

Nonviolence and the Arab Spring?

A comparative analysis of Tunisia and Egypt

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate how nonviolent methods can be successfully used in struggles against repressive regimes. This is done by examining two cases of uprisings in the Arab Spring, Egypt and Tunisia. Drawing from theories on nonviolence, mainly Gene Sharp; five elements that are considered favourable for nonviolent struggles has been selected for the analysis. The methodology employed to examine these elements is an intensive approach with a comparative aim. The result of this study, shows that even though not following all elements advised by theory, the uprisings still managed to succeed in their efforts. The results indicates that the key to success in both cases was the fast mobilization rate of participants, their united cause and the shifting allegiances of pro-regime supporters. Finally, the study points out that more comparative research that includes more elements is needed on the use of nonviolent methods.

Key words: nonviolence, civil resistance, mobilization, Arab Spring, Tunisia, Egypt, Gene Sharp

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1 Introduction

In 2011 was the world taken by surprise when the Arabic Spring. In just months, decade long regimes crumbled and fell, some with violence, some without. The events started in Tunisia with the self-immolation of a fruit vendor. With the resignation of Ben Ali one month later the protests spread to several other countries in the region such as Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain. These revolutions quickly gained wide attention in the media and were branded as “Facebook revolutions” (Tufekci & Wilson 2012: 365). Even though there were several instance of violence they were overall seen as nonviolent uprisings.

There have been several studies with the effort of explaining the events of the Arab Spring; Nepstad (2013) for instance, analyses the defections of security forces, Salamey & Pearson (2012) provides a structural explanation to the uprisings and Mabo (2013) analyses the role of wiki leaks in the uprisings. However, although even through the epithet of nonviolent Facebook revolutions, there has been few – of my knowledge – studies which applies a perspective of nonviolence. Angrist (2013) provides a compelling analysis for Tunisia and civil resistance but lacks comparisons with other cases – something which will done in this thesis.

My reason for using a nonviolent perspective is mainly normative. I believe that our world has a huge fascination for violence. We see it in movies, on television and in clothing, picturing famous rebel fighters rising up against oppression and injustice. There has always been something romantic with this notion of fighting back, we have seen in the cases of Swedish volunteers to Finland, The International Brigade in Spain and today, international volunteers in Syria.

This notion about the attention of violence does not seem to be false. In the March issue of *Journal of Peace Research* the authors demonstrate that the keyword *violence* in the journal has been increasing over time while the usage of *peace* has been at the same level (Gleditsch & Strand 2014). This is also supported by Jenkins who claims that we have a tendency to focus our research on war and not peace; our fascination with violence never seems to abate (Dower 2009: 141).

Contrary to the use of violence as a method, nonviolent methods have their obvious merit in not causing the potential damage as violence could and violent insurgency may to a certain extent only recruit some groups of the population – whereas a nonviolent movement could mobilize many more people (Sharp 1973: 793). There is also research pointing to, that the use of nonviolent methods is increasing the chance of making the hard transition towards democracy successfully after a regime change (Celestino & Gleditsch 2013; Ackerman & Rodal 2008: 119).

So why do people resort to violence? History has showed us that nonviolent struggle is possible. Mahatma Gandhi did overthrow the British reign in India and Otpor in Serbia succeeded where NATO failed. The usefulness of nonviolent methods was well illustrated in the Arab Spring, where the population went to streets and seemingly easy disposed of two entrenched dictators. Furthermore, the Arab Spring is relevant since it is still on-going, and examining how certain cases succeed and some not; can give useful insight to researchers on how nonviolence may succeed in disposing of a repressive regime. However, nonviolence has seemed to be deemed to remain in the dark, even in these recent cases of “nonviolent Facebook revolutions”. This leads me onto the purpose and research question of this thesis.

1.1 Statement of Purpose & Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate how nonviolent methods can be successfully used in struggles against repressive regimes. This will be done by comparing the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt during the Arabic Spring. Both these cases experienced a struggle involving mass protests and civil resistance with the result of the ousting of two dictators. With this purpose I will answer the following question:

How can we understand the success of the civil uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt from a nonviolent perspective?

This nonviolent perspective or framework will be created using theories on nonviolent movements; how they should act and which elements are favourable for the movement to succeed. This framework will take an explanatory shape. However, I want to stress out that my ambition is not to explain; but from my theoretical framework, describe why the uprisings succeed. With this approach, my findings may point out limitations and strengths in the theory.

1.2 Earlier Research on Nonviolence

The field of nonviolence has been described as understudied. But since the 80’s there has been a surge in research on the subject. In this research there has been a divide between two approaches. One field mainly consists of advocates and practitioners which focus on the way the struggle should be waged – namely the skills involved. The other field of study – advocated mainly by social scientists – emphasises structural factors or conditions favourable for formation and success for the struggle. (Nepstad 2011: xiif)

Several of the authors from which I have drawn my theoretical approach adhere to the concept of *strategic nonviolent conflict* (Ackerman & Kruegler 1994; Helvey 2006). As the name indicates, this concept is a practical approach to nonviolence. Although Gene Sharp does not use this term specifically but instead *nonviolent action*; his works are indeed a practical approach to the concept where he seeks to develop a framework for the transition from dictatorship to democracy (Sharp 2004; 1973). The reason for choosing this practical approach is the applicability to actual struggles. Since the approach is devised for being used in practice (Sharp 2004: viii-xi); examining how it will correspond to actual struggles may provide insights to both practisiers and researchers.

1.3 Outline of Thesis

I will begin his thesis with a methodological approach where I describe the choice of cases and which considerations I have taken. The next chapter describes my theoretical approach and gives an overview of the concept of nonviolence. This chapter is finishes by describing the chosen variables for my analysis. In my empirical analysis I will describe each case, examine the selected variables and finish with a conclusion. The final chapter will discuss the overall results and give suggestions for further research.

2 Methodological Approach

To answer my research question I will conduct a comparative case study of the civil uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. From my theoretical perspective I have identified five elements that could affect the chance to succeed: Mobilization & Unity, Leadership & Organization, Strategy & Tactics, Nonviolent Behaviour and Shifting Allegiances. These elements will be examined in an intensive manner with the purpose of giving an overall picture of each movement. These elements and the methodology employed to analyse the elements, will be explained in more detail in chapter 3.3.

The advantage of using an intensive approach is that the researcher may study his objects on a deeper level, with the prospect of discovering facts that would not manifested in an extensive study. While interpreting the material, it is vital that the researcher presents his choices and considerations to maintain a high level of intersubjectivity. (Teorell & Svensson 2007: 11, 280f)

Since I have chosen two cases with several variables to study, this method may not come to its full advantage because of the limited scope of this thesis. However, with the comparative approach this is still a viable option. By comparing the uprisings, I can discover their similarities and differences from the chosen elements – and thus add knowledge concerning the case of using nonviolent methods.

My study hence takes the form of a comparative case study with the aim to describe the two uprisings from a nonviolent perspective. The objects of study are thus the civil uprisings in each case. By this, I mean the parts of the population that actively, on the streets, displayed their discontent with their government – or otherwise engaged in similar acts.

With this approach, the two movements are not assumed as nonviolent but I will rather apply my framework of nonviolence on the civil uprisings to describe them. I will approach these cases focusing on the actual uprisings and exclude structural factors such as divided elites, external pressure or economic decline (Nepstad 2011: 124-126). The ideal approach would be to include both these perspectives but in this limited thesis I will only examine the actions of the protestors. The implications of this will be a less overall image of the circumstances concerning each struggle but with the advantage of a more intense view of the uprisings themselves.

2.2 Regarding my Choice of Cases

The timeframe selected for the analysis in this thesis is from starting point for each movement until the time their demands were met. In Tunisia this will mean from 17th of December to the 14th of January and the flight of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. For Egypt it would be the 25th of January until the resignation of Hosni Mubarak at February 11th. Due to the limited resources and the limitations of this thesis, the case study of Egypt will mainly examine the events in Cairo and because it was the starting point of the uprising. For the sake of this thesis, these cases will be regarded as successful movements, and the motivation behind this assumption will be further elaborated below.

Even though the more urban approach of Egypt, the cases are similar in several ways – both have been under a repressive regime for decades with limited civil liberties. Their struggles took place during a similar timespan, in the same geographical location and with similar cultural contexts (Gelvin 2012: 34-36). With Tunisia as case zero in the Arab Spring, the events there are likely to have affected or influenced Egypt. But since my focus is on the uprisings themselves, I do not believe this will hamper the study.

Thus with my choice of viewing both cases as successful, this comparative approach takes the form of Mill's method of agreement (George & Bennet 2005: 155-157). However, the flaw of this approach lies in a difficulty to isolate certain variables. For this paper, this may create an obstacle to making a general statement on the conclusion (Esaiasson et al 2007: 129f). However, making a general statement is not my aim. With my current purpose, I believe that this approach with two similar successful cases is sufficient. One other approach to increase the possibility to make general statements would have been to select cases according to Mill's method of disagreement or finding a crucial case (Esaiasson et al 2007: 130f, 183-185). However, since my area of interest – the Arab Spring – is far from over and several cases are still on-going; this method would be suboptimal.

Furthermore, I disagree with the notion that all studies in social sciences should strive to make general assumptions (Esaiasson et al 2007: 26f; George & Bennet 2005: 229f). This could make potential researchers refrain from conducting studies. I would rather adhere to the notion researchers should select – for them – interesting cases to study (Teorell & Svensson 2007: 17). By maintaining a high internal validity, even though this thesis study may not produce general assumptions, it could still give useful insights for other studies and thus gain an external validity to the concept of nonviolent uprisings (Esaiasson et al 2007: 64).

I have chosen to view both of these cases as successful. If we look at Egypt in a longer timeframe, it could hardly be classified as a success with the changing of governments and increasing of violence. The same goes for Tunisia after Ben Ali fled when the second revolution begun; demanding the resignation of former

party officials and further reforms. However, both uprisings actually did succeed in their aim of bringing down their rulers, although the latter goals were delayed in the case of Tunisia, and highly uncertain in Egypt.

When defining success in cases of nonviolent movements, Gene Sharp provides some insight. He uses the terms *failed*, *partly success* and *success* where success is when all goals has been fulfilled. A partial success is when some of the movements' goals has been reached, which could qualify my cases to this category (1973:764-766). Furthermore, Nepstad (2011: x) argues that the process of succeeding in a nonviolent revolution is different than the process of creating a stable state afterwards. I concur with this view and maintain that analysing both the reasons for the success of the movement and the failure of transition in Egypt, would be too vast of a topic with this thesis's limited space. Although, this transition period could also be an interesting frame to research, but since my main interest lies in the struggle itself – I refrain from it.

2.2 Material and Sources

For the empirical analysis, secondary sources consisting of scientific articles and books describing the Arab Spring mainly will be used. In addition, I will also employ news articles and interviews to support the other empirical material which will give the thesis more substance. Much of the material and interviews I will use is written shortly after the events which may be both to my advantage and disadvantage. The sources may thus have tendencies and wants to describe the event in a certain light. However, with the proximity in time and location to the events, this might work to my advantage since the interviewees may have had a better recollection of the events. (Esaiaasson et al 2007: 321f, 319)

3 Theoretical Approach

The use of nonviolent method and civil resistance is not a new phenomenon and has been employed as a method for a long time (Shock 2013: 277f; Ackerman & Rodal 2008: 111-115). The term nonviolence could encompass everything from pacifism, strikes and civil disobedience to civil resistance and large scale nonviolent campaigns. Gene Sharp traces the usage of nonviolent methods to achieve one's purpose to 494 B.C. in ancient Rome, where a number of plebeians successfully defied the consuls and achieved improvements in their way of life (1973: 75f).

One of the main divisions among theories of nonviolence is between *pragmatic* and *principled* nonviolence. Principled nonviolence stands for in short – the view of nonviolence as philosophy of life (Mayton II 2009: 8f). In this thesis I will adhere to the pragmatic approach, which is consistent with concept of *strategic nonviolent conflict* mentioned above. This approach does not view the concept of nonviolence as a philosophy of life, but merely as an effective method to achieve one's goals. This means that the goals of a struggle may not necessarily be democracy, freedom and justice, but that this method could be used by anyone, against anyone. The majority of the known cases involving nonviolent struggle belongs to this distinction (Sharp 1973: 70f; Ackerman & Kruegler 1994: 4f; Nepstad 2011: 2f).

One common misconception in the usage of the term nonviolence is the belief that it is the opposite of violence and an armed revolution. In fact these two struggles share many features, as we are about to discover through the words of Gene Sharp:

Nonviolence is a means of combat, as is war. It involves the matching of forces and the waging of 'battles', requires wise strategy and tactics, and demands of its 'soldiers' courage, discipline, and sacrifice (Sharp 1973: 67).

From these words we can clear up another delusion about nonviolence; namely that it would be a passive form of struggle. It is not waged by the simple use of persuasion, although it may be included in the strategy. It is a highly active form of struggle where the nonviolent movements use political, social and economic power to topple their opponent (Mayton II 2009: 5f; Sharp 1973: 70-72).

3.1 The View on Power

-“All government is based upon consent” Gene Sharp (1973: 28)

According to Gene Sharp, the “Machiavelli of nonviolence”, the power of the ruler in a society is depending on the people (Engler 2013; Sharp 1973: 8f). Furthermore, Sharp concludes that political power thus “must have outside sources”. According to him, political power emerges from the interaction of several or all of the following sources; authority, skills and knowledge, material resources, human resources, intangible factors and sanctions (Sharp 1973: 10-13).

Authority is a crucial factor of the ruler’s political power. If the ruler has authority, namely that his will and actions are voluntarily accepted by the populous without the threats of sanctions – the extent and intensity of his power is more easily maintained. The extent of a ruler’s power is also affected by the number of people following him and without these *human resources* his ability to rule is weakened. The power of the ruler is also affected by the *skills and knowledge* of these human resources and the relation of these skills to the needs of the ruler. Further to this the ruler is dependent on *material resources* which translate to the degree where he controls factors such as natural and financial resources, property, communication and transportation. *Sanctions* are important for the ruler in maintaining his political power. They are the tools for enforcing his standpoints when the population disagrees. They usually take the shape of security forces and the secret police, but can also take other forms. The capacity of imposing these sanctions is derived from the obedience. Without skills and knowledge, material and human resources, this capacity loses its effectiveness. (Sharp 1973: 11-15; Sharp 2004: 18f; Nepstad 2011: 127f)

This fact is true for all of these sources of power; they are all depending on the obedience of the people. Full cooperation from the people will increase the availability of these sources and thus the capacity of the ruler’s political power. However, without this cooperation and support, the sources diminish, decreasing the political power. If severely maimed, the political power weakens and finally dissolves (Sharp 2004: 19-20; Sharp 1973: 70).

The task for the nonviolent movement is to weaken these sources of power or *pillars of support* as Helvey puts it (2004: 9-13). Since every struggle has a different context, these pillars must be identified and then targeted. This could be compared to the centre of gravity, theorized by Carl Clausewitz during the 19th century. He maintained that you should always find the weakest point of the opponent and then strike it (1997: 317f). Consequently if the struggle is against a dictatorship, as in both of my cases, it would be unwise to try to strike them with military means – where they probably are the strongest. A nonviolent movement should strive to find the weaknesses of the dictatorship and strike them, thus undermining the opponent’s sources of power (Sharp 2004: 25-28).

If the movement is successful in undermining the base of the ruler's political power, the movement produces *leverage* or power over the opponent (Shock 2013: 283). This leverage can produce four different *mechanisms of change*. In *conversion* the opponent wilfully changes his point of view to the view of the opposition. In *accommodation*, the ruler sees his power becoming limited and accommodates to this new power-shift without changing his point of view. The accommodation manifests in concessions of his power to meet the demands of the opposition. In nonviolent *coercion*, the ruler's sources of power is so severely weakened that his ability to act effectively is removed. This coercion could go even further and lead to fourth and final mechanism, *disintegration*. If this mechanism appears, the ruler's sources of power are completely depleted and his reign falls into pieces (Sharp 2004: 35-37; 1973: 69f).

3.2 Nonviolence as a Method

To realise these mechanisms of change, the struggle has a variety of weapons to use. In his book, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973), Gene Sharp identifies 198 different methods that have been used throughout history. They vary from the distribution of leaflets, strikes and various boycotts. These methods are to be viewed as general methods of nonviolent sanctions that may or may not be used in a nonviolent struggle against a repressive regime.

The methods of vitalising these acts can be divided into three different categories. In *nonviolent protest and persuasion*; the movement uses demonstrations and other symbolic acts to show dissent or as a mean of persuading the opponent, or someone else. The second subgroup is called *nonviolent non-cooperation*. In this group the movement actively chooses not to cooperate with the regime, either socially, economically or politically. These actions manifests as strikes, boycotts and slowdowns. The final group is called *nonviolent intervention* where the movement actively choses to intervene by sit-ins, walk-outs, nonviolent obstruction or even the creation of a parallel systems (Sharp 1973: 68-70)¹. Ackerman & Kruegler discuss the methods available to a nonviolent struggle as well, but names them *nonviolent sanctions*. They are however consistent with Sharps approach (1994: 3-5).

For the nonviolent movements, these methods – nonviolent sanctions – become their instrument of power, their weapon of choice. By wielding these weapons, the movement counters the power of the opponent indirectly and changes the balance of power. If they are successful, the mechanisms of change come into being and the opponent will convert, accommodate, be coerced or disintegrate (Sharp 1973: 451f).

¹ For a detailed overview on these various methods, see Sharp 1973, chapters 3-8.

3.3 Why do nonviolent movements succeed?

According to Shock, the success of a civil resistance movement rests on three factors, mobilization, leverage and resilience. *Leverage* is as mentioned above, the capacity to produce power against an adversary. When the movement exercises leverage they will most likely be met by sanctions from the ruler. *Resilience* is the ability to endure these sanctions (2013: 282f). This factor is crucial for the success of movement. If the first sanctions are successful, it will contribute to the belief that violence is an effective tool in dealing with a nonviolent movement. Furthermore, if the movement would collapse at the initial stage, it would make the mechanisms of change hard to realise (Sharp 1973: 547f). However, since both of my cases were successful in showing both the leverage and resilience in their effort, I will not examine them thoroughly. Instead I will use them in the description of the events. What follows below are the chosen five elements for the analysis.

3.3.1 Mobilization & Unity

Mobilization is the process of the movement's efforts to acquire resources, people, and support for the campaign. This element is crucial in nonviolent struggles since they are depending on a high participation of people (Shock 2013: 282f). Connected to mobilization is the need for unity. This means that the movement should aim to include a wide array of actors such as political parties, civil society and religious institutions. To the nonviolent movement this is beneficial in two ways – their strength lies in numbers, and by encompassing actors over a wider spectrum, their legitimacy may be increased (Ackerman & Duvall 2006: 37f; Helvey 2006: 119f).

Movements should also strive to cultivate external assistance. This may be more applicable now than ever due to globalization and the growth of internet and alternative means of communication. In relation to my cases, which were named as Facebook revolutions; this fact may be a crucial factor in examining the mobilization process (Ackerman & Kruegler 1994: 32f; Helvey 2006: 125)

To examine the mobilization for each movement I will look into how the mobilization processes took place and which groups of people were mobilized. Furthermore, I will investigate if the movement could be considered unified or if there were divisions among it.

3.3.2 Leadership & Organisation

To wage a struggle in a strategic manner, one could assume that the movement would need a form of leadership. The leadership serves several purposes as developing and formulating objectives, choosing which tactics to use or keeping

the movement together as in the case of Chile, where religious leaders helped maintaining a nonviolent discipline (Helvey 2006: 107; Nepstad 2011: 132).

On the other hand, there have been some examples of leadership that derailed movements. The example of Tiananmen Square in China 1989 serves as a good example. In this case, the movement did not have an overall strategy and clear leadership. This resulted in a division among prominent figures when the troops arrived. Hesitating whether to stay or leave, to resort to violence or to maintain a nonviolent behaviour, this division resulted in a tragic (Nepstad 2011: 31-33).

Regarding this element, I will examine if the movement had any leadership structures, if there were internal division among this leadership and which role the leadership played in organizing the struggle.

3.3.3 Strategy and Tactics

Strategy and tactics is a vital part of a nonviolent struggle. The movement should devise a grand strategy constructed from their context. This could encompass which methods that are preferable to use related to the goals of the movement and the type of opposition they are facing (Sharp 2004: 51-55). The movement should always try to assess the vulnerabilities of the opponent and act accordingly. At the same time, the protagonists should have a clear plan and be prepared for setbacks and repression (Ackerman & Rodal 2008: 118).

There is also a need for flexibility. This means that the movements should be able to grasp political opportunities and use them to their advantage (Sharp 2004: 64f). Ackerman & Kruegler maintain that the movement “should adjust their offensive and defensive operations according to the relative vulnerabilities of the protagonists” (1994: 45).

Related to the need for strategy, the movement should have clear formulated objectives and operate with consensus. This serves several purposes. One of them is that this makes the participants aware that the struggle is possible. By formulating clear, well defined objectives the movement can gain a set of progressive victories to maintain the support of the participants or attracting new members (Ackerman & Kruegler 1994: 24-26; Ackerman & Duvall 2006: 37f).

The notion of strategy also translates to tactics, but on the lower level. Tactics refer to the behaviour of activists in certain restricted events. The tactics and methods used in these events should strive to coincide with the goals and strategy of the whole struggle. Furthermore, they should also be chosen with care (Sharp 2004: 44f).

To examine this element I will first investigate the goals of the protestors and the feasibility of them. Secondly I will examine if the movement had an overall strategy and which tactics were used. Finally I will investigate if the movement adapted to, if any, changing circumstances.

3.3.4 Nonviolent behaviour

In the face of repression and under the threat of sanctions, the movement should always strive to maintain a *nonviolent behaviour*. If the movement resorts to violence, their ability to keep people in their ranks may diminish due to the increased danger of violent confrontations (Ackerman & Duvall 2006: 38f). Furthermore, by maintaining nonviolent discipline the movement may win sympathy, support and attract larger participation, reduce their casualties, inducing mutiny among the opponent's forces (Sharp 1973: 595). Should violence erupt it may shift the attention from the aim of the struggle, the opponent's use of violence or the nature of the regime among others – to the use of violence itself (Sharp 1973: 597). The use of violence by the movement legitimates the opponent to increase repression. In failed cases of China, Panama and Kenya, protestors resorted to violent methods with the implication that the regimes declared martial law and used more repression (Nepstad 2011: 131; Helvey 2006: 117). The success of the struggle is thus highly dependent on the degree of persistence the movement shows in refusing the temptation to use violence: “whether caused by emotional hostility to the opponent's brutalities, by temptations of temporary gains, or by *agents provocateurs*, to fight with the opponent's ‘weapons system’” (Sharp 1973: 601). This variable will be examined by investigating if there were episodes of violence in the uprisings and if so, to what extent and which form of violence.

3.3.5 Shifting allegiances

One factor that is common in successful cases of nonviolent movements is *the shifting of allegiances* of the security forces (Erickson 2011: 128-130). If they could be convinced not to intervene against the movement or to defect from the regime, it could be a turning point for the movement. Soldiers are civilians too, during the Orange Revolution in, one general testified to that after office hours, his employees went to the Maidan² to demonstrate (Ackerman & Duvall 2006: 39). The movement should strive to influence, not only security forces but also uncommitted third parties and other factions of the governments pillars. By being resilient against repression the movement exposes their adversaries' methods and may gain support from various factions (1973: 657f).

This will be examined by firstly investigating, if and in that case, who shifted their allegiances. Secondly I will investigate if there were active attempts of influencing the people who shifted their allegiances, or other groups to relinquish their support for the government.

² The Maidan is the central square in Kiev

4 Tunisia

The spark that ignited the protests was the self-immolation of the fruit vendor Muhammad Bouazizi on December 17 2010 in the rural town of Sidi Bouzid. He had been harassed by the local police for not having a permit to sell his goods and set himself on fire as a protest. People felt identified with his fate and begun protesting against the unfair treatment from the government. The initial protestors consisted of relatives, union members and youths which quickly evolved into riots (Angrist 2013: 559f; ICG 2011a: 3).

These rural protests quickly spread across the country and on January 14 when Ben Ali resigned, the protests had spread to the whole of Tunisia (Chomiak & Entelis 2011: 13; ICG 2011a: 6). During the course of the uprising Ben Ali made three statements, the first on December 28 and the second on January 12 and the final on the 13th in which he promised to meet the demands of the protestors and finally relinquish power by not running in the next election (Schraeder & Redissi 2011: 7). For a further explanation of the events after Ben Ali's resignation and the lead up to of protests see (ICG 2011a; Angrist 2013; Schrader 2012).

4.1 Mobilization & Unity

The government of Ben Ali responded to the early stages of protest by trying to crack down the uprising. On December 24 the security forces opened fire on protesters, killing two people, which only fuelled the protests more. On the 28th Ben Ali first appeared on state television and threatened the protestors. However, with the continuation of violence from the government, the protestors disregarded the statement. (ICG 2011a: 4; Schraeder & Redissi 2011: 7)

The spread and mobilization of the protests was largely facilitated by two factors, the UGTT³ and the internet. The local UGTT branch framed the self-immolation as a political assassination and not a suicide attempt, which turned Bouazizi into a martyr (Angrist 2013: 560; Chomiak 2011: 70). The protests spread to a regional level through the network of UGTT, where the local leaders activated other branches of the union (ICG 2011a: 4).

Videos and images of the violent behaviour of the police against unarmed protestors circulated the country through social media and raised awareness. Despite though the existence of internet-surveillance and attempts from the government to block various sites; the protestors circumvented these efforts by using proxies. Furthermore, the mobilization process was fuelled by overseas bloggers and networks that picked up on the events in Tunisia and re-broadcasted

³ UGTT - General Union of Tunisian Workers

them internationally and back to Tunisia. In addition Al-Jazeera and other mainstream media channels started to cover the events, thus enabling non-internet users in Tunisia to take part via satellite television (Schraeder & Redissi 2011: 11; Breuer 2012: 18-20).

During the timeframe, more fractions of Tunisians linked up with the protests. On January 6 the Tunisian BAR Association⁴ announced that that 95% of the country's 8000 lawyers had joined protests because of the abuse from the security forces (Al Jazeera 2011a). The ranks of the protestors' were further filled with other professionals such as doctors, who with the lawyers were among the first to provide a link between the initial socioeconomic grievances and political demands. Other groups participating were human rights organisations and the Tunisian Association of Democratic women, ATFD (Gelvin 2012: 54; ICG 2011a: I; Schraeder 2012: 78f; Schraeder & Redissi 2011: 12f).

The uprising did not however reach to the traditional political opposition that was largely taken by surprise and left standing on the side-lines. The Islamic party Ennahda remained there, although their supporters participated in the protests, but without coordination from above (Schraeder & Redissi 2011: 13; Gelvin 2012: 56f; ICG 2011a: 8). Thus during the course of protests, the movement managed to mobilize a wide array of actors. What started as a local protest actions by union members, relatives and people who identified with Muhammad Bouazizi led to a nationwide secular movement involving lawyers, teachers and businessmen.

4.2 Leadership & Organisation

As mentioned, the UGTT took a leadership-role in facilitating the spread mobilization by activating local branches. This standpoint was however not clear in the beginning of the protests. In an interview, the leaders of the union claimed that the local union support was spontaneous in the beginning and acting without orders from the leadership. The initial protests were organized by more extreme factions of the union that disagreed with the leadership (Toensing 2011: 31f; ICG 2011a: 6). When Bouazizi perished on January 4, UGGT members formed a 'Committee of the Marginalized' to organize and coordinate the spread of the protests. During the period leading up to Ben Ali's flight, they continued to organize and coordinate strikes in various parts of the country (Angrist 2013: 560f; ICG 2011a: 4).

The leadership of UGTT took another approach seeking to mediate with the government and only issued statements condemning the actions of the regime and demanding investigations. This gradually changed with the developments on the ground. When the mediation attempts failed, UGGT took a clearer stand for the protests and aligned with the local and regional view on the struggle (Toensing 2011: 31-32; ICG 2011a: 4-6). Ultimately, on January 11, the leadership took a clear standpoint for the uprising by issuing a statement where they recognized the

⁴ Tunisian BAR Association – Lawyers Union of Tunisia

rights of the unionists in protesting against the government. They next day, after the final statement by Ben Ali the UGTT responded by initiating an official strike (ICG 2011a: 6; Chomiak & Entelis 2011:13). In addition to UGTT, the Tunisian BAR Association – with its history of protests against the government – played a lead role on a national level in encompassing other factions of the people such as lawyers and businessmen. Tunisia also had a rich variety of civil society organizations which took to the streets in the protests. The well-organized ATFD, for instance, ensured that their members were participating in the protests (Angrist 2013: 561; Schraeder & Redissi 2011: 12f)

4.3 Strategy & Tactics

The initial protests of the movement called for “work, freedom and dignity” and focused on socioeconomic factors such as lack of jobs and unfair treatment by officials (Scraeder & Redissi 2011: 7). These goals were thus formulated rather vaguely, demanding abstract values without a clear substance.

During the course and growth of the protests the goals became more radicalized and coherent, manifested in the commonly used phrases of “Ben Ali, degage!” and “The people want to topple the regime”, demanding the resignation of the president. (Scraeder & Redissi 2011: 7; Zeghal 2013: 257). This latter goal could arguably be seen as well formulated and concrete. But this was also the ultimate goal of the protests, thus eliminating the prospect of progressive victories to increase participation and enhancing the belief that victory was possible. However, the rate of people joining the protests could be seen as progressive victories as well, fuelling the belief that success is possible.

In the beginning of the protests when leadership of UGTT was still acting as a mediator there seemed to be no overall strategy for the protestors. However, the spread of the movement by activating local branches throughout Tunisia had some thoughts behind it. When the local leaders saw that the government focused their efforts to quell the uprising where it begun, the local UGTT branch mobilized through the country as a relief effort (ICG 2011a: 4).

The methods used by the protestors were mainly acts of protests and persuasion that later transcended into the use of non-cooperation. Their main approach was demonstrations, strikes, slogans and symbolic acts, such as the change of two million Facebook statuses after Ben Ali’s speech on the 14th (ICG 2011a: 4f; Chomiak & Entelis 2011: 13). There however were no indications on an overall strategy aside from the use of these methods.

4.4 Nonviolent Behaviour

The initial events in Sidi Bouzid consisted of protests but quickly evolved into riots with youths provoking the police by throwing stones (ICG 2011a: 3f). Throughout the protests there seem too have been sporadic events where the protests did not show nonviolent behaviour. For instance, January 8 in the city of

Tala, protestors set fire to a government building and threw stones and petrol bombs (Al Jazeera 2011c). However, these incidents were rather small and seemed to be spontaneous, without any planning. On the whole, the uprising adhered to nonviolent behaviour largely showing their dissent through marches, demonstrations and taunts. Furthermore, the *Tunisia en Blanc*⁵ Facebook page which coordinated some demonstrations, stressed that the protests called for, were of completely nonviolent nature (Chomiak 2011: 75).

4.5 Shifting Allegiances

The responses from civilians and other parties on the side of Ben Ali were close to conspicuous with their absence. During the course of protests the government party, RCD, with their 1 million members did not manage to organize any counter-protests even when ordered to do so. When they finally succeed in the end on January 14, their rally merged with UGTT at the same location with the result of RDC members joining the UGTT rally (Angrist 2013: 553, 549; ICG 2011a: 9f). This occurred even though Ben Ali had tried to frame the uprising as a result of foreign involvement and branded them as terrorists (ICG 2011a: 5).

One point in aiding to the flight of Ben Ali was the decision of the military not to intervene on behalf of the government when ordered to. The military's Chief of staff, General Ammar stated the military was on the protestors' side and refused to actively engage in violence towards them. Instead they deployed to the streets, maintaining order and safeguarding the protests (Schraeder & Redissi 2011: 13f; Angrist 2013: 550f). This standpoint could be explained by the relative marginalized status of the military. Ben Ali never relied on the military during his rule, but rather mainly on the presidential guard and other security forces. The military with its small size had never seen combat and was poorly equipped and it's questionable if their intervention could have suppressed the riots (Angrist 2013: 551, ICG 2011a: 11).

4.6 Conclusion Tunisia

The success of the civil uprising in Tunisia was seemingly dependent on the quick mobilization process facilitated mainly by the role of the UGTT local union branches. Their organization network provided the base for the mobilization and when their leadership chose side they gained more weight. The use of social media and the role of Al Jazeera helped the mobilization process by raising awareness on the on-going events but the UGTT did the main part.

The protestors did not seem to have an overall strategy, though certain actions had a strategic and tactical dimension such as the decision to mobilize

⁵ Tunisia en Blanc was a group of internet activists that coordinated nonviolent sanctions against internet censorship in 2010 (Chomiak 2011: 74-75; Chomiak & Entelis 2011: 15).

geographically and the use of social media, but rather as several isolated acts. The tactical approach used by the protestors was mainly showing their disapproval through nonviolent protests and persuasion and, nonviolent non-cooperation.

As noted, the protests were not purely nonviolent and the use of violence was exploited by the regime to justify their actions. However, the bulk of the protests adhered to nonviolent methods. And through the use of force by the government, the protestors showed *resilience* and did not sway. Finally, the lack of counter-movements from RCD members and the army's choice not to intervene; provided fuel to the movement.

From my perspective of nonviolence, the reason for the success of the uprising was the mobilization of a wide spectrum of actors that acted with unity and a coherent goal. This wide mobilization undermined Ben Ali's *authority* and *human resources* thus creating *leverage* and draining the government's political power; a fact also indicated by the lack of support from loyalists and the army. In addition, the internet served as an indirect foundation of the Tunisian economy through the tourism industry, and shutting the internet down was not an option for the government (Scraeder & Redissi 2011: 11-12). Thus by working through the internet the protestors indirectly and seemingly unaware, targeted one of the pillars of support of the government; but this was probably not the main reason Ben Ali decided to abandon ship.

Ben Ali, by first recognizing the potential leverage of the uprising in trying to accommodate to it by promising to relinquish his power in the future and provide reforms, the *nonviolent accommodation mechanism* came into being. When the protestors disagreed and continued their struggle, and the army shifted their allegiance, Ben Ali became *nonviolent coerced* to yield and flee the country.

5 Egypt

The events in Egypt started January 25 – the ‘Day of Anger’ – with people gathering in the evening on the Tahrir Square in Cairo. In the following days the protests spread to other parts of the country and on February 11, Hosni Mubarak resigned and the military took over control (ICG 2011b: 2f, 14).

There had been several incidents leading up to the protests aside from Tunisia such as a bombing of a church in Alexandria and the rigged election in late 2010 which led to a charged political atmosphere in the whole country. This all erupted on January 25, which was an announced holiday enabling wide participation (El-Ghobashy 2011: 5f). For a further view on the events before and after the uprising see: (Beinin 2011; ICG 2011b).

During the first days of protests the government responded with violence, using police, armed with tear-gas, water-cannons and rubber bullets to suppress the protestors. Over the course of the protests the police became too stretched to handle the uprising efficiently, which resulted in the government sending in the army on the 29th (ICG 2011b: 5; Austin Holmes 399). Mubarak made his first statement on the January 28 – ‘Friday of Anger’ – pledging to form a new government. When protests and clashes continued he issued further statements on February the first with more promises. His final try to appeal to the protests was made on the 10th, the day before the army stepped in (ICG 2011: 5, 8, 13)

5.1 Mobilization & Unity

The initial protests were united during the banner of “#Jan25”. Though not a coherent group, they consisted of different units that had a history of anti-government protests such as: 6th April Youth Movement, “We Are All Khaled Said⁶” and “Kefya” (Mabo 2013: 1845). Aside from these youth groups, participants came from a wide variety: women, workers and members of the repressed Muslim Brotherhood were all present (El-Ghobashy 2011: 5f; Mekay 2011). During the course of protests the protestors also succeeded in reaching out to the poorer, marginalized people in the suburbs of Cairo (Trombetta 2013: 140f). Meanwhile, the usual divide in Egypt – religion – did not manifest in the protests. People were united in their effort as Egyptians, not as Christians or Muslims which were illustrated in how they safeguarded each other’s ceremonies (Berger 2011: 2f; Austin Holmes 2012: 406).

The use of social media and cell phones played a role in mobilizing attendees, especially during the first days leading up to and on the protests on the 25th. The

⁶ Said was beaten to death by police in Alexandria and became a symbol for the uprising (Mabo 2013: 1845).

group “We Are All Khaled Said” called for protests via their Facebook page, among others. One other example was the activist Asmaa Mahfouz who called for people to join via a Youtube video. In Cairo tens of thousands of people went to the streets. They were joined by their peers in other cities as Alexandria and Suez, but not in the same numbers (ICG 2011b: 3; Mekay 2011). Protestors also used internet and their phones to capture incidents and then disseminate the contents to other users, thus spreading the awareness of the on-going events (Tufekci & Wilson 2012: 364, 373f). The government recognized the role of social media and internet to coordinate and mobilize support for the protests. On the 27th the internet and cell phone services was shut down in Cairo (Dunn 2011: 19-21). These attempts was however in vain since the Friday prayer on the 28th provided ample opportunities for face to face communication (ICG 2011b: 4; Mabo 2013: 1852).

Al Jazeera also played a role in raising awareness and spreading the images of the revolt to those not using social media. The channel had an intense coverage of the events which were broadcasted within and outside Egypt. They described the uprising in a favourable light, their leaders as heroes and interviewed the protestors. At the same time, they showed no participation of Mubarak supporters but provided frequent scenes of aggressive security forces beating protestors, thus framing the image of good protestors versus a bad regime. (Rinnawi 2012: 125-127). This resulted in the arrest of Al-Jazeera reporters and the channels license being suspended, something which did not hinder the broadcasting in practice (Rinnawi 2012: 128f). Concurrently, the state media intensified their broadcasting and were portraying the uprising as being the work of foreign agents and elements from radical Islam (ICG 2011b: 8f)

There were also some signs of division within the protestors. The Muslim Brotherhood whose members participated was not supportive in the beginning. At first the leadership was hesitant about their role in the protests but became during the course, more supportive and announced their full support at the Friday of Anger on the 28th. But they also showed that they had their own agenda with the protests at February the 5th when they negotiated with the government about halting participation in exchange for political recognition. However, this attempt was thwarted by the youth members. (De Smet 2014: 31f; Alexander 2011: 544)

The government also instigated talks with the protestors in the beginning of February. The “wise men” who represented the protestors were businessmen, former diplomats and members of the traditional opposition. This formation did not however reflect the actual protestors who did not regard them as legitimate representatives. These divisions did not seem to manifest themselves in the actual uprising where the people stood united. (ICG 2011b: 10-12)

5.2 Leadership & Organization

Although without any clear leadership, the protestors in Cairo demonstrated skills in organizing the protests. One evident example was Tahrir Square once

occupied. The protestors formed their own security forces that were on the lookout for infiltrating police (Trombetta 2013: 142f). They also created a micro community in the space of Tahrir with barricades, stages, newspaper walls, internet hubs, medical clinics and water points. People were organized in groups responsible for different tasks to keep the community going (Ramadan 2013: 147; Austin Holmes 2012: 405). This demonstration of organisation could probably not be realised without the unity and common cause of the people.

On the January 30, several independent trade unions joined together and formed the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions, EFITU (Beinin 2011: 190). The formation of EFITU helped in organizing and coordinating the strikes that took place all over the country. On January 8 they announced a strike which took place the following day in several Egyptian cities. A variety of branches such as, railroad, transportation, and textile and metal industries acknowledged the call and joined. 6000 workers by the Suez channel, a large revenue stream for the state, also went on strike. Although never closed, the strikes posed a threat (Abbas 2011; Austin Holmes: 2012: 406f). This strike was coordinated with the youth groups who tried to spread the protests further and keep their legitimacy (ICG 2011b: 12f). After this strike Mubarak gave his final speech at the 10th, promising to transfer some of his power to the vice-president and reform the constitution. This promise was disregarded by the protestors and strikers and they continued their actions (ICG 2011b: 13)

5.3 Strategy & Tactics

The thought behind the protests on the 25th was first symbolical, but the protestors added some demands towards the government. They called for the resignation of the interior minister, end of the Emergency Law, fair minimum wages and a two term limit on the presidency (ICG 2011b: 3). According to one leader of the young activists; their slogans and demands were formulated around the living costs and lack of work with the purpose to reach out to poorer marginalized areas (Trombetta 2013: 140f).

As in Tunisia, these goals became clearer over time and resulted in the common demand of the “the people want to bring down the regime”. Here we see the same pattern as in Tunisia with rather vague goals in the beginning that developed into a clear demand. This simple goal made it easier for the participants to maintain their unity (Alterman (2011: 113f). However, this ultimate goal did not give the prospect of progressive victories but as the participants witnessed weeks earlier in Tunisia, their goals were indeed feasible (El Hamamsy 2011: 457).

According to representatives from the youth movements, the protests were planned ahead, something that was clearly showed at the first day of protests. The marches which started in the morning were originated from various location and during the day they were continuously redirected and warned about chokepoints and police presence (Dunn 2011: 19). The protestors also showed flexibility when they were surrounded by the police at Tahrir in the evening by deciding to

disband and come back on the 28th, when they finally occupied the square (Trombetta 2013: 141). This is also illustrated by how they coordinated their efforts with EFITU in seeking new ways to keep up the protests' leverage on 8th. This notion of strategy and tactics had originated from earlier failed protests. This time the planning was done in secrecy, with only a few people knowing the plans of the 25th and then issuing orders as the event unfolded (Trombetta 2013: 140). There were also some indications that the protesters had prepared themselves before by attending seminars on civil resistance and nonviolence and studied the writings of Gene Sharp (Zunes 2011: 399f). One leader for the youth movement visited the Centre for Applied Nonviolent Conflict in Serbia and there was communication with Tunisian protestors regarding learning's from their struggle (Alterman 2011: 114; Gelvin 2012: 53). It is unclear how this affected the uprising but it demonstrates that there was a thought of planning behind it.

During the course of the uprising the protestors used a variety of tactics. Most frequently used was nonviolent protests and persuasion. This was done by chanting slogans and their demands. They also employed symbolic acts such as naming their announced days for protesting, Friday of Anger, million man march. The use of humour was also a tactic used by the protestors in great frequency such as jokes about Mubarak. As the uprising progressed, the protestors added methods of nonviolent non-cooperation by striking, to their repertoire. (ICG 2011b: 2f, 7, 12f; Helmey & Frerichs 2013: 463f)

5.4 Nonviolent Behaviour

At large, the incidents in Cairo were nonviolent and on several occasions the protestors stressed that their actions were nonviolent. For instance, before the 25th, the April 6 movement encouraged people to partake in training in how to behave during the upcoming protests (Berger 2011: 3). There were however signs of violence such as in the "Battle of the Camels", when mounted pro-government supporters attacked the occupied Tahrir Square at second of February, after Mubarak's second speech. Incidents such as this were repelled by the protestors by organized stone throwing to defend themselves from Mubarak supporters (Berger 2011: 3; Austin Holme 2012: 399).

Throughout the country, there were more incidents of violence. For instance, in Suez and Alexandria protestors threw stones, Molotov Cocktails and set government buildings ablaze (BBC 2011a; ICG 2011b: 3-5). In total, 26 policemen were reported dead which indicates that the protests clearly not was nonviolent (BBC 2011b).

5.5 Shifting Allegiances

The military has always had an important role in the Egyptian society and had been supportive of Mubarak. They did however shift their allegiance from him.

When they arrived to the streets on the 29th they did not actively engage the protestors but protected them from government supporters (Nepstad 2013: 342, ICG 2011b: 17). At the 10th of February, they issued a statement that they indeed would protect them and were on their side. As the multitude of strikes shook the country on the 8th, the military saw their economic interests threatened and after the final speech of Mubarak, they removed him from power the next day (ICG 2011b: 13f). The soldiers were welcomed peacefully by the protestors with flowers, food and tea; actively trying to encourage them to take their side in the conflict (De Smet 2014: 14; Alterman 2011: 113 Kamphoefner 2011). This can be explained by the traditional role of the army in Egypt. While still a tool of the government, the army has since long been regarded popular and as a national force for change (De Smet 2014: 14f). However, even though the protestors tried to influence the army to join them, this was probably not the reason they did. As Nepstad (2013: 342f) points out, it was rather their economic interest and a perception of the fragility of the regime rather than the efforts from the people.

5.6 Conclusion Egypt

Mubarak tried to make several concessions during the course of the uprising such as promising to relinquish some of his power and attempting to make a deal with the opposition. He thus acknowledged the uprisings' leverage and tried to *accommodate* to it. The fast mobilization process, spreading of the uprising and the *resilience* showed by the protestors stretched the police forces to their limits, forcing Mubarak to rely on the military. This traditional pillar of support for the government however proved to be unreliable when they indirectly sided with the protestors.

The key to success for the movement appears to be the resilience they showed during the first days of protests and the fast mobilization process thus undermining the ability of Mubarak to use his *sanctions*. Furthermore, the lack of a clear leadership in the uprising was beneficial in the sense of denying Mubarak the use of targeted counter measures, and instead he had to rely on his security forces and restricting cell phone and internet access. Mubarak's later efforts to mediate with the Muslim Brotherhood and the "wise men" also proved to be unsuccessful and the potential divide this could have caused among the uprising did not occur.

Social media and cell phones provided a vital tool for coordinating the initial protests leading up to the Friday of Anger on the 28th. However, when restricted, the uprising still was able to instigate and coordinate events such as the 'Million Man March'. The formation of EFITU probably also served as vehicle in spreading the word through the unions' networks. Al Jazeera's role in framing the uprising in favourable peaceful way played a part in mobilizing the sheer amount of people. Even though the uprising was not purely nonviolent, this framing helped in creating a view of a nonviolent uprising against an unjust regime, thus undermining the *authority* of Mubarak.

When EFITU announced their nationwide strike on the 8th, the uprising gained more leverage and Mubarak once again promised concessions, once again in vain. By making these subsequent statements where he promised more concessions, he tried to *accommodate* to the uprising. When the army finally sided against him, he became *nonviolent coerced* to relinquish his power. His authority, human resources and ability to use his sanctions were depleted.

6 Results and discussion

The initial question posed in this thesis was how we could understand these two uprisings from a nonviolent perspective. This was examined with the purpose of demonstrating how nonviolent methods can be successfully used in struggles against repressive regimes. My results indicate that the nonviolent framework employed here can provide an adequate description of the uprisings and shows, in these two cases, how the uprisings succeeded. Both cases managed to undermine the ability of the governments to wield their power. This was mainly done through showing resilience and draining the available human resources and thus the ability of the governments to use sanctions to enforce obedience.

The key to success in both cases seemed to be the fast mobilization rate and unity of the protestors. This was facilitated partly by the use of internet and cell phones to disseminate information. In both cases Al Jazeera aided this process by actively broadcasting events to the populations. In Egypt, a positive frame was intently chosen. The regimes' response by restricting access to these mediums did not seem to hinder the uprising. However, there is also evidence on the use of traditional communication channels such as the network of the pre-existing organisations in the UGTT, youth movement and later EFITU. In Egypt, the Friday Prayer seems to have acted as a channel of communication at least once. Since much effort has been invested in researching the use of social media in the uprisings, I would suggest that there is a gap in research on the role of traditional communication channels such as the Friday Prayer; which could be further researched.

In both uprising there were also a wide unity among participants. The reason behind this unity was not determined. It could however, be connected to the clear and comprehensive goals of each movement and the repressive measures deployed by the governments. These factors and the roles of the organisations seem to have negated the lack of clear leadership and strategy in each case.

Furthermore, the shifting allegiances of pro-regime supporters was important in both cases. In Egypt the decision of the army not to intervene efficiently drained Mubarak of his ability to use sanctions. The same decision of the Tunisian marginalized army did not have the same effect but still aided the uprising. More important was the lack of support from Ben Ali's other factions which seemed to have sided early with the uprising, but there were no signs showing they have been actively encouraged to do so. In Egypt however, the protestors tried to win over the army but as noted this was not probably the reason they remained neutral to the very end.

Both uprisings had elements of violence, more notable in Egypt. The uprisings should not be classified as nonviolent uprisings but still they showed resilience

and succeeded using mainly nonviolent means. This is interesting since the theory used suggests that maintaining a nonviolent behaviour is vital to the success. Although it is uncertain if and how violent behaviour affects the use of sanctions from the regime, since in both cases, the initial response was violence. However, this relationship between nonviolent behaviour – violence, use of sanctions – resilience, needs to be further researched. For instance, how much and which type of violence could be tolerated in the uprising before negative consequences appears?

Even though these results, my selected methodological and theoretical approach remove comes with some implications. This thesis only shows one perspective on the uprisings and excludes structural factors such as history, the strength of the state, external pressure and others. By drawing the attention to just one part of the whole, this study lacks the ability to give a complete picture of each case. Furthermore, since my approach to the cases could be seen as theoretical driven, important elements might have been missed or disregarded. Future studies on the subject should aim to encompass more structural factors and their effects on the uprising. Research is also needed on determining exactly which the pillars of support were and in which manner did the uprising, and other structural factors affect them.

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