the post-war era, ultimately putting forth the model of liberal democracy. Of particular note, Dahl is most renowned for his approach to the philosophy of political science as the founder of the "polyarchy" theory, which he expounded upon in his seminal work "Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition" in the early 1970s. His contribution to the field of political science extends to the measurement of the relationship between the governing authorities and their constituents, with a focus on parameters such as political participation and inclusiveness. Therefore, he coined a distinct term for non-abstract, actual democracy (SOTIROVIC, 2020, para. 23). Dahl's conceptualization of democracy holds immense significance owing to his portrayal of it as an all-embracing notion while simultaneously acknowledging its intricate and intricate nature. The emphasis on the intricate character of democracy as a system is encapsulated in Dahl's own words, as he posited in his book that one of the aspects of the democratization process is the establishment of a political framework that permits the opposition, contestation, or competition between an administration and its adversaries (Dahl, 1971, p. 1). Robert A. Dahl's oeuvre is characterized by his detailed depictions of democracy as a highly skilled and virtuosic concept, one that appears to be beyond the grasp of ordinary people. Nonetheless, he recognizes that electoral participation is an integral facet of democracy. Therefore, he contends that Polyarchy provided that two general conditions are met, is the most practical manifestation of democracy attainable in reality. These conditions are the level of participation and the level of public contestation. The element to infer from this characterization is that, in theory, a system is expected to be more democratic if it upholds a degree of elasticity and flexibility when interfacing with the parties and the public. In essence, democracy is only realized if it satisfies the two criteria of inclusivity and competitiveness, which in turn govern the nature of the system Dahl characterizes as one of four types: "closed hegemony," "inclusive hegemony," "competitive oligarchy," or "polyarchy," as denoted in the legend below. Image Robert Dahl referred to PolyarchyPolyarchy as a fundamental framework that must be established to attain democracy, which he considers an unattainable ideal. To be more precise, my review will

commence with a comparative analysis between Dahl's theoretical remarks and presumptions on the appropriate PolyarchyPolyarchy, and the behaviour of the Tunisian government under Saïed's administration in the last three years. This will enable me to substantiate the soundness of my primary argument with regard to this book analysis and, therefore, the validity of the overarching thesis. In the initial chapter of his book, Robert A. Dahl centres his attention on the criterion of public contestation and opposition, which he considers a crucial element for actual democratic participation. Initially, the author highlights two distinct means by which democracy can be an elective preference for those in positions of power rather than a moral imperative. Dahl assumed that when hegemonic regimes and competitive oligarchies transition towards PolyarchyPolyarchy, they enhance prospects for meaningful participation and rivalry (Dahl, 1971, p. 14). This postulation implies that the transition from a closed hegemony or a hegemonic structure necessitates a substantial change in terms of political involvement, as it strives to become a novel comprehensive regime based solely on multi-plurality and fulfilling the will of the people. Furthermore, Dahl argues that regimes generally have a considerable margin of freedom to choose between the costs of tolerance or the costs of suppression as a determining factor for their level of acquiescence or refusal to shift from a hegemonic system to a more open one for public participation. Expanding on the definitions of the two concepts mentioned in the previous sentence, the cost of tolerance refers to the material consequences that a government may face when it tolerates opposition. In contrast, the cost of suppression goes entirely in the opposite direction, suggesting the benefits that a government may reap by suppressing popular resistance movements and intensifying propaganda to counterbalance its domination. Additionally, Dahl posits that participation should be comprehended in terms of either positive participation or negative participation. In other terms, support for the local government or opposition to its policies. Consequently, circumstances that furnish a significant measure of mutual security for both the government and the opposition would tend to encourage and uphold broader opportunities for opposition groups to challenge the government's actions (Dahl, 1971, p. 16). In the subsequent chapter, Dahl expounds on the meaning of political opposition and oppositional freedom, highlighting the importance of the oppositional forces in challenging the status quo and establishing a more robust democracy. In the same vein, the author contends that oppositional freedom, while seemingly at odds with the notion of democratic governance, is, in fact, a crucial component in fostering the growth of democracy. Dahl posits that oppositional freedom is the product of three distinct factors: the freedom to express oppositional viewpoints, the freedom to organize oppositional forces, and the freedom to

operate as an oppositional entity within the political system. These elements, when combined, lead to the development of an oppositional force capable of challenging the ruling regime, thus providing a necessary counterbalance to its power. Moreover, Dahl asserts that oppositional freedom is not an inherent aspect of democratic governance but is rather the result of a deliberate effort on the part of political leaders to create an environment that allows for the existence of robust oppositional forces. In this sense, oppositional freedom can be viewed as a barometer of democratic health, with its presence indicating a more vibrant and participatory democracy. This aspect of non-inclusiveness in the Tunisian political scene has been implemented since 2019 in the frame of the third republic ideal as a new process of non-participatory democracy slowly took place. Consequently, this shift can only be explained by Dahl as a radical swing from a "near polyarchy" towards a "closed hegemony". In a different vein, Dahl highlights the salience of political parties and their involvement as a pivotal force in the advancement of the democratization process. He explained that in a given nation, the more opportunities available for conveying, organizing, and advocating for political inclinations, the greater the probability of a diverse array of preferences and interests being represented in policy formulation (Dahl, 1971, p. 26). The aforementioned point emphasizes the significance of political diversity and the integral role it plays in the achievement of a polyarchy. This notion, however, has been juxtaposed with the third republic ideal. On July 25th, 2022, the Tunisian President significantly curtailed the role of political parties by freezing the parliament's activities, resulting in a reduced number of participants in the country's decision-making process. This, in line with Dahl's theory, indicates a regression toward a closed hegemony. Conversely, the new constitution has introduced an unconventional political concept through the implementation of a bicameral system within the framework of grassroots democracy. A similar ideal is an exclusionist in terms of political multi-plurality as it grants all powers to the hands of the President of the republic. Hence, according to Dahl, "The consequences for government policies of lower thresholds for participation and public contestation are, unfortunately, obscure" (Dahl, 1971, p. 26). Through a comparative analysis of Dahl's theoretical propositions and the state of affairs in Tunisia between 2019 and 2022, one may deduce that the Saïed administration has fundamentally neglected the quintessence of the democratization process, namely, political inclusivity. This myopic view of the political apparatus in the country has dealt a severe blow to the once-flourishing Tunisian exceptionalism that emerged during the Arab Spring, ultimately jeopardizing its international standing in the global system and its potential political relations with the European Union. In the fifth chapter of his book, "THE

SOCIOECONOMIC ORDER: LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT," Dahl probes the level of inclusivity and competitiveness in a regime, positing a strong interdependence between these parameters and a country's economic development. In fact, he insists that "polyarchy", competitiveness, as well as inclusiveness, exhibit a high degree of intercorrelation (Dahl, 1971, p. 63). Thus, Dahl affirms Fareed Zakaria's perspective on the imperative role of economic growth in promoting liberal democracy. He further supports this notion by drawing on Russett's research, which validates the strong correlation between a country's level of economic development and the depth of inclusiveness and competitiveness of its political regime when he affirmed that this underscores the intrinsic relationship between economic development and the democratization process, in the "advanced" phases of economic advancement (referred to as Industrial Revolution Societies and High Mass Consumption Societies), the proportion of "competitive" and "semi-competitive" systems is substantially greater compared to the countries in the three less advanced phases, where "authoritarian" regimes are predominant (Dahl, 1971, p. 64). Therefore, Robert Alan Dahl supplements his theory of PolyarchyPolyarchy by introducing an economic parameter, contending that the attainment of an optimal level of democratization must be accompanied by a surge in wealth creation. Hence, the economic parameter represents another variable that can be utilized to evaluate whether a regime is progressing toward a polyarchy or if it is simply manipulating the fundamental elements of democracy to serve its own interests. In addition to this reference, Dahl also adjusted his analysis with a further dimension of credibility by making reference to the work of the factor analysis of developing countries conducted by Adelman and Morris (Gaur, 1997, p. 415). It is of utmost importance, at this juncture, to note that Dahl himself acknowledges the absence of a definite causal correlation between affluence and the evolution of a more competitive polyarchy. As Dahl asserted, the relationship between affluence and the development of Polyarchy is not straightforward, and he does not believe that it is currently feasible to formulate an acceptable causal theory that can explain all instances (Dahl, 1971, p. 71). Instead, Dahl endeavours to explain most instances of the rise of a competitive and inclusive political system by analyzing data available through Yale's political data program, which serves as a general framework for his analysis. In 1967, Adelman and Morris, two scholars, published a book entitled "Society, Politics & Economic Development," proposing a model to monitor factors and predict the future of economic development in third-world nations. Dahl's reference to this book is germane to my research in a specific way since it centralizes Gross National Product (GNP) per capita development as a decisive outcome of the degree of political liberalization in a given country. Therefore,

Dahl's view of the correlation between democracy and economic growth presumes that GNP per capita growth is an effect of residing in a polyarchy rather than a criterion for establishing a democracy. By relying on this one-sided analysis, I can scrutinize the influence of the new political behaviour of the third republic in Tunisia on the country's economic performance, enabling me to identify the fine line between its democratic and non-democratic elements. In fact, Dahl quotes Adelman and Morris's own words as they openly affirm that the relationship between per capita GNP and its correlation with a social and political factor exhibits a statistically significant association (Dahl, 1971, p. 64). Bearing in mind that the political aspect here refers to the magnitude and robustness of competitive political systems (Dahl, 1971, p. 64), this factor can only be valid if several conditions have been fulfilled by the local authority. The assessment conducted has revealed a three-factor model, as per Dahl's recommendation in his book. Dahl suggests using a scale that tracks the progression of the three economic factors, enabling the reader to comprehend the trajectory of a given political system. To obtain a comprehensive understanding, scrutiny over the existence of "factor II" criteria is necessary. "Factor II" alludes to the presence of three major criteria encompass (1) a marked escalation in the efficacy of democratic institutions, freedom of political opposition and press, the competitiveness of political parties, and the strength of the labour movement; (2) a perceptible trend towards political factions that prioritize ideological platforms as opposed to considerations of national unity; and (3) a discernible decline in the magnitude of the military and in the extent of centralization (Dahl, 1971, p. 64). Prior to delving into the analysis of the democratization of Tunisia, it is essential to clarify that "factor II" pertains to the political aspect influencing the development of Gross National Product (GNP). Furthermore, Adelman and Morris argue that the level of competitiveness in the regime is the primary factor influencing GNP development. This reading implies that a regime cannot assert its democratic status unless it exhibits a certain degree of liberalism and political pluralism within the local sphere, which affects the growth of the GNP. In fact, Robert Dahl emphasized the importance of the economic parameter to detangle the nature of a particular regime by affirming that a nation's likelihood of possessing a competitive political system is positively correlated with its socioeconomic status (Dahl, 1971, p. 64). As previously stated, the level of political dynamism can be attributed to the efficacy of democratic institutions and the predominant role of labour unions. However, the current local scene in post-25th of July Tunisia lacks any of these warning signs. When examining the Tunisian government's policies in relation to the validity of this factor, it becomes apparent that the necessary conditions are absent. This argument is underscored by the data provided by the INS,

Tunisia's sole national statistical institution. It is worth noting that the INS releases reports on the country's GNP development every three months throughout the year. Therefore, to demonstrate my argument, it is necessary to analyze the abundance of reports provided over the past three years and track their progress. This methodology will enable me to draw my conclusions and strengthen my argument on the non-democratic development of the Tunisian model by monitoring GNP development in the years 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. To begin with, the reports of the INS indicate that in the period lasting from 2019 to the second trimester of the year 2020 (the years in which the Tunisian system has been a representative democracy). According to the reports, the reported data indicates that in the first half of 2019, the GDP experienced a growth of 1.1% (translated from French) (INS, "*La croissance économique au premier trimestre 2019*", 2019, para. 1). The economic development has kept a steady pace of growth in the first nine months of 2019. As a result, the local GDP increased by 1.1% (translated from French) (INS, "*La croissance économique au troisième trimestre 2019*", 2019, para. 1). In comparison to the corresponding quarter of 2018, the real GDP exhibited a growth of 0.8% and a marginal increase of 0.1% when compared to Q3 of 2019. Over the course of 2019, GDP rose by 1.0% when compared to the previous peak recorded in 2018 (translated from French) (INS, "*La croissance économique au quatrième trimestre 2019*", 2019, para. 1). The sluggish economic growth in Tunisia, considered a natural consequence of the nine-year democratization process, is viewed as normal and reaffirms the validity of the Tunisian model, despite the slow pace of development in the country. However, the sudden shift in economic activity occurred following the political upheaval of July 25th. This upheaval resulted in the complete dismantling of representative democracy and a radical transition from a semi-parliamentary regime to a presidential regime, which has the potential to develop into a hyper-presidential system over time. The reports of the INS confirm this slide through the reports published in 2020. In fact, during the first quarter of 2020, the real GDP experienced a decline of 1.7% in comparison to the corresponding quarter of 2019 and a further decrease of 2.0% when compared to Q4 of 2019 (translated from French) (INS, "*La croissance économique au premier trimestre 2020*", 2020, para. 1). The plot thickens as the parallelism between theory and reality is corroborated in the report of the second quarterly tracking of GDP development. The provided data signals an unprecedented contraction in economic activity of 21.6% in the second quarter of 2020 (translated from French) (INS, "*La croissance économique au deuxième trimestre 2020*", 2020, para. 1). The report indicates that the GDP, at previous year's prices, decreases drastically by 21.6% (-21.6%) compared to the same quarter of 2019 and by 20.4% (-20.4%) compared to the first

quarter of 2020. On this basis, the Tunisian economy contracted by 11.9% (-11.9%) during the first half of 2020 compared to the first half of 2019 (translated from French) (INS, "*La croissance économique au deuxième trimestre 2020*", 2020, para. 1). The report mentioned above highlights the catastrophic effects of political decisions on economic growth, confirming Adelman and Morris's theory on the deviation from democracy. The nearly 22% reduction in economic output is an unprecedented event in the history of the Tunisian economy. The report for the third quarter of 2020 indicates that the economic contraction has continued to decline since July of that year. It indicates that the gross domestic product decreased by 6.0% (-6.0%) in the third quarter of 2020 compared to the third quarter of 2019 (translated from French) (INS, "*La croissance économique au troisième trimestre 2020*", 2020, para. 1). To summarise, the Tunisian economy, as evidenced by the tracking of Gross National Product and Gross Domestic Product development between 2019 and 2021, has advanced sluggishly during the period of parliamentary governance, which encompassed various aspects of democratic governance through the institutional framework. Nevertheless, the economy encountered a significant decline, which can be attributed to the detrimental impact of the political system, particularly when the governance structure underwent a transformation from a decentralized power framework to a unilateral system, in which the entire control was centralized in the hands of one actor. The reports continue by accentuating the degrading nature of the Tunisian economy in the last quarter of the year 2020, asserting that compared to the third quarter of this year, GDP decreased by 0.3% (-0.3%). On this basis, the Tunisian economy recorded an unprecedented decline of 8.8% (-8.8%) over the whole of 2020 compared to the year 2019 (translated from French) (INS, "*La croissance économique au quatrième trimestre 2020*", 2020, para. 1).

The economic decline still persists under Saïed's administration as the reports from the year 2021 clearly indicate that Gross Domestic Product decreased by 3% (-3%) in the first quarter of 2021 compared to the first quarter of 2020 (translated from French) (INS, "*La croissance économique au premier trimestre 2021*", 2020, para. 1)

In summary, based on the statistics derived from the exclusive and authoritative reports of the national institution directly affiliated with the treasury ministry, it can be ascertained that the annual economic contraction reflects the progressive shift from the relatively democratic nature that was instituted after the ousting of Ben Ali in 2011 to a near-polarchy by 2022. Employing Dahl's economic interpretation of a regime's inclusivity and its capacity to be categorized as a polyarchy, it can be inferred that the Tunisian democracy was terminated on July 25th, 2022.

3.10.Measuring Democratic Erosion in Tunisia: Insights from Democracy Index Reports

In view of the scrutiny of the deviation of Tunisian exceptionalism in facing substantial challenges to prosperity, this investigation draws upon the reliable assessments of the Freedom House to aid in unravelling the nebulous course of the Tunisian model and to elucidate the principal proposition of this section. The freedom house is an American operating organization dedicated to providing aid and protection for democratic values across the globe (Freedom House, n,d, "Our History", para. 1). Since 1941, this organization has been conducting thorough investigations and implementing a robust advocacy mechanism for democratic nations, ensuring that governments are held accountable to their citizens and the international community in full compliance with the principles of liberal democracy. In fact, Freedom House has predicated upon the fundamental credence that sovereignty thrives within democratic territories where governments remain accountable to their citizenry (Freedom House, 2013, para. 1). respect for the right of minorities and basic liberties such as liberty of assembly, religious practices, and advocating the incorrupt elections. In the section of the MENA program, the freedom house indicates that as a stalwart defender of human rights and democratic values, Freedom House is firmly dedicated to safeguarding fundamental liberties, encompassing but not limited to: 'freedom of expression, association, and speech, and seeks to promote the rule of law, government transparency, and citizens' access to information (Freedom House, n,d, "Middle East and North Africa Programs", para. 3). Freedom House is a highly influential institution, with over six regional programs that cover every nation worldwide. It is committed to promoting democratic values and conducts investigations to assess the performance of democracies worldwide. The institution provides an elaborate advocacy mechanism for democratic nations, and it ensures that governments are accountable to their people and the international community while adhering to the principles of liberal democracy. One of its primary goals is to champion human rights and democratic principles, which it does by working to protect fundamental rights. Its annual reports on democracy performance are highly regarded and serve as important tools for understanding global democracy trends. Freedom House's initiatives bolster proponents of human rights and democracy in their endeavours to foster transparent governance, safeguard human rights, fortify civil society, and expedite the unobstructed dissemination of information and notions (Freedom House, 2013, para. 5). The democratic assessment is divided into three categories

are as following, Global Freedom, Internet freedom as well as Democracy status for each country in order to represent a general overview of the number as well as the quality of democratic performance around the world. In its heading "about us" section, the organization emphasized its neutral aspect and emphasized that its sole purpose of work is a watchdog over the transgressions that may be committed to human rights as it is noteworthy to maintain the nonpartisan nature of the organization (Freedom House, n.d, "About Us", para. 2). Thus the neutrality of this organization and its nonpartisan characteristic. Additionally, the Freedom House has serious non-exclusionist policies in the process of assessing the democratic performances of the various countries under question, as it does not consider factors such as geographical location, ethnic or religious makeup, or level of economic advancement (Freedom House, n.d, "Freedom in the World Research Methodology", para. 2) to have the slightest distinguishing characteristics that have to influence the neutrality of this recognizable institution in any way. Besides, The Middle East and North Africa program cover the evolution of democracy in the MENA countries with a particular emphasis on the violent dimensions that took shape as a means to oust previous long-lasting regimes to participate in destructive proxy conflicts (Freedom House, n.d, "Middle East and North Africa Programs", para. 1). The Tunisian modal marked history with an exception amidst the transition period to democracy as it has always been assessed as a positively distinguished singularity in the region with an "impressive resiliency and political achievements compared with the rest of the Middle East and North Africa" (Freedom House, n.d, "Middle East and North Africa Programs", para.2)

3.10.1. The freedom house: definition & Methodology

The selection of Freedom House as the primary reference for supporting the main argument is rooted in multiple factors, such as its global credibility, relevance, and impartiality in monitoring the progress of the Tunisian model. In fact, the institution works using a distinctive blend of analysis, advocacy, and hands-on assistance to directly aid frontline champions of liberty (Freedom House, n.d, "About Us", para. 2). The Freedom House is widely acknowledged globally as one of the most esteemed and trustworthy indices that assesses a particular state's performance in upholding the rule of law and practising good governance. Thanks to specialized scholars and analysts, Freedom House conducts research and generates reports on a range of critical thematic topics that pertain to democracy, civil liberties, and political rights. (Freedom House, n.d, "About Us", para. 3). The pertinence of

citing this source in my inquiry is bolstered by the extensive historical credibility it has accrued over the years in its steadfast commitment to championing the promotion of democracy across the globe as it, from the onset, has assumed a prominent position in spearheading fresh initiatives aimed at addressing the rising global shift towards authoritarianism (Freedom House, n.d, "Our History", para. 12). Originally, this organization was founded by a number of influential scholars and prominent figures from diverse sectors, including business and labour, journalism, academia, and government leadership (Freedom House, n.d, "Our History", para. 2). the Index attributes a score out of 100 on the scale of democracy, the Freedom House assigns a quantitative value and ranking to countries based on a scale of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free (Freedom House, n.d, "Our History", para. 8). The Freedom House is widely acknowledged as a highly reputable and credible index that assesses the performance of individual states in relation to their adherence to the rule of law and good governance. This source is particularly relevant to my research, as it has a strong historical credibility and a long-standing mission of defending and promoting democracy worldwide. Its assessments are grounded in real-world applications across all five continents, making it an ideal resource for studying the evolution of democracy across a broad range of contexts. One of the key strengths of the Freedom House Index is that it provides data that aligns precisely with the temporal framework of my research. The data provided to the public is not only credible but also distinguished by a high degree of seriousness and academic rigour. Reports, charts, tables, and other materials enable the researcher to gain a holistic and neutral perspective on the situation as a whole and at different stages of development. Furthermore, the provided data enables the researcher to obtain a clear and neutral image of the situation as a whole, as well as to track its yearly evolution. The Freedom House index provides the researcher with detailed statistics, a summary of the factors and events that affected the rating of the country in question, and a clear and neutral picture of the situation. While studies of the performance of the current Tunisian version of democracy date back to 2011, the actual focal point of my research is the shift to a parliamentary system introduced by the 2014 constitution of the dissolved House of Representatives. The Index provides annual reports from 2016 onwards, which makes it a credible source for tracking the evolution of democratic performance in Tunisia at the local level. By tracking these reports, the researcher can explain how international actors such as the European Union base their future decisions on the performance of the founding pillars of the EU, which are purely humanistic. The Index begins each report with a listing of the most democracy-related events and arrangements that influenced their assessment and then moved on to discuss the new

yearly conceptualization of the same democratic path. This persistent tracking allows the researcher to identify the local issues and events that directly affected bilateral relations with the EU and have had a significant impact on funding and support for the path as a whole since 2011. One of the major advantages of this Index in relation to my research is that it considers various aspects in addition to electoral considerations when assessing the level of democracy. Categories such as freedom of assembly, freedom of media, impartiality in the election running, and government accountability and transparency are taken into account. The methodology of the Freedom House research offers a clear and straightforward approach to demonstrating my point of view, as it enables me to divide my study into either yearly or periodical readings. I would opt for both, as each approach offers a different perspective on the same situation. By finding a good point of concomitance between the yearly and periodical readings, I can ensure that my research is grounded in solid evidence and robust analysis.

In terms of methodology, the primary approach employed herein entails assessing the extent of liberty within the global community by scrutinizing a range of facets that align with democratic comprehension.

Thus, the data is not only gathered through comprehensive scrutiny of local measures but also across multiple timeframes. In more precise terms, the evaluation of democracy is not undertaken in a simplistic manner, as the organization refrains from offering a direct democracy index to the nations being examined. Rather, Freedom House relies on a diverse set of criteria that collectively paint a holistic portrait, encompassing factors such as global liberties, internet freedom, and democratic status. This aspect is further emphasized by the fact that the methodology used in the report is largely based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. (Freedom House, n.d, "Middle East and North Africa Programs", para. 2).

3.10.2. Periodical reading and yearly reading

To initiate the analysis, a backward chronological approach will be employed, commencing with the most recent reports. This will involve examining the accorded scores since the inception of Tunisian democracy reports, tracing the democratic decline by comparing year-by-year overall scores. The same pattern will be applied for periodical analysis.

From the inception of this examination, it is imperative to underscore that Tunisia had never been appraised as a democratic state by the Freedom House prior to 2011. Subsequent to that

year, the Freedom House initiated the annual publication of reports on the subjects of freedom, liberty, and political participation. In the most recent report, Tunisia has been assessed to be a partly-free country with an overall score of 64 out of 100 as per the indications of the relevant report (Freedom House, "*Tunisia: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*", 2022, n.d). The global freedom status of Tunisia can be deduced from its Political Rights and Civil Liberties scores of 26 out of 40 and 38 out of 60, respectively. These scores offer insight into Tunisia's level of democratic and civil society development and can be utilized to track the country's progress in safeguarding and promoting human rights and democratic values as per the indications of the freedom house report on the year 2022 (Freedom House, "*Tunisia: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report*", 2022, n.d). In the preceding year, Tunisia's overall score exhibited a remarkable improvement with a soaring 7-point elevation, culminating in a total score of 71 out of 100. This was corroborated by Political Rights' score of 32 out of 40 and Civil Liberties' score of 38 out of 60, both experiencing a significant rise when compared to the present year, according to the indications of the reports of the freedom house. In particular, Political Rights gained an impressive 8-point increase, whereas Civil Liberties displayed a modest, yet stable, growth of 0 points. Looking back another year to 2020, the scores for Tunisia showed an overall rating of 70 out of 100, with a breakdown of 32 out of 40 for Political Rights and 38 out of 60 for Civil Liberties. This marks a decrease of 6 points compared to the previous year. Notably, the subcategories of Political Rights and Civil Liberties showed a decline of 0 and 1 points, respectively. At this juncture, it is imperative to underscore that the sole phase wherein a marked deterioration of the Tunisian democratic model, as per the Freedom House reports, was documented was the era subsequent to the events of the 25th of July 2021. In the year 2019, Tunisia received an overall score of 69 out of 100, according to the Freedom House reports, with Political Rights obtaining 31 out of 40 and Civil Liberties obtaining 38 out of 60. This assessment puts it in a more retrograde by one point in terms of political rights as well as holding the same performance as the next year's assessment in terms of civil liberties (Freedom House, "*Tunisia: Freedom in the World 2019 Country Report*", 2019, n.d.) as per the indication of the table on the report. In addition, the year 2018 marked the golden age of the Tunisian democracy with an accorded overall score of 70 out of 100, with Political Rights receiving a score of 30 out of 40 and Civil Liberties receiving a score of 40 out of 60, indicating the country's ongoing progress in the democratic arena. as far as the comparison between the year 2019 and 2018 is concerned, the year 2018 outperformed by the scores of 2 points on civil liberties and a slight regression of only one point in the scale of political rights

the year 2019 (Freedom House, "*Tunisia: Freedom in the World 2018 Country Report*", 2018, n.d.). The year 2017, however, outperformed all the ensuing years in Tunisia in terms of democracy. In fact, the indication on 2017 freedom house reports indicates that Tunisia reached its peak in terms of freedom and democracy that year with a score of 78 out of 100, indicating a significant improvement in its democratic modal. The scores of the sub-sections, Political Rights and Civil Liberties, were respectively 36 out of 40 and 42 out of 60, marking a remarkable achievement in both categories.

In a general sense, the official reports produced by the Freedom House indicate that Tunisia's performance on the scale of global freedoms within the country can be divided into two distinct timeframes. The first period, during which Tunisia operated under a parliamentary system, was marked by a "stable" transition from 2017 to 2019. During this initial period, Tunisia attained the highest score ever in its history, with a rating of 78 out of 100, while the lowest score recorded during this time was 69 out of 100. It is noteworthy to mention, in line with Robert Dahl's theory on Polyarchy, that the Freedom House index has never awarded the full score to any country in its history since its inception. However, the second period, spanning from 2019 to 2022, was characterized by a gradual shift from a representative democracy in the first half of the period to a unilateral governing system in the second half. This change in governance style corresponded with a significant decline in scores concerning the respect of global freedoms and democracy. In actuality, during the last three years, Tunisia recorded a maximum of 71 out of 100 and a minimum of 64 out of 100. In effect, Said's administration resolved on the 20th of July to dissolve the parliament along with the political powers of the elected MPs. On a much broader scale, the index refers to the country's policies regarding the criteria of "respect for global freedoms" and "respect of human rights" as "Free" for the five years following the 2014 constitution. The first and only degradation transpired in the 2022 report, as the country was evaluated as "Partly free." It is evident that the country's policy diversion had an impact on the assessment of the index and, therefore, the validity of my argument.

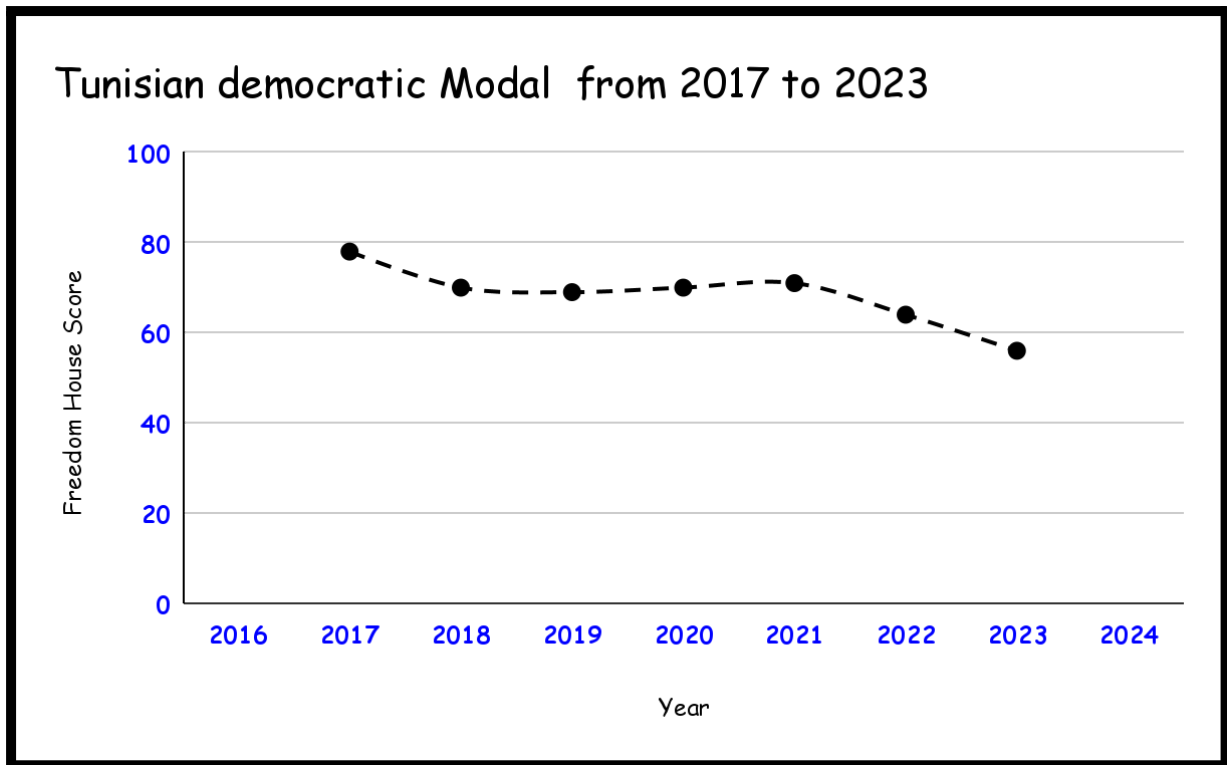


Figure 3: The Tunisian democratic performance in years from 2017 to 2023

Author's own elaboration based on the reports of the Freedom House from 2017 to 2023

In summary, it is discernible that the Tunisian democratic regime experienced a period of considerable stability between 2018 and 2021, with its Freedom House Scores attaining a range of 70 to 71. Nevertheless, this period of coherence was abruptly disrupted from 2021 onwards, coincident with the dissolving of the parliament and the resumption of autocratic rule under Kais Saïed.

The recorded data displays a significant downtrend in democratic values from 2021 to 2023, with the Freedom House Score plummeting from 71 to 56. This decline of nearly 20 points in the course of just three years marks grave violations of the abidance of democratic norms and also highlights the obstructive nature of representative democracy in the country. The downfall of democracy is recognized to stem from Saïed's consolidation of power and his unilateral decision-making, which has deleteriously impacted the nation's democratic progress and served as a contributing factor in putting an end to the Tunisian successful democratic modal and, therefore, obstructing the "Tunisian exceptionalism" and replacing it with a counterproductive political mainstream that does not align with the European requirements to elaborate further on the EU's initiatives concerning democracy promotion.

3.11. Measuring Democratic Erosion in Tunisia: Insights from IDEA Reports

3.11.1. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance: definition & Methodology

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an esteemed intergovernmental organization that was inaugurated on February 19, 1995, with the aim of promoting and supporting sustainable democratic governance worldwide. The institute endeavours to reinforce and fortify democratic institutions and procedures on a global scale. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of democracy, It employs an array of quantitative techniques to evaluate the efficacy of democracy in diverse countries. By analyzing these indicators, International IDEA is able to provide an objective and comprehensive assessment of a country's democratic progress and identify areas for further improvement. The institute's approach has proven to be a valuable tool for monitoring and promoting democratic governance globally, and it has become a leading authority on democracy and electoral assistance.

The democratic assessment conducted by International IDEA, however, is widely regarded as a robust and reliable measure of democratic governance worldwide. This magnitude stems from the fact that the international accreditations that the institute receives from prominent democratic countries such as the USA and Canada are a testament to the robustness of its assessment methodology. In fact, the institute's assessment is approved by 33 countries around the world, further highlighting its reputation as a credible source of information on democratic governance. Therefore, these accreditations provide strong validation of International IDEA's methodology and its commitment to promoting and supporting democratic governance globally.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) employs a set of benchmarks to assess the quality of democracy, which are devised under the auspices of the Global State of Democracy indices. According to the Global State of Democracy, Representative Government is measured according to four main factors: Clean Elections, Inclusive Suffrage, Free Political Parties, and Elected Government. The prerequisite rights

that should be upheld, including the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association, and movement, are measured according to two factors: Access to Justice and Civil Liberties. Additionally, the mechanisms of checks on governments are measured according to three factors: Effective Parliament, Judicial Independence as well as Media Integrity. Besides, Impartial Administration is gauged by two factors: the "Absence of Corruption" in addition to the "Predictable Enforcement." Finally, the methodology on the Global State of Democracy indices Participatory Engagement extrapolates that it is measured according to the four following factors: Civil Society Participation, Electoral Participation, Direct Democracy, and Local Democracy. By measuring these factors, a more comprehensive understanding of the state of democracy can be achieved in different countries and work towards strengthening and protecting democratic practices worldwide.

3.11.2. Periodical reading on the Tunisian democratic trajectory

At the onset, the research would address the periodical assessment of the Tunisian democratic performance as it provides a solid background and a quick overview of the pre-25th of July incident. Against this backdrop, it is important to contextualize the periodic assessment of Tunisian democratic performance within the broader historical context, more minutely, from the year 2012 to 2021. Tunisia has undergone an arduous journey toward establishing a robust and sustainable democratic system, particularly in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, which marked a turning point in the country's history. The country embarked on a promising trajectory towards democratic governance, enshrining a new constitution in 2014 and conducting up to 3 free and fair elections. In order to assess the country's democratic performance during this period, this section will resort to the scores provided by IDEA. Serving as an objective barometer of Tunisia's democratic progress during this phase, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance provides a comprehensive assessment across five dimensions that are enshrined as follows: Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration as well as Participatory Engagement. The following figure summarizes the periodical overview as per the reports and the indications of IDEA Institute.

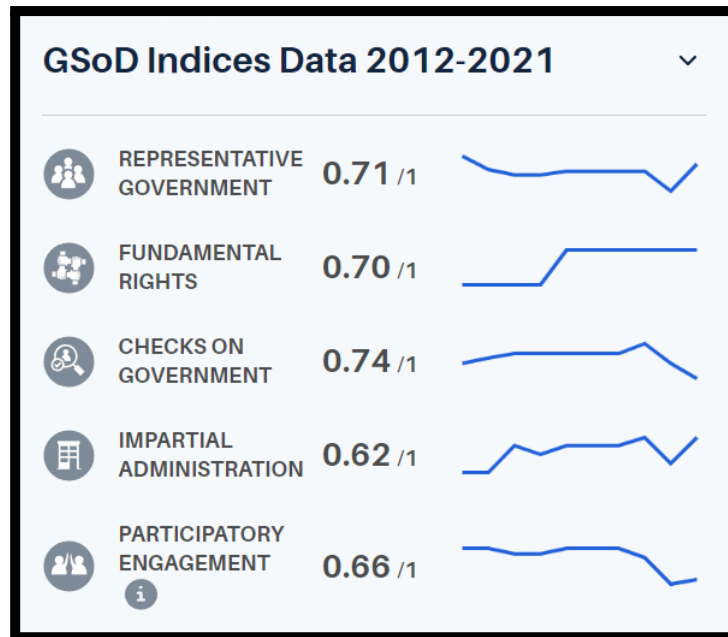


Figure 4: The Tunisian democratic performance in years from 2012 to 2021 by IDEA.

It is pertinent to note that, based on the provided data, the index signifies a decline in democratic values in the country, as it transmuted from being categorized as a democratic nation from the year 2011 to 2020 to a country of a hybrid regime from 2020 onwards.

2. Conclusion

In conclusion, the central objective of this study was to investigate the involvement of the European Union in post-revolution Tunisia, by utilizing a tripartite framework that highlights its normative capacity within global politics. Furthermore, this study aimed to evaluate the complexities associated with supporting Tunisia's democratic transition from the lenses of the European Union, with allocating a specific emphasis on the principle of conditionality in relation to the Tunisian responsiveness under the administration of President Saïed from 2019 to 2022. In addition to that, the study assessed the resulting implications of the role of the European Union in democratic transitology in Tunisia. As far as the research approach is concerned, this study was conducted by employing a combination of quantitative as well as qualitative research methods that relies extensively on analyzing the documents, the reports, as well as the academic papers pertaining to the Euro-Tunisian bilateral relations. In addition to that, a number of semi-structured interviews have been deemed essential to conduct as they would bring more profound knowledge about the democratization of the country from a European Union's perspective. Similarly, the interviews were deemed fundamental to this research as they were considered to present a reliable platform to gather substantial firsthand information regarding the transition that supports the Tunisian view. Hence, assure simultaneously the credibility, reliability, the scientific neutrality of the research process and its findings. Nevertheless, in order to enhance the validity of the findings, the study has also incorporated the evaluation of renowned democracy indexes to accurately measure the democratic decline witnessed in the country as a result of the 25th July movement. Thus, providing a set of reliable and unbiased scientific methods to ensure an englobing and comprehensive study.

The opening chapter establishes the concept of normativity in the external influence of the European Union, employing Ian Manners' Normative Power Europe (NPE) theory as a framework to analyze the impact of the EU on Tunisia's transition to democracy. Manners' approach assumes that the EU's influence goes beyond its economic and military capabilities and depends on its ability to maintain legitimacy and coherence within its borders by means of low politics. Additionally, NPE signals the institutionalization of the European Union's plan to promote democratization within the Southern Neighborhoods region as a counter-strategy to counter currents that threaten regional stability. The magnitude of promoting democracy is essential to maintain the necessary momentum and foster healthy

inter-relations between the EU and the countries of the Southern Mediterranean. Furthermore, the concept of democracy, introduced by the ratifications of the Lisbon Treaty, is explored as an overarching concept that encompasses various parameters. The paper adopts Farid Zakaria's theory as a framework to discuss the meaning as well as variations of "Democracy". It argues that the common understanding of "democracy" must embrace beyond-traditional notions exemplified by the electoral processes and political representation. Instead, Liberal Democracy embraces the rule of law, separation of powers, and respect for fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, assembly, religion, and property as its fundamental parameters. The first chapter closes with a discussion about participatory democracy that brings forth to the reader's mind a comprehensive establishment of the concept and showcases its validity in relation to the element of European studies. The passage presents a comprehensive overview of the theoretical conceptualization of "participatory democracy", highlighting its emphasis on inclusive politics and directly-engaging citizenry in the decision-making processes. It acknowledges the drawn benefits such as increased political inclusivity and a sense of ownership among citizens and also sheds light on the challenges and constraints faced by participatory democracy, exemplified by including resource limitations, diverse opinions, and potential disparities in participation. Examining different perspectives on democracy reveals key differences that allow each variation to navigate the intersection of differences.

The first chapter opens with allocating major regard to exploring the Foreign Policy of the European Union from a theoretical standpoint as extrapolated on in the rich scholarship of European studies. Moreover, the discussion commences by elucidating an encapsulating outlook on the historical milestones that defined the normative power of the European Union and forwarded it as an influential global actor in world politics. The essence of might and capability was, later on, investigated by means of examining two fundamental tools of the European Union, namely the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as well as the process of Europeanization. Nevertheless, the study explains that the EU's approach to its external surroundings can be traced back to the foundation of the European Community in the 1950s, which was pointed at countering hyper-militaristic development and advancing the financial interface. The study has deliberately resorted to employing these distinctive aspects because they elucidate on the idea that the European Union has created, over time, a set of instruments enabling it to effectively engage with its member states and neighboring countries, operating

at both national and organizational levels while asserting its authority in conveying its norms and values.

In terms of its approach to the Southern Mediterranean, the study contends that the EU has actualized a plethora of instruments and established differentiated understandings over a long time pointed at cultivating political, social, and financial participation. These initiatives incorporate a number of mediators to enhance the proximity between Europe and Tunisia such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), and more minutely the Southern Neighborhood Policy (SNP), among others. Furthermore, the process of “Europeanization” is also regarded to be the closest affiliation with the Normative Power of the European Union. However, the study distinguishes the point that “Europeanization” is considered to be less useful in nations that have no prospect of getting benefit from the carrot of membership in the union, nor have the driving force to embrace the instruments of conditionality or the 'adaptable pressures' to acclimatize majority rule measures and EU administrative system such as Tunisia the case study.

The study argues that the European Union's approach to promoting democracy is multifaceted and conducted through a trichotomy of strategies aimed at fostering a functional liberal democracy in the country. It assumes that the EU's prioritization of democracy promotion is a key feature within its international agenda and that it is taken as essential for maintaining international peace and security with non-coercive measures. Subsequently, the trichotomy approach includes political conditionality, economic remuneration, as well as the transnational exchange to support the Tunisian transition to establishing a functioning liberal democracy. As a matter of fact, the Tunisian government's cooperation with EU assistance is taken to be a critical element that contributes to the success of these strategies.

In the second chapter, the study provides a contextual background to allow the reader to form a comprehensive image of the development that took place in 2011. The segment covers a glimpse of the EU-Tunisia relations as it proffers on showcasing the elementary political stationary milestones that have molded the European approach to the country as a fundamental component of the Southern Mediterranean partners of Europe. In addition, the presentation of the EU's physical security and thriving financial concerns arising from the worry about the Tunisian democracy assisted the reader to relativize the stance of the Tunisian example amidst the political ordeal that occurred in the region by late 2010. In the subsequent sections, the chapter examines the Tunisian Transformation in 2011, which started the Arab Spring and drove the ruin of the absolutist administration of President Zine El

Abidine Ben Ali. It inspects the coordinated and roundabout variables that contributed to the rebellion, counting financial incongruities, debasement, and chronicled legacies. Furthermore, an application of the theoretical knowledge that was presented in the aforementioned sections has been acutely adjusted to the role of the European Union amidst the Tunisian transition via providing thorough analyses of the assistance provided to the country via the tripartite system of assistance.

The final section scrutinizes the striking changes that have occurred within the Tunisian Democratization handle from 2019 to 2022 under the administration of President Saïed. The investigation endeavors to shed light on the significant shift within the Tunisian democracy and the accompanying instruments that have emerged after 25th July 2021 concerning the deviation of the Third Republic towards a non-democratic modular system. The chapter's central objective is to manifest how these critical occasions have served as a catalyst for the European Union to reassess its position with respect to the subsidizing designated to the 2019 Tunisian regime. Fundamentally, the examination commences by analyzing the 2022 constitution and its inadequacies. Along these lines, the chapter delves into the repercussions of choice on the picture of Tunisia within the universal political net. The inquiry essentially questions the legislative conduct of the post-2019 development in the country and analyzes how Tunisian exceptionalism has fallen briefly and to what degree it has been debilitated. Given the foremost significance of the relationship between the Tunisian Republic and the European Union since the Republic's beginning in 1956, it is significant to assess the conduct of the nearby regime, given the weight that the element of democracy holds within the condition of Tunisian collaboration and participation with the EU.

To conclude, the investigation sought to determine the consequences of the post-revolutionary two-sided relations between Tunisia and the European Union by utilizing a number of political theories and concepts, counting the lopsidedness of interdependency between the two parties.

Drawing upon the aforementioned summaries of the two chapters, it is evident to refer to the fact that the study came to conclude a number of findings.

To start with, the European Union's reaction to the post-revolutionary political atmosphere in Tunisia has been broadly regarded as a convenient and favorable response to generate the stemming bud of a novelty in the Arab world, especially in its insight into neighborhood exigencies. In spite of the noteworthy rise of Tunisia's importance in European undertakings after the Arab Spring of 2011, it remains far from being obviously true as to whether the

driving force spearheading this rise has experienced any groundbreaking motives for implementing a real change in the long run. However, the positive stance towards Tunisia has experienced a relapse, especially in the wake of the 2015 terrorist attacks based on oppressor assaults on the Bardo Exhibition Hall as well as the Beach resort in the coastal city of Sousse. These occasions have been taken as the essential calculations that incited the European Union's return to its neo-realist viewpoint towards Tunisia, associated with its pre-2011 approach. Nevertheless, the positive responsiveness of EU officials was not reliably actualized with the same level of significance and viability as expected. Yet, the European plan can be seen as an expansion of Tunisia's verifiable, however deficient, journey towards modernization that started during the late 19th century. The study also suggests that the EU's support was primarily responsive to local arrangements and lacked sufficient backing to establish substantial checks and balances mechanisms, which are necessary for building a robust democratic framework. Put simply, the EU has been found to focus on short-run objectives that serve euro-centric interests rather than allocating more seriousness to the long-term objective that can benefit both parties and break the traditional hesitance towards Tunisia.

Last, but not least, it has been observed that the decay in Tunisian democracy started with the inception of the events of 25th July 2021, during which President Saïed pronounced an instrumental hindering the only successful pattern in the MENA region. The legislative branch and the guarantees of the balance of power have been omitted from the political equation by dismantling the national parliament. This event initiated a retrograde enrollment of events as the president seized all political powers, and the country was implunged once again into one-man rule. In the guise of the socio-economic hardships within the nation, the Tunisian democracy has been taken down. Besides, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on the economic performance of Tunisia, which has exacerbated the return to unilateral rule. Additionally, the study proposes that the failure of Tunisian democracy can be ascribed to purely internal variables such as amateurism, ineptitude, and a lack of clarity of the political vision. These inner components have contributed to the decrease of majority rule values within the nation and the disintegration of the rule of law.

Despite the valuable listed above findings in this study, a number of considerable limitations have been identified throughout the analysis process. The present study has faced several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First of all, it is crucial to note that the vast majority of the resources employed in the study were sourced from primary documents and reports, and polls of the European Union's different institutions. This criterion may negatively

affect providing the reader with a balanced and objective view that takes into account the Tunisian perspective. Put simply, these resources afford valuable insights into the EU's approach to Tunisia post-revolution, it may have resulted in a Euro-centric perspective on the study. Secondly, there is a dearth of internet resources from official Tunisian institutions that match the study's interests and objectives. This limitation may have resulted in a partial understanding of the Tunisian perspective on EU-Tunisia relations as it does not present enough well-elaborated Tunisian-Tunisian reading of the situation. Similarly, the majority of the scholars identified throughout the study were not Tunisians, and it was challenging to find Tunisian scholars addressing the EU-Tunisia post-revolution era. This absence of an equal ratio of Tunisian and European scholars on the subject matter may have resulted in a limited perspective on the topic. Additionally, the indexes' assessments used in the study were limited in time, either beginning several years after the revolution, resulting in no data on the initiating period of the Tunisian democratization process or not providing actualized data for the year 2022, thereby potentially impacting the accuracy of the findings. Finally, there is a significant lack of Arabic resources that could have been utilized in the thesis, which may have resulted in a limited understanding of the Tunisian perspective on the subject matter. Furthermore, the study adds a fraction to the scholarship on European studies but fulfils a section that has been left unexplored for quite a long time. Despite that, the Euro-Tunisian relation is still in need of further investigations from different perspectives such as the problematic of migration or also the economic ties that unite both parties. These kinds of burning issues still need to be properly addressed in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the situation and elaborate on future solutions for stakeholders and political actors to take into account.

In summation, this investigation sheds light on the critical role of the European Union in supporting the democratization process in Tunisia, which has been remarkably distinguished compared to other countries within the MENA region. Moreover, it grabs the reader's attention to the impediments and challenges that the EU has confronted in executing its external mission in the country, such as the lack of adequate checks and balances components, focusing particularly on short-term responsive measures, and the constrained Tunisian point of view. The recent events that occurred in Tunisia majorly exemplified by the suspension of democratic institutions emphasize the paramountcy of supporting and strengthening the fledgling local democracy. The findings of this research can serve as a valuable asset for policymakers and scholastics to understand the complexities and dynamics of EU-Tunisian relations and inform future efforts to reinforce law-based institutions in

Tunisia. Ultimately, this study showcases the broader significance of advancing democracy and human rights within the MENA region throughout the portal of Tunisia, which can contribute to soundness, security, and prosperity in the Mediterranean.

4 . Appendix: Interviews Transcriptions

4.1. Interview 1

1. How can you read the EU's investments in Tunisia in terms of democratic consolidation?

French: La plupart des remboursements effectués par l'Union européenne envers la Tunisie étaient dirigée vers l'assistance gouvernementale plutôt que l'appui à la société civile tunisienne. L'Union européenne en fait, a dédié un crédit de 300000000 d'euros annuels pour que l'État tunisien s'en serve afin de renforcer la démocratie à l'exemple du secteur juridique ainsi que le parlement. Ces fondements ont aussi été consacrés pour assurer des réglementations pour les régions intérieures de l'État. C'est vrai que l'Union européenne a fourni des remboursements financiers pour la société civile, mais ça reste encore très peu, même extrêmement très peu comparé à l'aide financière reçue par l'Etat. En dépit ça. Les remboursements financiers qui ont été assurés pour assister la société civile ont été largement dirigés pour soutenir les.Financement des ONG européennes en Tunisie et pas les ONG tunisiens en Tunisie. En conclusion, ce n'est pas du tout vrai au ces mêmes options kurdes de dire que l'Union européenne a renversé la démocratie tunisienne par le biais primordial de la société civile, c'est pas vrai.

English: Most of the EU's reimbursements to Tunisia were directed towards government assistance rather than support for Tunisian civil society. The European Union has in fact earmarked a credit of 300,000,000 euros per year for the Tunisian state to use to strengthen democracy, such as the legal sector and parliament. These foundations have also been devoted to ensuring regulations for the interior regions of the state. It is true that the European Union has provided financial reimbursements for civil society, but this is still very little, even extremely little compared to the financial assistance received by the state. The financial reimbursements that have been provided to assist civil society have largely been directed to support European NGOs in Tunisia and not Tunisian NGOs in Tunisia. In conclusion, it is not at all true to the same Kurdish options to say that the European Union has overthrown Tunisian democracy through the primary means of civil society, it is not true.

2. What do you think of the democratic transition in Tunisia after President Saïed's coup de force on 25 June 25 July 2021?

French: Je partage le qualificatif coup de force car il n'existe pas de termes plus précis. Je pense que vous avez posé la question de ce que la transition ne tombe pas en réalité n'est pas simplement en panne. C'est un coup d'arrêt à la fin, c'est un coup d'arrêt. C'est un coup de force qui se traduit par un coup d'arrêt à la transition. Ce qu'on appelle la transition démocratique en tout cas ou un processus de démocratisation parce qu'il y a tout un débat sur la transition. Certains disent, on a trop misé sur la transitologie, c'est le passage d'un État où il n'y a pas de d'État on va dire à un état de non liberté et cetera. Donc moi j'utilise le terme plutôt processus démocratique, donc c'est un coût donc de 25 juillet c'est un coût pour le processus démocratique, un coup d'arrêt pour cette démocratie qui s'est enclenché depuis 2011 en Tunisie.

Ce coup d'arrêt s'est traduit par la suite, très rapide d'ailleurs très vite, par des mesures qui plutôt se déroulaient dans le sens d'une contre démocratisation, dans le sens qui fait que éliminer tous les éléments objectifs qui constituent l'ensemble du processus démocratique. C'est un coup d'arrêt qui s'est traduit par la remise en cause de quelques rares acquis que le processus démocratique a eu pendant cette période à savoir les élections démocratiques sont dépassées en 2011 ainsi qu'en 2014 et en 2019 par la suite. En revanche, la suspension en plus dans les vocations du Parlement et le Conseil supérieur de la magistrature, enfin bref. Outre le fait que c'est le coup de force, est traduit par un par un État institutionnel. Il n'y a plus d'État de lois, il y a plus de lois, il n'y a plus d'équilibre de pouvoir qu'ils mettent au pays d'être gérés d'une manière qu'on peut qualifier de pro-démocratique. Donc voilà, c'est le pouvoir d'une personne qui initialement était considérée comme un pouvoir provisoire, un état d'exception. En réalité, très vite, on s'est rendu compte que c'est pas l'état d'exception, c'est un État qui a duré, qui dure encore depuis le 25 juillet, on est dans un état de non-droit, dans un État de force par lequel Monsieur Saïd à imposé et a pris toutes les mesures. Donc c'est un coup d'arrêt et c'est un coup dur qui s'est traduit par la destruction des acquis que la période précédente a réalisée. Évidemment, la période précédente a connu aussi d'autres aspects qui ne sont pas positifs en termes de processus démocratique à l'exemple de l'absence de la constitutionnelle qui est un élément essentiel parce que je vous rappelle simplement que pendant la période précédente, en particulier depuis le vote de la loi des

élections en 2014 et des différents gouvernements et différents parties qui ont dirigé le pays n'ont pas réussi en fait, n'ont pas voulu mettre en place la court. Imaginons un instant, puis on aurait une cour constitutionnelle avant le 24 juillet par exemple, Mr Saïed n'aurait pas pu faire sans coup de force le 25 juillet. ça serait impossible en tout cas juridiquement. Il y a eu des acquis mais y a aussi des manquements terribles, pour ne pas dire des erreurs monumentales. J'ai cité l'exemple de la Cour mais aussi je cite aussi un autre exemple c'est l'instance supérieure indépendante des élections qui a été malmenée moi quand vous dire pendant la période c'est-à-dire qu' elle est de moins en moins indépendante bien avant le coup de force 25 juillet.

English: I agree with the term "coup de force" because there is no more precise term. I think you have asked the question of what the transition does not actually fall into is not just broken. It's a stall at the end, it's a stall. It's a coup de force that results in a coup d'arrêt to the transition. What is called the democratic transition in any case or a process of democratization there is a whole debate on the transition. Some people say, we've put too much faith in transitionology, it's the passage from a state where there is no state to a state of no freedom and so on. So I use the term "democratic process" , so it's a cost, so 25 July is a cost for the democratic process, a stop for this democracy that has been underway since 2011 in Tunisia.

This stoppage was translated afterwards, very quickly in fact, by measures that were more in the direction of a counter-democratisation, in the sense that they eliminated all the objective elements that constitute the whole democratic process. It is a stoppage that has resulted in the questioning of some of the few achievements that the democratic process has had during this period, namely the democratic elections were overtaken in 2011 and in 2014 and in 2019 thereafter. On the other hand, the suspension in addition to the vocations of the Parliament and the Supreme Council of the Judiciary, well in short. Apart from the fact that it is a coup de force, it is translated into an institutional state. There is no more state of laws, there are no more laws, there is no more balance of power that they put in the country to be managed in a way that can be called pro-democratic. So this is the power of a person who initially was considered as a provisional power, a state of exception. In reality, very quickly, we realized that it was not a state of exception, it was a state that lasted, that has lasted since 25 July, we are in a state of lawlessness, in a state of force by which Mr Said imposed and took all the measures. So it's a blow and it's a hard blow that has resulted in the destruction of the achievements of the previous period. Obviously, the previous period also had other aspects

that are not positive in terms of the democratic process, such as the absence of the Constitution, which is an essential element, because I would just remind you that during the previous period, especially since the vote on the election law in 2014, the different governments and different parties that ran the country did not succeed in fact, did not want to put the court in place. Let's imagine for a moment, then we had a constitutional court before July 24 for example, Mr Saïed could not have done without a coup de force on July 25. It would be impossible at least legally.

3. Tout le chemin après le 25 juillet 2021 s'est fondé sur des errances, est-ce-que vous pensez que cette saisie de pouvoir est vide et manque de légitimité?

French: Le processus du 25 juillet n'est pas légitime. D'abord, il n'est pas légal, et c'est clair. D'ailleurs, ce n'est pas moi qui le dit seulement. La Cour africaine a déposé un jugement. De la même manière, l'avis de la commission de Venise est clair là-dessus quand elle était consultée sur le décret relatif à l'ISIE. Comme la question fait débat à l'intérieur de la Tunisie, la question de la légalité ou non du 25 juillet, ainsi que celle du décret 117, sont soulevées. Mais comme on n'a pas de cour constitutionnelle en Tunisie, qu'est-ce qu'on fait en général ? On fait donc un peu une liste comparative, et donc on s'appuie sur des avis, dont l'avis de la Cour Africaine, dont la Tunisie est un membre fondateur. Et ce n'est pas un simple avis, c'est un jugement. D'ailleurs, la Tunisie est obligée, d'après le texte de cette décision, de régulariser la situation dans les 2 ans, car le jugement considère que le 25 juillet, tout comme le décret 117, sont anticonstitutionnels et ne sont pas conformes aux engagements de la Tunisie qu'elle a pris au titre de la Charte africaine des droits de l'homme, entre autres. Le jugement considère également qu'il est urgent de revenir à une situation plus conforme à ses engagements. De la même façon, la Commission de Venise est une commission. Elle ne donne qu'un avis et ce n'est pas un jugement. La Tunisie est membre de cette commission depuis quelques années. Cette commission est un groupe d'experts mis en place par le Conseil de l'Europe, qui est plus large que l'Union européenne. Il y a des pays comme la Turquie ou encore le Vatican qui en font partie. Cette commission peut donner un avis soit à la demande d'un membre ou même à la demande d'un état quelconque. L'avis que la Commission de Venise a donné concerne le décret concernant l'ISIE tel que Kaïs Saïed l'a voulu. En fait, c'est l'Union européenne qui l'a demandé par le biais de sa délégation en Tunisie. L'UE a demandé l'avis de la Commission de Venise pour savoir si le décret, modifiant la loi fondamentale relative à l'ISIE (établie depuis 2012), est conforme ou nonconforme, entre autres. Et donc, l'avis était sans appel en disant que ce décret n'est pas du tout conforme ni avec la

Constitution ni avec les engagements internationaux de la Tunisie, ni avec quoi que ce soit. À la demande de l'avis, la commission recommande de rétablir l'ISIE dans sa version précédente, moyennant éventuellement quelques modifications qui doivent être conformes aux engagements de la Tunisie. Il y a des choses qui ont été réalisées. J'ai cité le Conseil supérieur de la magistrature. En dépit des critiques que l'on peut avoir vis-à-vis de la manière dont ces institutions ont été mises en place, avec beaucoup de failles et de manquements, il ne faut pas politiser l'affaire et tout instrumentaliser de manière partisane, notamment les mécanismes de nomination. Néanmoins, il y a eu la mise en place d'institutions telles que le Conseil supérieur de la magistrature.

English: The 25 July process is not legitimate. First of all, it is not legal, and that is clear. Moreover, it is not only me who says so. The African Court has issued a judgment. Similarly, the opinion of the Venice Commission was clear on this when it was consulted on the decree on the ISIE. As the issue is debated within Tunisia, the question of the legality or otherwise of 25 July, as well as that of Decree 117, is raised. But as we don't have a constitutional court in Tunisia, what do we do in general? So we make a comparative list, and we rely on opinions, including the opinion of the African Court, of which Tunisia is a founding member. And it's not just an opinion, it's a judgment. Moreover, Tunisia is obliged, according to the text of this decision, to regularize the situation within 2 years, because the judgment considers that 25 July, as well as Decree 117, are unconstitutional and do not comply with Tunisia's commitments under the African Charter on Human Rights, among others. The judgment also considers that there is an urgent need to return to a situation more in line with its commitments. Similarly, the Venice Commission is a commission. It only gives an opinion and it is not a judgment. Tunisia has been a member of this commission for several years. This commission is a group of experts set up by the Council of Europe, which is broader than the European Union. There are countries like Turkey and the Vatican that are members. This commission can give an opinion either at the request of a member or even at the request of any state. The opinion that the Venice Commission gave concerns the decree concerning the ISIE as Kais Saïed wanted it. In fact, it was the European Union that requested it through its delegation in Tunisia. The EU requested the opinion of the Venice Commission on whether the decree, amending the fundamental law on the ISIE (established since 2012), is compliant or non-compliant, among other things. And so, the opinion was without appeal saying that this decree is not at all in conformity with the Constitution nor with the international commitments of Tunisia, nor with anything else. At the request of the opinion, the committee

recommends reinstating the ISIE in its previous version, with some modifications that must be in line with Tunisia's commitments. There are things that have been achieved. I mentioned the Higher Council of the Judiciary. Despite the criticisms that we may have of the way these institutions were set up, with many flaws and shortcomings, we must not politicize the matter and instrumentalise everything in a partisan manner, particularly the appointment mechanisms. Nevertheless, institutions such as the Supreme Council of the Judiciary have been set up.

4. Quelle est l'implication des erreurs commises à la rédaction de la constitution tunisienne en 2022 sur la démocratie tunisienne?

French: À la base, c'est un texte qui est antidémocratique, d'abord, au niveau du processus d'élaboration. C'est un texte qui est imposé d'en haut, y compris le mécanisme mis en place par Kaïs Saïed, notamment la commission présidée par Sadok Belaid, qui a été mise de côté. Ça, c'est au niveau du processus d'élaboration. Encore une fois, c'est un Monsieur seul qui décide tout seul de nous imposer une loi fondamentale qui s'appelle la Constitution. Ensuite, au niveau du fond, au niveau du texte lui-même, c'est un texte fondamentalement antidémocratique. Non seulement la manière dont elle a été projetée est antidémocratique en raison de la non-participation et de l'absence d'un débat, mais aussi dans son contenu. Il a complètement chambardé les équilibres du pouvoir. Le premier élément, et aujourd'hui, il y a dans cette Constitution un seul pouvoir qui décide, c'est le pouvoir présidentiel, tous les autres pouvoirs se soumettent au président. Ils sont pour la plupart du temps nommés par lui de manière directe. Ils sont soumis, mais plus graves encore, ce Président omniprésent, omni fort est un président qui n'est pas responsable. Toutes ces décisions doivent être acceptées sans aucun recours, ça c'est clair.

Au niveau des libertés, il y a certains articles qui les gardent, aussi au niveau de la forme. Des questions de liberté, je ne vais pas y revenir, mais quand on voit la faiblesse, pour ne pas dire l'annexion, la soumission du pouvoir judiciaire au pouvoir exécutif, on voit bien que le seul garant des libertés dans toutes les démocraties, c'est la justice. Mais une justice indépendante, qui n'existe plus. C'est devenue une fonction judiciaire et non un pouvoir judiciaire. Le mot "pouvoir" a disparu de toutes les institutions. Il n'y a qu'un seul pouvoir, c'est le pouvoir présidentiel. Le reste ce sont des fonctions, donc le seul garant de la liberté, qu'une démocratie devrait respecter, c'est une justice indépendante. De la même manière, le pouvoir parlementaire est à la fois marginalisé, affaibli considérablement, mais en même temps, complètement décomposé en 2 morceaux pour pouvoir jouer de l'impossibilité de ce

morcellement de pouvoir, de ce qui reste du pouvoir législatif. L'idée est d'affaiblir le législateur, tant au niveau de ses propres fonctions et attributions que de son fonctionnement.

English: Basically, it's an undemocratic text, first of all, in terms of the drafting process. It is a text that is imposed from above, including the mechanism put in place by Kais Saïed, notably the commission chaired by Sadak Belaid, which was set aside. That's at the level of the drafting process. Once again, it is a single man who decides to impose a fundamental law called the Constitution on us. Then, at the level of the substance, at the level of the text itself, it is a fundamentally undemocratic text. Not only is the way it was drafted undemocratic because of the non-participation and the absence of a debate, but also in its content. It has completely upset the balance of power. The first element, and today there is only one power in this Constitution that decides, it is the presidential power, all the other powers submit to the president. They are mostly appointed by him directly. They are submissive, but even more seriously, this omnipresent, omnifort president is a president who is not responsible. All these decisions must be accepted without any appeal, that's clear.

In terms of freedoms, there are certain articles that preserve them, also in terms of form. I'm not going to come back to questions of freedom, but when we see the weakness, not to say the annexation, the submission of the judiciary to the executive, we can see that the only guarantor of freedoms in all democracies is justice. But an independent judiciary, which no longer exists. It has become a judicial function and not a judicial power. The word "power" has disappeared from all institutions. There is only one power, and that is the presidential power. The rest are functions, so the only guarantor of freedom, which a democracy should respect, is an independent judiciary. In the same way, parliamentary power is both marginalized, considerably weakened, but at the same time, completely broken down into two pieces in order to play on the impossibility of this fragmentation of power, of what remains of legislative power. The idea is to weaken the legislator, both in terms of its own functions and attributions and its operation.

4.2. Interview 2

1. Any general comments about the Democratic transition in Tunisia?

Let me start by saying a couple of things about the period before 2019. I think that both the United States and the European Union were initially very happy with the revolution that Tunisia was on the path to democracy. They tried to help with the democratic transition in the country because they thought that it would be in their interests to have stability with democracy in Tunisia, which could then become a model for the out-of-work because a lot of them understand that they need stability. However, stability with a dictatorship is not a real assurance. You cannot depend on it. They have tried it for 50 years or 60 years and they know that authoritarian regimes are by definition unstable because they don't enjoy popular support and they keep making mistakes and they don't correct their mistakes. That's the definition of an authoritarian regime: it doesn't realize that it is on the wrong path. The great advantage of democracy is that there is a self-correction mechanism. Of course, there will always be mistakes, but in a democracy, there is a mechanism to correct those mistakes. In a dictatorship, even in an authoritarian regime, there is no such mechanism. So you keep making mistake after mistake after mistake until the whole system explodes or falls down. The support in the beginning was quite substantial and the beginning for me is from 2011 until about 2014. In those three years, there was a lot of desire to help Tunisia, and a lot of support was provided to help Tunisians with whatever they needed, including financial support to stabilize the economy. If you remember, there were many meetings of the G8 and on that, and they promised something like a Marshall Plan, where they would give billions and billions of dollars to Tunisia and other countries during the Arab Spring, but they were also focusing on Tunisia. But that number materialized. You know that support, that economic support to stabilize the economy, was promised in 2011 and 2012 in tens and hundreds of millions. I forgot the exact amount. It was here over \$20 billion or something in that he was a lot of money. But it never actually was never delivered, never materialized. So there was not enough economic support to stabilize the economy.

This is the biggest mistake that I think the United States and the European Union made because, in a democratic transition, there is no way that you can do political reforms and economic reforms at the same time. Instead, you have to focus on political reforms first. You have to establish the political structures and institutions, and then you can tackle the economic problems of the country. There is a step-by-step approach that must be taken. The

political reforms themselves take a minimum of 10 years and probably longer than that in 15 years, possibly 20 years to really establish the democratic structures and institutions so that they can become strong enough to sustain any problems or challenges.

Democracy was not yet strong enough, or stable enough to defend itself against possible attempts to destabilize it. Under political reforms, there were delays. I wouldn't say that nothing was achieved. We achieved quite a bit in those ten years, but it was not enough. After 2014, when the new constitution was adopted and was considered a success story around which all Tunisians have basically united around, it required a lot of time to iron out all the differences and to build consensus around it. When we finally succeeded, then we had a constitution that basically all Tunisians agreed on. Only by then, I think the US and European Union declared triumph. So that's another mistake: The Democratic transition is over. But I think it was a really stupid mistake, a really unforgivable mistake on the part of the American States and

2. Do you believe that the European Union kept supporting its neo-realist approach to Tunisia and only supported the fledgling Tunisian democracy in its early stages to ensure stability along its southern borders?

I think that simultaneously, in those years between 2011 and 2014, the Arab Spring had already failed in the other Arab countries, so the Arab Spring started in Tunisia, but then quickly moved to Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria, and those four countries by 2014 were already in a state basically of civil war or military coup, so the democracy agenda became much weaker. It's not the bright outlook as it used to be in 2011. I think that the European Union and the United States' attention shifted during those three years from democracy promotion to stability. Even though Tunisia was an exceptional student at that time, it was not regarded as a priority anymore. Tunisia is a small country. It's not a very influential country in the region. Even if democracy succeeds in Tunisia, it doesn't mean it's going to affect the other Arab countries because it is such a small country, it does not necessarily affect Libya, Egypt, Syria, or Yemen. It's too far from those countries anyway. I think that democracy stayed as a goal but not as a priority. Democracy took a back seat. Even though Tunisia was still succeeding in the democratic form, it did not receive any attention or any real support after 2014. Most of it went to just fighting extremism and terrorism then and strengthening the defense mechanisms of the army and police training and all of that. Even in terms of civil society, all the funding that went to civil society was for fighting extremism. So even civil

society was hijacked. Civil society was supposed to strengthen democratic cultural dialogue between the Tunisians and establish the requirements for a successful democracy, which are tolerance, accepting different points of view, and dialogue. Civil society was directed only towards fighting extremism and terrorism and forgetting about democracy. I think it's a number of mistakes that basically weakened the democratic process and weakened the democratic transition over a period of time.

In my opinion, in 2014 and 2015, the European Union made several mistakes, one of which was insisting on the rights of homosexuality as if that should be a priority. It was really stupid, and I think it was not advised for the European Union and some in the United States to insist that this very hot topic and difficult public issue be introduced in Tunisia at such a young age when the transition to democracy is still not strong.

So there are two big mistakes in that. First of all, Europe and the United States did not allow homosexuality until five or ten years ago. This is very recent, even in Europe and the United States. I am someone who has lived in the United States for 40 years, and I guarantee you that in the first 30 years of those 40 years, there were no such things as open rights for homosexuality or homosexuals or lesbians. They were always hiding, in the closet, as they say, and it was rejected by society and even by their own families.

Things have changed, but it changed only in the last 10 years. So to come to a new democracy in an Arab and Muslim country and say, "OK, you have to do what took us 200 years to establish as a real democracy and then to discuss this problem, sexuality, which is very difficult and controversial, before you finish building your democratic institutions and before you become a real democracy" is not reasonable.

In a stable democracy, we're not gonna wait for you. We're not going to wait ten years or 20 years or 30 years. At the time,

3. The Saïed's popularity, What do you think of it and how do you qualify it?

First of all, democracy was not a priority anymore and whatever was left of democracy support went into either fighting extremism or terrorism, which has nothing to do with supporting democracy. I mean, it's a good cause, but it's not democracy. I think it's providing security and stability, which Tunisia needs. As a result, supporting the institutions of democracy or a culture of democracy went completely missing. So I think that created a new environment by 2019 where a populist can take advantage of this situation and propose, you know, direct democracy instead. And, by the way, this is what the populists in the world say. This is not something new. This is what populism is. You promise everything to the people

you're talking to. It's not their fault. It's always the fault of those who are in the government. The populist leader promises to save them from those people and give them power. He is not interested in power himself; he just wants to transfer the power to the people.

4. How do you think the arrival of Saïed influenced the democratic transition in the country?

For me, Saïed represents exceptionalism, but not of the good kind. It was based on the absence of competition and the dissatisfaction with the outcomes of representative democracy from 2015 to 2019, which in turn, led to a lack of legitimacy. Though there was initially strong satisfaction with democracy, particularly among the younger population, many of whom remained unemployed and saw no improvements, there were underlying issues that created an opportunity for the rise of populist leaders. The democratic transition was in crisis because the country was not making enough progress economically, and even politically in terms of building the necessary institutions for democracy, such as political parties. In a dictatorship, there are no political parties, and even the ruling party is just a group of people looking to gain personal benefits. Political parties are a key component of democracy, as they are able to bring people together around a set of programmes, which are tested and refined at the local or regional level, and then presented to the people for their vote. Unfortunately, in Tunisia, we never reached the point of building real political parties, with 200 or 250 of them existing, and even the largest movement, Ennahda, was not able to transform itself from a movement into a party. This weakness created a vacuum, which was exploited by populist leaders with messages such as "forget about democracy," portraying politicians as crooks only looking out for themselves. This message became popular, especially among young people who were disillusioned with the state of democracy in Tunisia, and as a result, the conditions for the rise of populist leaders became increasingly favorable.

4.3. Interview 3

1. Quelle est votre lecture de l'élection du président Saïed en 2019 et de quelle façon vous apercevez les manifestations de cette élection sur la transition démocratiques en Tunisie.?

French: Il a été élu en 2019 parce que en face, les 2 principaux camps, le camp conservateur et le camp dit progressiste pour aller vite 'Nidaa Tounes' et ces dérivées. ces corps là on a été divisé parce que y' avait un truc tout bête si on prend le score de Abdelkarim Zebidi et de Youssef Chahid quand on les somme tous les deux, on a plus que Nabil Karoui..S'il y avait un seul candidat entre les 2n Ce candidat saurait arriver très probablement 2nd tour, face à Kaïs Saïed, il aurait gagné donc ça c'est il y a un contexte et qu'il émerge, c'est pas parce que les gens se sont dit, tiens il s'arrête, il est mieux que les autres, c'est parce que y a des anti-candidats et les 2 principales familles politiques. La conservatrice et la, entre guillemets progressiste avaient plusieurs candidats. Donc il y avait une suroffre sur des corps qui sont assez identifiés et Kaïs Saïed à juste profité de ça. Ça pour le premier tour et au 2nd tour, il a profité D'être candidat contre Nabil Karoui. N'importe qui aurait été élu contre Nabil Karoui parce que Nabil Karoui c'est vraiment la caricature de tous les maux de la transition. C'est l'homme qui fait la politique et les médias, et cetera, et cetera. Donc ça pour moi, c'est pour ça qu'il a été élu .Il n'a pas été élu ni sur son projet ni sur quoi que ce soit, il a été élu sur cette base là, donc ça déjà, pourquoi il arrive au pouvoir.

Quand il fait son coup d'État le 25 juillet 2021, là on est sûr d'autres choses. D'ailleurs, on retrouve par exemple des des camps qui s'affrontent, c'est-à-dire que des gens qui l'ont soutenu au 2nd tour. Typiquement Le mouvement "ennahdha" se retrouve à être les premiers à s'opposer à lui. Beaucoup de gens qui ont soutenu Nabil Karoui se retrouvent dans une situation d'opposition. En fait, il y a un renversement d'alliance qui s'est déroulé. C'est une exception, oui, mais c'est pas tant lié à la personne de Kaïs Saïed, C'est plutôt lié au niveau de l'élection et au niveau du coup d'État, c'est lié à la perception qu'on a du contexte politique. Après. Y compris après son élection comme quelqu'un d'anti système, de sortant des clous. Même quand on examine ce qu'il a dit après son élection, quand on prend des discours une fois au président de la République, on se dit que c'est un opposant qui parle. Identifié comme quelqu'un qui n'a pas intégré le le système et c'est à partir de là que des personnes plutôt lambda vont avoir tendance à plutôt à lui faire confiance.

English: He was elected in 2019 because in front of him, the two main camps, the conservative camp and the so-called progressive camp , quickly became 'Nidaa Tounes' and

its derivatives. These bodies were divided because there was a very simple thing: if we take the score of Bulkrim Zebidi and Youcef Chahid when we are both, we have more than Nabil Karoui. If there was only one candidate between the two, this candidate would have probably arrived in the 2nd round, facing Kais Saïed, he would have won, so there is a context and he emerges, it's not because people said to themselves, well, he's better than the others, it's because there are anti-candidates and the two main political families. The conservative and the, quote, progressive had several candidates. So there was an oversupply of bodies that are quite identified and Kais Saïed just took advantage of that. For the first round and in the second round, he took advantage of being a candidate against Nabil Karoui. Anyone would have been elected against Nabil Karoui because Nabil Karoui is really the caricature of all the ills of the transition. He is the man who makes the politics and the media, et cetera, et cetera. He was not elected on his project or on anything else, he was elected on this basis, so that's why he came to power.

When he makes his coup d'état on 25 July 2021, we are on to other things. Moreover, we find for example camps that clash, that is to say that people who supported him in the 2nd round. Typically the "ennahda" movement finds itself to be the first to oppose him. Many people who supported Nabil Karoui, find themselves in the opposite nation. In fact, there is a reversal of alliance that has taken place. It's an exception, yes, but it's not so much linked to the person of Kais Saïed, it's more linked to the level of the election and the level of the coup d'état, it's linked to the perception that we have of the political context. Afterwards, even after his election as someone who was anti-system, who went outside the box. Even when you look at what he said after his election, when you give speeches once to the President of the Republic, you think that he is an opponent who speaks. Identified as someone who has not integrated the system, and it is from there that people who are rather lambda will tend to trust him.

2. Comment vous adressez le visionnage des systèmes politiques différents qui a été imposé par Kaïs Saïed lors du coup d'État du 25 juillet 2021?

French: Personnellement, je trouve que le concentré de sa pensée on la retrouve dans cette fameuse interview pour le magazine "Cheraa Al Magharibi" de 2019.

Il débite des pensées qu'on retrouve dans le débat essentiellement populiste, c'est à dire que la démocratie représentative telle que nous la connaissons est à bout de souffle du fait de la mondialisation, de la crise de la démocratie à l'Occident et cetera. Il donne un exemple des gilets jaunes en France. Voilà, c'est un exemple parmi d'autres que la démocratie telle qu'elle

a été, ce qu'on appelle la démocratie libérale. C'est une impasse et donc il faut retourner à la base. Il estime que les corps intermédiaires typiquement représentés par les partis politiques mais pas que eux, c'est-à-dire, en plus des syndicats et les unions générales. Il les considère comme un frein et sur tout sorte fils.Populaire et son exercice, et donc il s'estime, lui dépositaire de la volonté populaire, Et ça, on le voit par exemple, quand on lit le le préambule de la Constitution de 2022 qui commence à chaque fois par ‘nous le peuple Tunisien’. Je ne sais pas si vous avez lu mon livre ou pas, il y a une notion qui s'appelle “L'homme peuple” qui a été entre autres théorisée par Pierre Rosanvallon qui fait comme souvent d'ailleurs, on populisme vraiment. Ce qui fait école, c'est l'Amérique latine qui fait référence à Le maire de Bogota.Dans les années 40.qui disait genre” le peuple c'est moi”. Pareil au cas Tunisien, Kais Saïed estime que c'est lui le peuple. Tentative, hein et libérale, qui s'exerce notamment dans les pays occidentaux.

English: Personally, I find that the essence of his thought is found in this famous interview for the magazine "Cheraa Al Magharibi" in 2019.

He spouts thoughts that are found in the essentially populist debate, i.e. that representative democracy as we know it is at the end of its tether due to globalization, the crisis of democracy in the West and so on. He gives an example of the yellow waistcoats in France. This is one example among others that democracy as it has been, what we call liberal democracy. It is a dead end and therefore we must return to the base. He considers that the intermediary bodies are typically represented by the political parties but not only them, that is, in addition to the trade unions and the general unions. He considers them to be a brake on all kinds of popular power and its exercise, and therefore he considers himself to be the custodian of the popular will, and this can be seen, for example, when you read the preamble to the 2022 Constitution, which begins each time with 'we the Tunisian people'. I don't know if you've read my book or not, there's a notion called "The people's man" which was theorized by Pierre Rosanvallon, among others, and which, as is often the case, is really populism. What makes school, it is Latin America which refers to the mayor of Bogota, in the 40s, who said "the people are me". In the same way as in Tunisia, Kais Saïed believes that he is the people. This is an attempt, hein and liberal, which is exercised in particular in the Western countries.

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