Overview
Students begin this lesson by discussing the concept of freedom and the attributes of countries that embrace or deny freedom. Within this context, students will then learn about the “Arab Spring” through a PowerPoint centered discussion, political cartoons, and a series of news articles. The lesson culminates with students creating a social media campaign that focuses on an issue they support or an issue they would like changed.

Grade
9

NC Essential Standards for World History
- WH.6.2: Analyze political revolutions in terms of their causes and impact on independence, governing bodies and church-state relations.
- WH.7.1: Evaluate key turning points of the modern era in terms of their lasting impact
- WH 7.4: Explain how social and economic conditions of colonial rule contributed to the rise of nationalistic movements
- WH.7.6: Explain how economic crisis contributed to the growth of various political and economic movements
- WH.8.3: Explain how liberal democracy, private enterprise and human rights movements have reshaped political, economic and social life in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, the Soviet Union and the United States

Materials
- Tunisia and the Arab Spring PowerPoint, available in the Carolina K-12 Database of K-12 Resources.
  - To view this PDF file as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “View” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “Full Screen Mode”
  - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu
- Arab Spring Cartoons #1 – 4 Handout, attached
- The Arab Spring Through Political Cartoons Handout, attached
- Tunisian Diplomatic Cable handout, attached
- Tragic Life of a Street Vendor handout, attached
- Tunisia’s Islamist Ennahda party wins historic poll handout, attached
- The Overblown Islamist Threat handout, attached
- American Spring Project handout, attached
- The Arab Spring, chronicled Tweet by Tweet article (optional)
- Computers with internet access (optional)
- Poster Paper or Chart Paper
- Pens, pencils, crayons, markers, colored pencils

Essential Questions
- What is freedom and how do we identify what nations are free?
- What is the Arab Spring?
- Why did the Arab Spring start in Tunisia?
- What were effects of the Arab Spring?
- What is unique about Tunisia’s recent election?
Duration
• Two - three 90 minute periods
• To limit the amount of class time spent on this lesson, readings can be assigned individually and for homework.

Teacher Preparation
Teachers may want to familiarize themselves with the attached articles, as well as some of the articles from the “Additional Resources” section before teaching this lesson.

Procedure

Warm Up: Freedom
1. As a warm up, project slide 2 and instruct students to silently brainstorm the word “freedom”. After a few minutes, solicit responses from students and write their thoughts on the board/chart paper. To facilitate further discussion, pose the following questions from slide 3 to the class and record responses.
   • What actions do you associate with freedom?
   • What makes a country free?
   • What countries do you associate with freedom? Why?
   • What countries aren’t free? Why?
   • What do you think life is like for people in those countries?
   • President Ronald Reagan once said, “Let us remember our heritage and, with it, our destiny – the destiny of this shining city on a hill, this beacon of freedom for all the peoples of the Earth.” Can you think of times when the United States did not live up to the ideals expressed in this quote or when people were denied freedom?
     o Students should answer “yes”. Using the United States as an example, you can refer to slavery, the lack of voting rights for non-property owners, women, and minorities, Jim Crow laws, treatment of Native Americans, etc.
   • How did the United States become “freer” overtime? Revolution, gradual change, war, a combination of all three?

A Short Introduction to the Arab Spring
3. Inform students that they are going to learn about a recent struggle for freedom that took place during the “Arab Spring” in Tunisia. To gauge the class’ prior knowledge of the Arab Spring, ask for a show of hands as to how many students have heard the term Arab Spring on the news. Tell students that they’ll be able to share what they’ve learned during this next activity.

4. Explain to students that they will begin learning about the Arab Spring through a set of political cartoons. Divide students into pairs/groups of 2 – 4 and provide each group with a set of the attached political cartoons relating to the Arab Spring. Also provide the attached “Arab Spring through Political Cartoons” handout.

5. Select one student in each group to record the group’s answers for the handout. Review the instructions before allowing groups to discuss the cartoons and answer the question. Groups should have at least ten minutes to discuss and answer the questions.

6. After the allotted time, bring the class together to review the cartoons and the handout. To facilitate discussion, project slides 4 – 7, which contain the cartoons, and answer the questions from the handout below:
   • What objects and people do you see in the cartoon?
   • What symbols do you identify in the cartoon? What do you think they symbols stand for/mean?
   • Are there any important clues that you can identify (words, places, numbers) in the cartoon? Explain.
• Describe any action that is happening in the cartoon.
• What message is the cartoonist trying to convey?
• Who might agree and who might disagree with the cartoon’s message? Why?
• What does this cartoon tell you about the Arab Spring?
• What title would you give this cartoon?

To further the discussion, ask the following slide related questions:

• Slide 4: Cartoon #1
  o What countries are represented by the two peace signs?
    ▪ Egypt and Tunisia
  o What does this cartoon tell you about the governments in North Africa and parts of the Middle East?

• Slide 5: Cartoon #2
  o What country do you associate with the pyramids?
    ▪ Egypt
  o What is the big challenge facing Egypt after toppling the authoritarian regime?
    ▪ What type of government will Egyptians replace the autocracy with – a democracy or a theocracy.

• Slide 6: Cartoon #3
  o What does this cartoon tell you about the role of social networking in the Arab Spring?
    ▪ Facebook can be used as a weapon against authoritarian governments.
  o How can Facebook be used as a weapon against authoritarian regimes?
    ▪ Answers include, but aren’t limited to: can be used to organize protests, provides uncensored information to citizens of those regimes.

• Slide 7: Cartoon #4
  o Why do you think participants in the Arab Spring rejected terrorism as a tool for change?
  o Do you think that violence is justified when fighting for your freedom? Why or why not?
  o What do you think is more effective – violence or non-violence? Why?
  o Can you identify the symbols at the bottom of the sign?
    ▪ Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.
  o What does this tell you about relationship between the Arab Spring and social networking?
    ▪ Participants used new social networking to organize the protests.
  o How do you think the participants used social networking?

7. After discussing the cartoons and handouts, ask each group to share their definitions of the Arab Spring. Note the similarities and differences between each group then share the following overview of the Arab Spring:

• The Arab Spring is a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests occurring in the Arab world that began on Saturday, 18 December 2010. To date revolutions have occurred in Tunisia and Egypt; a civil war in Libya, resulting in the fall of its regime; civil uprisings in Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen; major protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and Oman; and minor protests in Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Western Sahara. Clashes at the borders of Israel in May 2011 have also been inspired by the regional Arab Spring. The protests have shared techniques of civil resistance in sustained campaigns involving strikes, demonstrations, marches and rallies, as well as the use of social media to organize, communicate, and raise awareness in the face of state attempts at repression and internet censorship. Many demonstrations have met violent responses from authorities, as well as from pro-government militias and counter-demonstrators. A major slogan of the demonstrators in the Arab world has been “the people want to bring down the regime”. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_spring Edited by Carolina K-12)
8. Explain to students that they will be focusing on Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab Spring, through a PowerPoint based discussion. Use the questions for each slide below to foster discussion while students are taking notes.

- **Slide 8: Tunisia: An Overview**
  - What do you notice about the age breakdown of the population?
  - Do you think the large population of young people contributed to the Arab Spring?
  - The official languages of Tunisia are Arabic and French, what does this tell you about Tunisia’s history?
    - It was a French colony.

- **Slide 9: Tunisia: An Overview**
  - Is there anything surprising to you about the statistics on slide 10?
    - Some students may be surprised that a large majority of the population is urbanized or that Tunisia has a diverse economy and doesn’t rely on an oil based economy.
  - Why is unemployment a bad thing for the stability of a country?

- **Slide 10: Tunisia’s Government**
  - What do you think “socially liberal” means?
  - What does the above fact (Tunisia has only had two presidents since 1956) tell you about the nature of Tunisia’s government?
    - It’s an autocracy or dictatorship.

- **Slide 11: Tunisia’s Government**
  - What features of Tunisia’s government are democratic? What features are authoritarian?
  - Does the role of women in Tunisia’s government surprise you? Why or why not?

- **Slide 12: Voting in Tunisia**
  - Why do you think active military members and internal security forces are denied suffrage?
  - Comparing past US elections to Tunisia’s most recent presidential election, what does Ben Ali’s margin of victory tell you about elections in Tunisia?
    - Note: The 1964 Presidential Election was the largest landslide in US history and the incumbent President only received 61% of the vote.
    - The elections in Tunisia are most likely rigged.

- **Debrief: Slide 13 – Fall of Ben Ali**
  - What do you think prompted people to demand change in Tunisia?
    - What do you think prompted Tunisians to demand change?
    - What would it take for you to get out marching in the streets?

**What Started the Revolution?**

9. Inform students that the uprisings in Tunisia were a response to a number of different factors that had built up over many years, but there were two events that helped spark a revolution: the release of a Wikileaks cable regarding Tunisia and the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi. Move to slide 14, it contains a brief overview of Wikileaks. Discuss the following questions:

- Why do you think WikiLeaks wants to publish secret information?
- Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Why?

10. Move to slide 15 and instruct students to return to the groups they were assigned for the political cartoon activity and provide each student with a copy of the attached “Tunisian Diplomatic Cable”. This is a cable sent by a US official to the State Department that details the rampant corruption at the highest levels of Ben Ali’s government. Inform students that they have 15 minutes to complete the reading and to discuss the attached questions:
According to Transparency International, is the perception of corruption getting better or worse? Why is perception important?

- The perception of corruption is getting worse. Perception is important because “perception is the reality”. If people in the country believe that the government isn’t working for them, then they aren’t going to support it.

How would you describe Ben Ali’s family?

- The family could be described as “mafia-like”, corrupt, abusers of power, etc.

Who are the Trabelisis? Why are they disliked in Tunisia?

- The Trabelisis are Lelia Ben Ali’s extended family. They hold a great deal of power in Tunisia and they’re disliked because they abuse their power, spend lavishly with the country suffers, they’re corrupt, etc.

Describe Tunisia’s financial sector in one sentence.

- Any answer that is similar to “the financial sector is broken” or the “financial sector is corrupt”, “relies on personal connections rather than fair business practices,” etc.

How would you feel if you experienced this type of “trickle-down effect” corruption in your daily lives?

Aside from corruption, what else contributed to Tunisians unhappiness with their government?

- The excesses of the Ben Ali regime, rising inflation, and high unemployment

How do you think this cable contributed to the overthrow of Ben Ali’s regime?

11. After discussing the questions, provide each group with the attached “The Tragic Life of a Street Vendor” which details the story of Mohamed Bouazizi, the street vendor whose self-immolation prompted the Arab Spring. Again, Inform students that they have 15 minutes to complete the reading and to discuss the attached questions:

- What did Mohamed Bouazizi do for a living?
- Why do you think that Mohamed have trouble finding a job?
- Describe the abuse the police inflicted on Mohamed
- Why did Mohamed set himself on fire?
- How did Ben Ali respond to Mohamed’s actions? Do you think if he had responded differently, he would still be in power? Why or why not?
- How quickly did things change in Tunisia after Mohamed set himself on fire?
- Can you put yourself in Mohamed’s shoes?
- Do you think the same thing could happen in the United States? Why or why not?

Day Two

What Now? – Tunisia’s Elections

12. Show slides 16 – 21 which provide a very brief overview of major events in the Arab Spring and the results of Tunisia’s most recent election.

13. Move to slide 22 and explain to students that they will now read an Op-Ed from the New York Times that attempts to convince people that an Islamist party winning the election doesn’t spell the end of democracy in Tunisia. Divide students into pairs and distribute the attached “The Overblown Islamist Threat” article. Provide pairs with 10 minutes to read and answer the questions on slide 22. Once students are finished, discuss the questions as a class:

- Why were Islamist parties popular under autocratic regimes?
  - Many times they were the only source of opposition to the regime because other parties were banned. They are also connected to the mosque and this is appealing for many Muslims
- How does the younger generation of Arabs affect the power of the Islamist parties?
  - They have shown that they will protest if the government doesn’t listen to them, so if Islamist parties ignore them, they will protest again.
- What has happened when Islamist parties have been included in government?
Islamist parties have been more moderate because they have to appeal to a wide range of people to keep their power in government.

- Do we have anything similar in the United States?
  - There are some conservative Christians in the United States that would like to change our laws to conform to their religious views.

“The American Spring”

14. As a culminating activity, return to the warm up discussion of freedom and pose the following questions to students:

- Would you consider Tunisia a free country now? Why or why not?
- What kind of problems do you think Tunisia will face as they establish a new government?
- Once a country becomes “free” will it always be free or do they have to work toward this ideal of freedom?
- What are some ways that the citizens of Tunisia can protect their own freedom?
- What are some freedoms that we have in the United States that you are thankful for?
- If those freedoms were taken away, what do you think you would do?

15. Point out that our most cherished freedoms (freedom of speech, separation of church and state, freedom to worship without government interference, the right to vote, etc.) are protected by the US Constitution. Tell students that they are going to have the opportunity to exercise some of the very freedoms that people participating in the Arab Spring are fighting for by working in small groups to develop a social media campaign surrounding an issue they care about. Provide students with the attached “American Spring” project instructions and review the assignment in detail. Allow students to work independently for the remainder of class. Slides 23 and 24 contain screen shots of a tweet and Facebook page for students to refer to when they’re working on their projects. Let students know when the final project is due.

16. On the project’s due date, as a warm up, have students post their FaceBook pages around the room and allow students to do a brief “gallery walk” at the start of class. As students circulate around the various FaceBook pages, teachers may want them to take notes on what they liked about the various pages and what they learned about the various issues being advocated. Next, review respectful audience member expectations with students and allow each group to present their You Tube video. After each presentation, allow students to ask the presenters additional questions about their campaigns. Student audience members can then provide feedback regarding what they learned, what they liked, and what action they feel compelled to take regarding the issue presented.

Additional Resources

The following links were active as of April, 2012. If articles have been removed upon your search, and internet search of the title or subject should result in alternate choices:

- Opinion: How WikiLeaks helped fuel Tunisian revolution
- WikiLeaks: Tunisia knew its rulers were debauched. But leaks still had impact
  - [http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/feb/02/wikileaks-exclusive-book-extract](http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/feb/02/wikileaks-exclusive-book-extract)
- The Story of Mohamed Bouazizi, the man who toppled Tunisia
- A Twitter Snapshot of the Tunisian Revolution: Over 196K Mentions of Tunisia, Reaching Over 26M Users
- Mohammed Bouazizi: the dutiful son whose death changed Tunisia’s fate
- Tunisia’s Election Sets a High Bar for the Arab Spring

- The Arab Spring, Chronicled Tweet by Tweet
Cartoon #1

Source: [http://www.toonpool.com/user/3816/files/arabian_spring_1159485.jpg](http://www.toonpool.com/user/3816/files/arabian_spring_1159485.jpg)

Cartoon #2

Cartoon #3


Cartoon #4

The text on the sign says, "Peaceful protest creates change", while the text on the bloody sword says "Terrorism creates change".

The Arab Spring Through Political Cartoons

As a group, evaluate the political cartoons provided to you by discussing the four questions below for each cartoon.

1. What objects and people do you see in the cartoon?
2. Are there any symbols in the cartoon? If so, what might the symbol mean?
3. Are there any important clues that you can identify (words, places, numbers) in the cartoon?
4. Describe any action that is happening in the cartoon.

Answer the following questions on the back of this sheet or on a separate sheet of paper.

**Cartoon #1**
1. What message is the cartoonist trying to convey?
2. Who might agree and who might disagree with the cartoon’s message? Why?
3. What does this cartoon tell you about the Arab Spring?
4. What title would you give to this cartoon?

**Cartoon #2**
1. What message is the cartoonist trying to convey?
2. Who might agree and who might disagree with the cartoon’s message? Why?
3. What does this cartoon tell you about the Arab Spring?
4. What title would you give to this cartoon?

**Cartoon #3**
1. What message is the cartoonist trying to convey?
2. Who might agree and who might disagree with the cartoon’s message? Why?
3. What does this cartoon tell you about the Arab Spring?
4. What title would you give to this cartoon?

**Cartoon #4**
1. What message is the cartoonist trying to convey?
2. Who might agree and who might disagree with the cartoon’s message? Why?
3. What does this cartoon tell you about the Arab Spring?
4. What title would you give to this cartoon?

After viewing these cartoons and answering the questions above, create a group definition of the Arab Spring and explain how it relates to our discussion about “freedom”.

Tunisian Diplomatic Cable

Summary

¶1. (S) According to Transparency International's annual survey and Embassy contacts' observations, corruption in Tunisia is getting worse. Whether it's cash, services, land, property, or yes, even your yacht, President Ben Ali's family is rumored to covet it and reportedly gets what it wants. Beyond the stories of the First Family's shady dealings, Tunisians report encountering low-level corruption as well in interactions with the police, customs, and a variety of government ministries. The economic impact is clear, with Tunisian investors -- fearing the long-arm of "the Family" -- forgoing new investments, keeping domestic investment rates low and unemployment high (Refs G, H). These persistent rumors of corruption, coupled with rising inflation and continued unemployment, have helped to fuel frustration with the GOT and have contributed to recent protests in southwestern Tunisia (Ref A). With those at the top believed to be the worst offenders, and likely to remain in power, there are no checks in the system. End Summary.

The Sky's the Limit

¶2. (C) According to Transparency International's 2007 index, the perception is that corruption in Tunisia is getting worse. Tunisia's ranking on the index dropped from 43 in 2005 to 61 in 2007 (out of 179 countries) with a score of 4.2 (with 1 the most corrupt and 10 the least corrupt). Although corruption is hard to verify and even more difficult to quantify, our contacts all agree that the situation is headed in the wrong direction. When asked whether he thought corruption was better, worse, or the same, XXXXXXXXXXX exclaimed in exasperation, "Of course it's getting worse!" He stated that corruption could not but increase as the culprits looked for more and more opportunities. Joking about Tunisia's rising inflation, he said that even the cost of bribes was up. "A traffic stop used to cost you 20 dinars and now it's up to 40 or 50!"

All in the Family

¶3. (S) President Ben Ali's extended family is often cited as the nexus of Tunisian corruption. Often referred to as a quasi-mafia, an oblique mention of "the Family" is enough to indicate which family you mean. Seemingly half of the Tunisian business community can claim a Ben Ali connection through marriage, and many of these relations are reported to have made the most of their lineage. Ben Ali's life, Leila Ben Ali, and her extended family -- the Trabelsis -- provoke the greatest ire from Tunisians. Along with the numerous allegations of Trabelsi corruption are often barbs about their lack of education, low social status, and conspicuous consumption. While some of the complaints about the Trabelsi clan seem to emanate from a disdain for their nouveau riche inclinations, Tunisians also argue that the Trabelsis strong arm tactics and flagrant abuse of the system make them easy to hate. Leila's brother Belhassen Trabelsi is the most notorious family member and is rumored to have been involved in a wide-range of corrupt schemes from the recent Banque de Tunisie board shakeup (Ref B) to property expropriation and extortion of bribes. Leaving the question of their progenitor aside, Belhassen Trabelsi's holdings are extensive and include an airline, several hotels, one of Tunisia's two private radio stations, car assembly plants, Ford distribution, a real estate development company, and the list goes on. (See Ref K for a more extensive list of his holdings.) Yet, Belhassen is only one of Leila's ten known siblings, each with their own children. Among this large extended family, Leila's brother Moncef and nephew Imed are also particularly important economic actors.

¶4. (S/NF) The President is often given a pass, with many Tunisians arguing that he is being used by the Trabelsi clan and is unaware of their shady dealings. XXXXXXXXXXXX a strong supporter of the government and member of XXXXXXXXXXX, told the Ambassador that the problem is not Ben Ali, but "the Family" going too far and breaking the rules. Nevertheless, it is hard to believe Ben Ali is not aware, at least generally, of the growing corruption problem. This might also reflect the seeming geographical divisions between the Ben Ali and Trabelsi fiefdoms, with the Ben Ali clan reportedly focused on the central coastal regional and the Trabelsi clan operating out of the greater Tunis area and therefore, generating the bulk of the gossip. The Ben Ali side of the Family and his children and in-laws from his first marriage are also implicated in a number of stories. Ben Ali has seven siblings, of which his late brother Moncef was a known drug trafficker, sentenced in absentia to 10 years prison in the French courts. Ben Ali has...
three children with his first wife Naima Kefi: Ghaouna, Dorsaf and Cyrine. They are married respectively to Slim Zarrouk, Slim Chiboub, and Marouane Mabrouk -- all significant economic powers.

This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land

¶5. (S/NF) With real estate development booming and land prices on the rise, owning property or land in the right location can either be a windfall or a one-way ticket to expropriation. In summer 2007, Leila Ben Ali received a desirable tract of land in Carthage for free from the GOT in order to build the for-profit Carthage International School (Ref F). In addition to the land, the school received a 1.8 million dinar (US $1.5 million) gift from the GOT, and within a matter of weeks the GOT had built new roads and stoplights to facilitate school access. It has been reported that Ms. Ben Ali has sold the Carthage International School to Belgian investors, but the Belgian Embassy has as yet been unable to confirm or discount the rumor. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX asserted that the school was indeed sold for a huge, but undisclosed sum. He noted any such sale would be pure profit since Ms. Ben Ali’s received land, infrastructure, and a hefty bonus at no cost.

¶6. (S/NF) Construction on an enormous and garish mansion has been underway next to the ambassador’s residence for the past year. Multiple sources have told us that the home is that of Sakhr Materi, President Ben Ali’s son-in-law and owner of Zitouna Radio. This prime real estate was reportedly expropriated from its owner by the GOT for use by the water authority, then later granted to Materi for private use. A cafe owner recounted a similar tale to an Embassy employee, reporting that Belhassen Trabelsi forced him to trade in a cafe he previously owned in a prime location for his current cafe. The cafe owner stated Trabelsi told him he could do whatever he wanted there; if 50 dinar bribes to the police were not effective, Trabelsi said the owner had only to call him and he would “take care of it.”

Show Me Your Money

¶7. (S) Tunisia's financial sector remains plagued by serious allegations of corruption and financial mismanagement. Tunisian business people joke that the most important relationship you can have is with your banker, reflecting the importance of personal connections rather than a solid business plan in securing financing. The legacy of relationship-based banking is a sector-wide rate of non-performing loans that is 19 percent, which remains high but is lower than a high of 25 percent in 2001 (Ref I). Embassy contacts are quick to point out that many of these loans are held by wealthy Tunisian business people who use their close ties to the regime to avoid repayment (Ref E). Lax oversight makes the banking sector an excellent target of opportunity, with multiple stories of “First Family” schemes. The recent reshuffle at Banque de Tunisie (Ref B), with the Foreign Minister’s wife assuming the presidency and Belhassen Trabelsi named to the board, is the latest example. According to a representative from Credit Agricole, Marouane Mabrouk, another of Ben Ali’s sons-in-law, purchased a 17 percent share of the former Banque du Sud (now Attijari Bank) shares immediately prior to the bank’s privatization. This 17 percent share was critical to acquiring controlling interest in the bank since the privatization represented only a 35 percent share in the bank. The Credit Agricole rep stated that Mabrouk shopped his shares to foreign banks with a significant premium, with the tender winner, Spanish-Moroccan Santander-Attijariwafa ultimately paying an off the books premium to Mabrouk. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX recounted that when he was still at his bank he used to receive phone calls from panicked clients who stated that Belhassen Trabelsi had asked them for money. He did not indicate whether he advised them to pay.

The Trickle Down Effect

¶8. (S) While the stories of high-level, Family corruption are among the most flagrant and oft-repeated, Tunisians report encountering low-level corruption more frequently in their daily lives. Speeding tickets can be ignored, passports can be expedited, and customs can be bypassed -- all for the right price. Donations to the GOT’s 26-26 Fund for development or to the Bessma Society for the Handicapped -- Leila Ben Ali’s favored charity -- are also believed to grease the wheels. Hayet Louani (protect), a well-connected member of Parliament, faced increased pressure from the GOT after refusing several “requests” to donate money to Trabelsi’s soccer team. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX reported that customs inspectors demanded 10,000 dinars to get his goods through customs; he did not reveal whether or not he acquiesced to the demand.
\(\text{¶9. (S)}\) Nepotism is also believed to play a significant role in awarding scholarships and offering jobs. Knowing the right people at the Ministry of Higher Education can determine admission to the best schools or can mean a scholarship for study abroad. An Embassy FSN stated that the Director of International Cooperation, a long-time contact, offered to give his son a scholarship to Morocco on the basis of their acquaintance. If you do not know someone, money can also do the trick. There are many stories of Tunisians paying clerks at the Ministry of Higher Education to get their children into better schools than were merited by their test scores. Government jobs -- a prize in Tunisia -- are also believed to be doled out on the basis of connections. Leila Ben Ali’s late mother, Hajja Nana, is also reported to have acted as a broker for both school admissions and government job placement, providing her facilitation services for a commission. Among the complaints from the protestors in the mining area of Gafsa were allegations that jobs in the Gafsa Phosphate Company were given on the basis of connections and bribery.

\(\text{Mob Rule?}\)

10. (S/NF) The numerous stories of familial corruption are certainly galling to many Tunisians, but beyond the rumors of money-grabbing is a frustration that the well-connected can live outside the law. One Tunisian lamented that Tunisia was no longer a police state, it had become a state run by the mafia. "Even the police report to the Family!" he exclaimed. With those at the top believed to be the worst offenders, and likely to remain in power, there are no checks in the system. The daughter of a former governor recounted that Belhassen Trabelsi flew into her father’s office in a rage -- even throwing an elderly office clerk to the ground -- after being asked to abide by laws requiring insurance coverage for his amusement park. Her father wrote a letter to President Ben Ali defending his decision and denouncing Trabelsi’s tactics. The letter was never answered, and he was removed from his post shortly thereafter. The GOT’s strong censorship of the press ensures that stories of familial corruption are not published. The Family's corruption remains a red line that the press cross at their own peril. Although the February imprisonment of comedian Hedi Oula Baballah was ostensibly drug-related, human rights groups speculate his arrest was punishment for a 30 minute stand-up routine spoofing the President and his in-laws (Tunis D). International NGOs have made the case that the harsh prison conditions faced by journalist Slim Boukdhir, who was arrested for failing to present his ID card and insulting a police officer, are directly related to his articles criticizing government corruption. Corruption remains a topic relegated to hushed voices with quick glances over the shoulder.

\(\text{The Elephant in the Room}\)

11. (S) Several Tunisian economists argue that it does not matter whether corruption is actually increasing because "perception is reality." The perception of increasing corruption and the persistent rumors of shady backroom dealings has a negative impact on the economy regardless of the veracity. Contacts tell us they are afraid to invest for fear that the family will suddenly want a cut. "What's the point?" Alaya Bettaieb asked, "The best case scenario is that my investment succeeds and someone important tries to take a cut." Persistently low domestic investment rates bear this out (Ref H). Foreign bank accounts, while illegal, are reportedly commonplace. A recent Ministry of Finance amnesty to encourage Tunisians to repatriate their funds has been an abject failure. Bettaieb stated that he plans to incorporate his new business in Mauritania or Malta, citing fear of unwanted interference. Many economists and business people note that strong investment in real estate and land reflects the lack of confidence in the economy and an effort to keep their money safe (Ref C).

\(\text{Comment}\)

\(\text{¶13. (S)}\) Although the petty corruption rankles, it is the excesses of President Ben Ali’s family that inspire outrage among Tunisians. With Tunisians facing rising inflation and high unemployment, the conspicuous displays of wealth and persistent rumors of corruption have added fuel to the fire. The recent protests in the mining region of Gafsa provide a potent reminder of the discontent that remains largely beneath the surface. This government has based its legitimacy on its ability to deliver economic growth, but a growing number of Tunisians believe those at the top are keeping the benefits for themselves.
Corruption is a problem that is at once both political and economic. The lack of transparency and accountability that characterize Tunisia's political system similarly plague the economy, damaging the investment climate and fueling a culture of corruption. For all the talk of a Tunisian economic miracle and all the positive statistics, the fact that Tunisia's own investors are steering clear speaks volumes. Corruption is the elephant in the room; it is the problem everyone knows about, but no one can publicly acknowledge. End Comment.


After reading the diplomatic cable, answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:

- According to Transparency International, is the perception of corruption getting better or worse? Why is perception important?
- How would you describe Ben Ali’s family?
- Who are the Trabelsis? Why are they disliked in Tunisia?
- Describe Tunisia’s financial sector in one sentence.
- How would you feel if you experienced this type of “trickle-down effect” corruption in your daily lives?
- What is the rule of law and why is it important? Provide two examples of the failure of the rule of law in Tunisia.
- Aside from corruption, what else contributed to Tunisians unhappiness with their government?
- How do you think this cable contributed to the overthrow of Ben Ali’s regime?
The Tragic Life of a Street Vendor

Al Jazeera travels to the birthplace of Tunisia’s uprising and speaks to Mohamed Bouazizi’s family.

In a country where officials have little concern for the rights of citizens, there was nothing extraordinary about humiliating a young man trying to sell fruit and vegetables to support his family.

Yet when Mohamed Bouazizi poured inflammable liquid over his body and set himself alight outside the local municipal office, his act of protest cemented a revolt that would ultimately end President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali’s 23-year-rule.

Local police officers had been picking on Bouazizi for years, ever since he was a child. For his family, there is some comfort that their personal loss has had such stunning political consequences.

"I don't want Mohamed's death to be wasted," Menobia Bouazizi, his mother, said. "Mohamed was the key to this revolt."

Simple, troubled life

Mohamed Bouazizi was 10 years old when he became the main provider for his family, selling fresh produce in the local market. He stayed in high school long enough to sit his baccalaureate exam, but did not graduate. (He never attended university, contrary to what many news organisations have reported).

Bouazizi's father died when he was three years old. His elder brother lives away from the family, in Sfax. Though his mother remarried, her second husband suffers from poor health and is unable to find regular work.

"He didn't expect to study, because we didn't have the money," his mother said.

At age of 19, Mohamed halted his studies in order to work fulltime, to help offer his five younger siblings the chance to stay in school.

"My sister was the one in university and he would pay for her," Samya Bouazizi, one of his sisters, said. "And I am still a student and he would spend money on me."

He applied to join the army, but was refused, as were other successive job applications. With his family dependant on him, there were few options other than to continue going to market.

By all accounts, Bouazizi, just 26 when he died earlier this month, was honest and hardworking. Every day, he would take his wooden cart to the supermarket and load it with fruit and vegetables. Then he would walk it more than two kilometres to the local souk.

Police abuse

And nearly everyday, he was bullied by local police officers.

"Since he was a child, they were mistreating him. He was used to it," Hajlaoui Jaafer, a close friend of Bouazizi, said. "I saw him humiliated."

The abuse took many forms. Mostly, it was the type of petty bureaucratic tyranny that many in the region know all too well. Police would confiscate his scales and his produce, or fine him for running a stall without a permit.

Six months before his attempted suicide, police sent a fine for 400 dinars ($280) to his house – the equivalent of two months of earnings.
The harassment finally became too much for the young man on December 17.

That morning, it became physical. A policewoman confronted him on the way to market. She returned to take his scales from him, but Bouazizi refused to hand them over. They swore at each other, the policewoman slapped him and, with the help of her colleagues, forced him to the ground. The officers took away his produce and his scale.

Publically humiliated, Bouazizi tried to seek recourse. He went to the local municipality building and demanded to meet with an official. He was told it would not be possible and that the official was in a meeting.

"It's the type of lie we're used to hearing," said his friend.

**Protest of last resort**

With no official willing to hear his grievances, the young man brought paint fuel, returned to the street outside the building, and set himself on fire.

For Mohamed's mother, her son's suicide was motivated not by poverty but because he had been humiliated.

"It got to him deep inside, it hurt his pride," she said, referring to the police's harassment of her son.

The uprising that followed came quick and fast. From Sidi Bouzid it spread to Kasserine, Thala, Menzel Bouzaiene. Tunisians of every age, class and profession joined the revolution.

In the beginning, however, the outrage was intensely personal.

"What really gave fire to the revolution was that Mohamed was a very well-known and popular man. He would give free fruit and vegetables to very poor families," Jaafer said.

It took Ben Ali nearly two weeks to visit Mohamed Bouazizi's bedside at the hospital in Ben Arous. For many observers, the official photo of the president looking down on the bandaged young man had a different symbolism from what Ben Ali had probably intended.

Menobia Bouazizi said the former president was wrong not to meet with her son sooner, and that when Ben Ali finally did reach out to her family, it was too late - both to save her son, and to save his presidency.

He received members of the Bouazizi family in his offices, but for Menobia Bouazizi, the meeting rang hollow.

"The invite to the presidential palace came very late," she said. "We are sure that the president only made the invitation to try to derail the revolution."

"I went there as a mother and a citizen to ask for justice for my son."

"The president promised he would do everything he could to save our son, even to have him sent to France for treatment."

The president never delivered on his promises to her family, Menobia Bouazizi said.

**Contagious uprising**
But by the time Menobia Bouazizi's son died of his burns on January 4, the uprising had already spread across Tunisia. Fedya Hamdi, the last police officer to antagonise the street vendor, has since fled the town. She was reportedly dismissed, but her exact whereabouts are unknown.

Meanwhile, the body of the man who started a revolution now lies in a simple grave outside Sidi Bouzid, surrounded by olive trees, cactuses and blossoming almond trees.

He is sorely missed by his family, whose modest house is now one of the busiest in Sidi Bouzid, with a steady flow of journalists who have only just discovered the town where it all began.

"He was very sincere," Basma Bouazizi, his shy 16-year-old sister, said. "We are like soulless bodies since he left."

"We consider him to be a martyr," Mahmoud Ghazlan, a local member of the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), said in an interview metres away from the spot where the street vendor set himself on fire.

Proof itself of the progress made in four short weeks: such an interview with an opposition activist on the streets of Sidi Bouzid would not have been possible until the day Bouazizi inspired the revolt.

Tunisia’s election last month, in which the Islamist party Ennahda claimed more than 40 percent of the seats in the national assembly, reinforced the conventional wisdom that Islamists will be the biggest beneficiaries of the Arab Spring.

Held down for years by autocratic regimes, so the argument goes, Islamists will be able to exploit their popularity in new elections and ultimately gain control. This raises fears among secular leaders in the region and in Western capitals.

The West wants to pretend that Islamist parties don’t really exist. This won’t work. Political Islam will not go away because the West ignores it; Islamist parties will, however, become more moderate if they are included in government.

Islamists are unlikely to take over new governments in the Arab world, and seeking to prevent Islamist parties from participating in governance would actually be counterproductive for several reasons.

First, Islamists are not stupid. Arab countries face daunting challenges and whoever governs them will need to tackle tremendous political and economic problems. Islamists don’t want to be blamed for the mess. In Tunisia, Ennahda has made it clear that it’s uninterested in ruling the country alone.

Second, Islamists are not as popular as Western pundits and policy makers think. Political Islam benefited from closed authoritarian systems throughout the Arab world because there was no alternative; they were the only viable political opposition. Although Islamists in Egypt and Jordan enjoy no more than 15 to 20 percent of the popular vote, they are seen to have much wider influence on the street.

Regimes couldn’t totally crack down on Islamists given the power of the mosques, so people unhappy with the status quo tended to cast protest votes in favor of Islamist parties. Now there are other options and new political parties will take some of the opposition votes away from Islamists.

Third, the vast majority of protesters are not seeking to replace autocratic regimes with religious theocracies. Arabs — especially the young people and secular liberals who poured into the streets earlier this year — are not going to be satisfied with hard-line ideological regimes. Islam as a solution is not enough for them; people want jobs and better lives and will demand results.

Moderate Arab countries like Jordan have included Islamists in governments in the past. When Islamists were brought into the Jordanian government in 1990, they tried to introduce segregation between fathers and their daughters at school events. This backfired and citizens simply refused to go along with it. Jordan’s Islamists quickly backed down and dropped the demand. Political inclusion, it turned out, had a moderating effect on Islamists.

Islamists have proved to be no better or worse than any other party in government. The best way to deal with Islamist parties, therefore, is to include them in government and hold them accountable.

In Tunisia, Ennahda has already said that it will respect personal rights and that the veil is a woman’s choice. Ennahda understands that it can’t ignore the secular part of the electorate. If the party wants to be as successful in Tunisia’s next election after a new constitution has been written, it knows it needs to present moderate views.

Over the next few years, other parties will have a chance to develop in Tunisia and Islamists are likely to get a lower percentage of the vote next time around. They will start winning votes in relation to their actual strength on the ground. While they may be part of leading coalitions in various countries, they are unlikely to gain power outright in any country.
In order to ensure peaceful political competition between Islamists and other political parties, the new Arab democracies need to enshrine two principles in their new constitutions: pluralism and a peaceful political landscape that is free of armed groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. Pluralism would ensure that neither Islamists nor anyone else could come to power and then deny the right of political organization to others. And peaceful transfers of power are essential for any stable democracy.

Countries in transition have no choice but to open up the political system. Excluding and marginalizing Islamists out of fear will only strengthen their appeal.

*Marwan Muasher*, the former foreign minister and deputy prime minister of Jordan, is vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Directions: After learning about the Arab Spring and the movement’s fight for freedom, we’re going to practice exercising the First Amendment freedoms we have as Americans. You and your partner will choose an issue or issues that are important to you then organize a campaign using peaceful techniques (such as those utilized in Arab Spring) to educate our leaders about what’s important to you and what you think needs to change.

1. Begin by brainstorming the following questions:
   - What’s important to me?
   - What do I like about the United States, North Carolina, my hometown, my school?
   - What would I like to change in the United States, North Carolina, my hometown, my school? What problems exist in my community? What issues need improving?

2. After brainstorming choose one or two issues that you would like to see changed in the United States, or specifically in North Carolina or your hometown or school.
   - Some sample issues: lowering the voting age to include high school students; taking action to prevent global warming; more jobs for teenagers; more student voice in school decisions; more funding for schools, lower taxes for all Americans; etc.

3. Once you’ve chosen an issue, you and your partner need to create a social media campaign that educates people about your issues, identifies what you would like to change, and encourages people to take action. This social media campaign must include the following:
   - **A name and slogan for your group**
     - Examples:
       - Name: Occupy Wall Street  Slogan: “We are the 99%”
       - Name: Tea Party  Slogan: “Don’t Tread on Me”
   - **A Facebook Page for Your Group**
     - This should be completed on a piece of chart paper or poster paper and must include the following:
       - A mission statement that explains what your group is about, what is important to you, why it is important to you, and ideas for bringing about change.
       - Other groups that you “like” (these can be a mixture of actual groups and groups you have made up)
       - A drawing of your group’s logo for a photo
       - One wall post by someone who agrees with you
       - One wall post by someone who disagrees with you
   - **Three Tweets**
     - The tweets should urge people to support your cause, list facts about your cause, etc.
     - Limit your tweets to 140 characters (letters, symbols, etc.) or less
     - It should include a hashtag, which is a way for people to track your group on twitter. (For example, #ArabSpring, #USA, etc.)
     - It should look like it was actually posted on Twitter
   - **A YouTube video**
     - The video should be acted out in front of the class and last at least one minute
     - You’re allowed to recruit classmates to appear in your video skit
     - It should explain your group’s mission statement and educate people about why they should care about your issue.
     - The video can be funny or serious

Grading: You’ll be graded based upon the above criteria as well as creativity, neatness, and ability to explain your ideas in a clear and concise manner.
The Arab Spring, chronicled Tweet by Tweet
Social media powered up the Arab Spring and has created a new space for how history will remember its events.
by D. Parvaz, Originally appeared at Al-Jazeera English

Every revolution has multiple narratives - from city blocks to city halls, from the streets and from the state. But what tends to survive is the official version - often shaped by whatever state or government either survives or is formed after the dust has settled.

Even though the shape of things to come remains quite blurry in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, it’s far too soon to tell what the power structures will in fact look like, what level of reform they deliver and if those reforms will satisfy the cries of those who took to the streets calling for change.

One thing, however, is clear: The recollection of these revolutions, uprisings or periods of unrest (call them what you will) will not be left to official, state records - they have already been chronicled, largely by the people themselves. This might well be the first time that people living under autocratic rule have managed to document their struggles and movement on almost the most micro level imaginable, leaving a long digital trail of Tweets, Facebook posts, Audioboo recordings, YouTube videos, blogs and so much more.

Moreover, while official versions tend to appear fully formed, Jimmy Wales, founder of online encyclopedia Wikipedia (a popular first stop on any online search) points out that a Wiki entry changes as new information comes to light over time - such as when the US government said that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction in the lead up to the war in 2003. As more reports came in on the story - and it became quite clear that then President Saddam Hussein did not have a massive stash of chemical weapons - the entry grew and shifted to reflect that.

"It would be a great fertile ground for future historians to look at," said Wales. "As the news is emerging, how do you go from one position to another?"

These shifts are happening faster, as what Wales calls "the frontline role of Twitter and Facebook" kicks into ever higher gear, bringing more detail into light minute-by-minute. This is then supported by the work of a trusted blogging community producing longer pieces, fact-checking each other as well as social media, putting their reputations on the line with each post they produce.

The official version versus what really happened
In the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia - and to a lesser extent, Syria - so much of the actual first-hand records are there for people to see for themselves. After all, "Tweeting the revolution" became a common catchphrase as journalists and activists seemed to jockey to be the first to post breaking news on the microblogging site. "Influential Tweeters" are even ranked by some media.

Ed Bice, CEO of Meedan, a non-profit organisation aimed at increasing online exchange of media, especially between Arabic and English-language users, calls each of these Tweets and posts an "artefact", and said that telling the history of these revolutions would be a matter of weaving a narrative through these durable references or artifacts.

And unlike certain historical events, which remain in hot dispute - consider the difference between how the Armenians see what happened to their population in Turkey starting in 1915 (genocide) - compared with how the Turkish state see it (deportation) - there will be far more points of reference as a means of confirming or debunking any particular take on events.
"There are now durable artefacts to point these narratives against - when Al-Ahram runs an absurd frontpage on January 26 - say events had gone differently - there's no chance that would have become an accepted part of the narrative just because we've got not 1,000, not 10,000, but hundreds of thousands of publishing points that contraindicate the official lines," said Bice.
But the question of what will endure remains tricky.

"What version of history gets kept? My answer is that I think all versions get kept. What becomes socially dominant is a totally different question and that has to do with power and who controls the media and other such issues."
But this doesn't mean that people will necessarily always seek out the unofficial version of things.

Wales tells a story of a recent visit to China where he showed a group of students a photo of a tank at Tiananmen Square, where in 1989, several hundred unarmed civilians died after the Chinese army open fired on them during a pro-democracy protest.

He said many of the students said they've never seen the image, but one student, whose parents had been there during the June 4 massacre, at least knew of the event.

"The way she reported it was just astounding. She said that it was really unfortunate, that it was a bit of a misunderstanding between the students and the government, but fortunately, no one got hurt," said Wales, adding that her response was especially odd, given that even the Chinese government has admitted that people were hurt that day.

The future of activism
Regardless of what history books or public records will look like in decades to come, one thing is already clear: The future of activism in the Middle East is unlikely to resemble its past.

After all, it's hard to imagine what sort of country Syria would be today had there been a means of documenting what really happened during the Hama Massacre of 1982.

If there had been thousands of Tweets, photos and videos recording exactly what unfolded - when as many as 40,000 people, by some accounts, were slaughtered at President Hafez al-Assad’s request - would those images have prompted a sustained popular uprising then? Would Syria have gone down a different road?

It's not just a matter of current records serving as a playbook for future activists and civic groups. It's also a matter of empowering a population to record - on their own terms - what transpired on their streets, something being documented in some measure now in Syria.

In Egypt, it's already clear that people know that taking to the streets yields results, which is why the protests against their ruling military are still ongoing, even as the country braces for parliamentary elections.

"One of the things I suspect we'll see in the places where there is now transitional state or transitional government [is that] the people are quite excited," said Wales.

"That alone will mean in two or three years time, when there's some sort of a stumble or an error - and there always is - people will be quite willing to go out and demand change again, which could be a good thing, or it could be difficult for a well-meaning government that's just having a struggle."

Building citizenship skills
While the protests, graffiti and volume of written matter online speaks to an engaged and active population, it highlighted the shortcomings in the educational systems in, say, Egypt, where many protesters didn't seem to realize that some of their demands were not possible under their country's constitution.
There’s a chance, some say, for this swell of activism and its documentation to shape education in countries where the system for decades has been tightly controlled by authoritarian mandate. "When you have different versions of history, you are creating an atmosphere of freedom - it's more like an element of democracy. And this is not characteristic of most Arab countries. You are not expected or allowed to have more than one version of history," said Muhammad Faour, senior associate at the Carnegie Middle East Centre.

"Take other countries too - can the student in class discuss different versions [of history] with the teacher?"

Faour feels that the Arab Spring might provide opportunities to improve what he calls "citizenship skills" - a term used to describe not just a knowledge of government or political institutions - but the participation in civic community and the understanding of a certain set of values.

"You want to develop respect for diversity, respect in human dignity, belief in freedom and equality - all these things are concepts that become part of the value system," he said.

This is key, added Faour - who specializes in education reform in Arab countries - because, if done right, using all the information that has already been gathered and consolidated on and via social media could have a major, positive impact on the future of the region.

"We’re not only talking about a small group. We’re talking about one-third of the population of Arab countries, which is under 15 years of age," said Faour.

"This is a school-aged population, so if we have education for citizenship in schools, then we're educating millions of people, and this will be very important in consolidating emerging democracies or to help transform societies into democracies."

Wales, Faour and Bice were in Doha, Qatar, at the Word Innovation Summit for Education