Determinants of Participation in Protests in the Arab Uprisings: Grievances and Opportunities in Egypt and Tunisia

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ABSTRACT

The bourgeoning literature on the protestors of the Arab Uprisings proposed several arguments about participation in protests in reference to grievances and opportunities. However, these arguments did not directly test both grievances and opportunities in a comparative setting. Using survey evidence, this article explores the role of grievances and opportunities on participation in protests in Egypt and Tunisia. It argues that grievances for Tunisians and opportunities for Egyptians played the main role for the decision to participate. Particularly, the Egyptians who followed the news and the developments in Tunisia more closely perceived such an opportunity to protest against their regime.

Keywords: Arab Uprisings, Participation in Protests, Grievances and Opportunities, Egypt, Tunisia

Arap Ayaklanmaları'nda Protestolara Katılımın Belirleyicileri: Mısır ve Tunus'ta Sıkıntılar ve Fırsatlar

ÖZET

Arap Ayaklanmaları'ndaki protestocular üzerine gelişmekte olan literatür, protestolara katılım konusunda sıkıntılar ve fırsatlara referansla muhtelif argümanlar sunmuştur. Ancak bu argümanlar sıkıntılar ve fırsatları karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde doğrudan test etmemiştir. Bu makale, anket bulgularını kullanarak, Mısır ve Tunus'ta protestolara katılım hususunda sıkıntılar ve fırsatların rolünü incelemektedir. Buna göre Tunus'ta sıkıntılar, Mısır'da ise fırsatlar protestolara katılıma karar verme konusunda en önemli rolü oynamıştır. Özellikle Mısır'da haberleri ve Tunus'taki gelişmeleri daha yakından takip eden bireyler ülkelerinin siyasal rejimlerine karşı protesto edebilmeleri için bir fırsat olduğuna dair bir algıya ulaşmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap Ayaklanmaları, Protestolara Katılım, Sıkıntılar ve Fırsatlar, Mısır, Tunus

Introduction

The Arab Uprisings, which had significant consequences on the sociopolitical developments in the region, attracted significant scholarly attention over the last decade. Given the salience of the protest movements, several studies tried to explain the onset of the Uprisings and participation in protests through different factors such as religiosity,[1] economic hardships,[2] demonstration effect,[3] signaling,[4] the role of focal days,[5] networks,[6] brokers[7] and the social media.[8]

While some of these studies reference the central debate of the contentious politics between grievances and opportunities, they did not directly test these factors in a comparative setting. Following the footsteps of this bourgeoning literature, I examine why the Arab citizens decided to take the streets despite the foreseeable risks in protests. More specifically, during the early days of the Arab Uprisings, why did some people protest against the dictators and the others remained at home? Which theories of the contentious politics literature, grievances or opportunities, have more leverage at explaining the participation in protests? What was the core of the variation across countries and across individuals within the countries?

This study concentrates on these questions on the determinants of participation in protests that initiated the Arab Uprisings. Focusing on the two most symbolic cases of the Arab Uprisings, Tunisia and Egypt, I argue that the causes leading the individuals to protest were not necessarily the same across these countries. Survey evidence suggests that in Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab Uprisings, the perception of opportunities was not really a determinative factor in the decision to protest against the regime. In contrast, economic and political grievances played a central role for individuals to take to the street and start the revolution. In Egypt, on the other hand, grievances were not the main factor that distinguished the protestors from the rest of the Egyptians. Yet, the perception of opportunities helped Egyptian protesters to protest against the Mubarak regime. Among the Egyptians, the ones who follow political news through internet were the ones who perceived such an opportunity and decided to participate in protests.

1   Michael Hoffman and Amaney Jamal, "Religion in the Arab Spring: Between Two Competing Narratives", *The Journal of Politics,* Vol. 76, No 3, 2014, p. 593–606.

2   Jean-Pierre Filiu, *The Arab Revolution: Ten Lessons from the Democratic Uprising*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2011.

3   Christopher Barrie and Neil Ketchley, "Opportunity without Organization: Labor Mobilization in Egypt After the 25th January Revolution", *Mobilization: An International Quarterly,* Vol. 23, No 2, 2018, p. 181–202.

4   David Doherty and Peter J. Schraeder, "Social Signals and Participation in the Tunisian Revolution", *The Journal of Politics,* Vol. 80, No 2, 2018, p. 675–691.

5   Neil Ketchley and Christopher Barrie, "Fridays of Revolution: Focal Days and Mass Protest in Egypt and Tunisia", *Political Research Quarterly,* Online First, 2019.

6   Elizabeth R. Nugent and Chantal E. Berman, "Ctrl-Alt-Revolt? Online and Offline Networks during the 2011 Egyptian Uprising", *Middle East Law and Governance,* Vol. 10, No 1, 2018, p. 59–90.

7   Killian Clarke, "Unexpected Brokers of Mobilization: Contingency and Networks in the 2011 Egyptian Uprising", *Comparative Politics,* Vol. 46, No 4, 2014, p. 379–397.

8   Killian Clarke and Korhan Kocak, "Launching Revolution: Social Media and the Egyptian Uprising's First Movers", *British Journal of Political Science*, 2018, p. 1–21; Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain, *Democracy's Fourth Wave?: Digital Media and the Arab Spring*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.

The Development of the Literature on Protestors of the Arab Uprisings

Throughout the process of the Uprisings, most countries in the Arab world experienced popular protests with differing degrees. Most of the protests were stopped either brutally or by different sets of appeasement measures, but in some cases, protestors managed to overthrow their former dictators. With its still salient impacts, the Arab Uprisings have marked the most important series of events in the Middle East and North Africa in the last decades.

Since there have been different pathways and outcomes, the Uprisings have been both very difficult to follow and very complicated to interpret. Except a few cases, the early literature on the Arab Uprisings focused more on country-level dynamics[9] and paid less attention to the individual aspect of the protests. While a few earlier studies looked at the decisions and actions of individuals and the masses,[10] only later did literature emerge exploring the patterns of participation in protests in the Arab Uprisings.[11] Joining this bourgeoning literature, I look at the main determinants of participation in protests on the individual-level in Egypt and Tunisia, the two frontrunners in the protest movements. For this, the literature of contentious politics presents a very strong theoretical background in order to explain the causes and conditions under which individuals decide to participate.

What are Grievances and Opportunities?

The literature of contentious politics literature focus on a plethora of arguments to explain events such as protests, rebellions, civil wars, revolutions, and terrorism among others. Yet, most of these factors are categorized in two categories as grievances and opportunities.[12]

Earlier studies emphasized the role of underlying grievances as the core factor behind rebellion. This classical model, also known as the relative deprivation model, argues that people decide to rebel because of the grievances that they develop against the target group, mostly the authority. For this model, there is an objective aspect that is conditions or strains originated from the society or the state which can affect individuals. There is also a subjective aspect that pays attention to the psychological impact these objective factors on the individuals.[13] The motivation to participate in social movements, therefore, comes from the need to change the conditions that create a disruptive psychological state.

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9   See for example: Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds, *The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2015; Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Arab Uprisings and The MENA Regional States System," *Uluslararası İlişkiler,* Vol. 11, No. 42, 2014, p. 7–27.

10 Mark R. Beissinger, Amaney A. Jamal, and Kevin Mazur, "Explaining Divergent Revolutionary Coalitions: Regime Strategies and the Structuring of Participation in the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions", *Comparative Politics,* Vol. 48, No 1, 2015, p. 1–24; Hoffman and Jamal, "Religion in the Arab Spring"; Michael Robbins, "People Still Want Democracy", *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 26, No 4, 2015, p. 80–89.

11 See for example: Neil Ketchley, *Egypt in a Time of Revolution: Contentious Politics and the Arab Spring*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017; Nugent and Berman, "Ctrl-Alt-Revolt?"; Doherty and Schraeder, "Social Signals and Participation in the Tunisian Revolution"; Clarke and Kocak, "Launching Revolution".

12 For some examples that compare arguments on grievances and opportunities in different forms of contentious politics, see James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War", *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 97, No 1, 2003, p. 75–90; Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War", *Oxford Economic Papers,* Vol. 56, No 4, 2004, p. 563–595.

13 Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982.

In one of the seminal works on this classical model, *Why Men Rebel?*, Gurr argues that social and psychological factors play an important role for the rebellion, by shaping the relative deprivation that individuals feel. For him, relative deprivation is the discrepancy between "ought" and "is": Everyone has certain value expectations and value capabilities. If one's capabilities do not meet one's expectations, it generates the perception of a relative deprivation and drives a number of individuals to protest.[14]

While these underlying grievances are important, they do not always translate into protest. After all, grievances are pretty much everywhere; yet, actual protests are much more limited in number. If every group with grievances protested, there should have been much more protests than there actually were. Therefore, it is difficult to claim a one-to-one correspondence between grievances and protest.[15] For that, scholars have argued that for these grievances to translate into action, there needs to be certain structural conditions that allow people to protest.[16] These structural conditions can appear in the form of opportunities or constraints, but in either case, they define the decisions and strategies of the actors to protest or not to protest. The sociopolitical environment and the institutional opportunities define when and in what form movements emerge and how much impact they make.[17] The changes in the sociopolitical structure are also important as they can generate political opportunities and help people to reappraise their situation. Following certain structural changes, the apathy that people have can transform into hope and action.[18]

While the main arguments in the literature of political opportunities emphasize the structural factors, there is also a set of arguments that focus on the perception of individuals. For that, individual perceptions about the success and failure of the protests can influence their decision-making on whether to participate or not.[19] According to Kurzman, there are two faces of opportunities: objective structural opportunities and subjective perceptions on those opportunities. For that, not only the objective structural conditions but occasionally the way the individuals perceive them is important for decision-making. This perspective suggests that when individuals believe that there are pertinent political opportunities, they start protesting against the authorities.[20] Whereas most works in the opportunity model focus on systemic-level factors, this argument brings the opportunity model to the level of individuals.

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14 Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970.

15 William A. Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*, Belmont, California, Wadsworth Pub Co, 1990; John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, No 6, 1977, p. 1212–1241.

16 McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*.

17 Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*, New York, Vintage, 1978.

18 For more on the impact of changes in opportunity structures on contentious politics, see Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Reading, Addison-Wesley, 1978.

19 Steven E. Finkel, Edward N. Muller, and Karl-Dieter Opp, "Personal Influence, Collective Rationality, and Mass Political Action", *The American Political Science Review,* Vol. 83, No 3, 1989, p. 885–903; Bert Klandermans, "Mobilization and Participation: Social-Psychological Expansions of Resource Mobilization Theory", *American Sociological Review,* Vol. 49, No 5, 1984, p. 583–600.

20 Charles Kurzman, "Structural Opportunity and Perceived Opportunity in Social-Movement Theory: The Iranian Revolution of 1979", *American Sociological Review,* Vol. 61, No 1, 1996, p. 153–170.

In different areas of contentious politics, scholars have tried to argue that grievances and opportunities played the major role in the outbreak of events. The topics that these arguments were tested include civil wars, political violence, genocides and ethnic cleansing. Several studies have compared these two competing arguments[21] and others have proposed hypotheses combining both.[22] This rich literature showed that, unlike conducting ethnography or process tracing, detecting grievances and opportunities is rather difficult in large-N studies. Since these are very loose concepts, scholars conducting large-N studies have used a wide range of proxies for these two factors. Some common proxies for opportunities include regime type, energy consumption, natural resources, GDP growth, terrain and population.[23] On the grievances side, GDP per capita, ethnic and religious fractionalization, regime type and civil liberties have been used as proxies.[24] Survey-based research on contentious politics usually employ similar proxies to tap into grievances and opportunities.

Explaining the Uprisings through Grievances and Opportunities

In light of this discussion on grievances and opportunities, I explore how these factors shaped the protest behavior during the Arab Uprisings. I make an individual-level analysis focusing on survey evidence in order to understand participation in protests in Tunisia and Egypt, the two countries that initiated the Arab Uprisings.

The proxies that were discussed in the previous section usually measure structural and institutional dynamics that affect people's lives. No doubt, there are certain structural and institutional differences between Egypt and Tunisia as well. Tunisia had a relatively higher level of development and civil society as well as a better education system.[25] Moreover, Egypt had a very strong coercive apparatus under the army which was a strong force of repression.[26] From this comparative perspective, there are more structural and institutional reasons for the Egyptians to have more grievances. However, there are two concerns with such comparisons.

First, the differences between the two countries were not too stark. Tunisia's economic development was still quite low and the economy had been stagnant after a decade of honeymoon under Ben Ali.[27] Moreover, despite not having a strong army, Tunisia had the police forces as the backbone of the coercive apparatus, controlling and repressing the opposition.[28]

21   Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War"; Collier and Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War".

22   Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*, 2nd ed, Boulder, Westview Press, 2004.

23   Christopher Blattman and Edward Miguel, "Civil War", *Journal of Economic Literature,* Vol. 48, No 1, 2010, p. 3–57; Ibrahim Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis, "How Much War Will We See? Explaining the Prevalence of Civil War", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 46, No 3, 2002, p. 307–334; Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War".

24   Marie Besançon, "Relative Resources: Inequality in Ethnic Wars, Revolutions, and Genocides", *Journal of Peace Research,* Vol. 42, No 4, 2005, p. 393-415; Lars-Erik Cederman, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Halvard Buhaug, *Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

25   Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds, *The Arab Spring.*

26   Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring", *Comparative Politics,* Vol. 44, No 2, 2012, p. 127–49.

27   Emma C. Murphy, *Economic and Political Change in Tunisia: From Bourguiba to Ben Ali*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1999.

28   Derek Lutterbeck, "Tool of Rule: The Tunisian Police under Ben Ali", *The Journal of North African Studies,* Vol. 20, No 5, 2015, p. 813–831.

Second, and more importantly, these differences in the structural-level do not always directly translate into grievances and opportunities in the individual-level. As Gurr[29] and Kurzman[30] pointed out, there is a subjective aspect of the decision to protest. For an individual to protest, as much as the objective structural conditions, how they are perceived and evaluated based on expectations are central in deciding to act. Furthermore, for most individuals, the subjective comparison is done with what they had in their society beforehand. Despite relatively different conditions between the countries, the more important thing for individuals to protest is how things change over time in their own countries and how they subjectively evaluate this.

While the country-level structural and institutional factors are important, the decision to protest or not, despite its connection to collective action, is an individual decision. As several studies based on survey research indicate, individuals' statements on grievances and opportunity perceptions are crucial to understanding participation in protests.[31] It particularly helps to understand variation within countries, in other words, why some people protest within a society while others do not. In this way, it is possible to understand the determinants of protest by the individuals' agency, while keeping the country-level structural and institutional factors constant.

In this light, participation in protests in the Arab world, and particularly during the Uprisings, was examined at the individual-level, in several studies, using survey evidence and event history data. While there were studies looking at participation in protests during the 2000s,[32] the Uprisings led to an upsurge in such studies, particularly focusing on Egypt and Tunisia. While these studies refer or allude to grievances and opportunities (as well as resources), their arguments are based on various factors, without directly explaining the outcome with the former ones.

On the grievances side, in an earlier study, Hoffman and Jamal find that higher religiosity has an impact on participation in protests in Egypt and Tunisia. Unpacking the mechanisms, they argue that religiosity also has a significant explanatory power to predict religious motivations (as they consider under the label of grievances) and not religious resources (opportunities).[33] Beissinger et. al. look at the same two cases to explain the differences in socioeconomic profiles of revolutionary coalitions. While the factors explaining participation in protests in Tunisia and Egypt are different, they argue that the Tunisian Revolution was significantly more diverse in social composition unlike the Egyptian one. While they allude to the presence of economic grievances as the dominant factor in participants' agenda, they do not systematically test the role of such grievances in participation in protests.[34] Barrie, focusing on Tunisia, argues that the determinants of protest are dynamic and tied to the process of protest itself. While local development, which is related to economic grievances, was a predictor of participation in early stages of protests, it shifted later on and the commitment to democracy predicted participation better in later stages of anti-Ben Ali protests.[35]

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29 Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*.

30 Kurzman, "Structural Opportunity and Perceived Opportunity in Social-Movement Theory".

31 Debra Javeline, *Protest and the Politics of Blame: The Russian Response to Unpaid Wages*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2003; Edward N. Muller, Henry A. Dietz, and Steven E. Finkel, "Discontent and the Expected Utility of Rebellion: The Case of Peru", *The American Political Science Review,* Vol. 85, No 4, 1991, p. 1261–1282.

32 M. Najeeb Shafiq et al., "Are Student Protests in Arab States Caused by Economic and Political Grievances? Empirical Evidence from the 2006–07 Arab Barometer", *Peabody Journal of Education,* Vol. 89, No 1, 2014, p. 141–158.

33 Hoffman and Jamal, "Religion in the Arab Spring".

34 Beissinger, Jamal, and Mazur, "Explaining Divergent Revolutionary Coalitions".

35 Christopher Barrie, "The Process of Revolutionary Protest: Development and Democracy in the Tunisian Revolution", Unpublished Manuscript, v2, August 10, 2018, https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/eu5b4. (Accessed on February 10, 2020)

On the opportunities and resources side, several studies indicate the conditions that facilitate participation in protests. For Doherty and Schraeder, participation in protests in Tunisia was the outcome of exposure to social signals, more than grievances. Individuals whose friends and neighbors participated in protests were more likely to participate since such signaling facilitated mobilization.[36] In a similar fashion, Barrie and Ketchley explain labor mobilization in Egypt based on a cross-sectoral demonstration effect, showing that districts experienced higher rates of protests following mobilization in their neighboring districts.[37] While signaling and demonstration were important, others focus on the role of individuals and networks on mobilization. Clarke explains how brokers, after observing the Tunisian experience, played an active role in Egypt and mobilized different social sectors and networks to protest.[38] Nugent and Berman, on the other hand, do not focus on individual actors but the broader networks themselves and illustrate how online and traditional networks, as well as their interaction, shaped the patterns of participation in protests by facilitating the flow of information and communication.[39] Clarke and Kocak similarly indicate the role of social media in the mobilization of first movers during the Egyptian protests.[40]

While I discuss the findings of these studies under grievances and opportunities for the purposes of providing links, their direct focus is not necessarily these factors. These studies benefit from the main tenets of the literature discussed above; however, some of them do not directly test for both grievances and opportunities while others test them only in single case settings. My analysis on the determinants of participation in protests in Egypt and Tunisia in the early days of the Arab Uprisings follows the footsteps of these studies, yet, it takes a more direct approach toward grievances and opportunities. In this study, I specifically look at how grievances and opportunities directly impact participation in protests in a comparative setting.

As the studies above distinguish, just like others, grievances are not always monolithic.[41] The impact of grievances on an individual's decision might be similar; yet, some grievances originate from economic conditions,[42] while others are the product of political ones. One could see the role of both grievances in the discourse of protestors during the Arab Uprisings. The main motto of the Tunisian Revolution was "Bread, Freedom and Human Dignity" (*Aish, Hurriyah, Karamah Insaniyyah*). In the Egyptian case, a similar motto was used with the replacement of human dignity with "Social Justice" (*Aish, Hurriyah, Adalah Igtima'iyyah*).[43] These two mottos illustrate signs of both types of grievances.[44] The demands of bread and social justice represent economic grievances more while freedom and human dignity were more related with political grievances. Therefore, I hypothesize that higher economic and political grievances led some individuals to take to the streets against their authoritarian governments.

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36 Doherty and Schraeder, "Social Signals and Participation in the Tunisian Revolution".

37 Barrie and Ketchley, "Opportunity Without Organization".

38 Clarke, "Unexpected Brokers of Mobilization".

39 Nugent and Berman, "Ctrl-Alt-Revolt?"

40 Clarke and Kocak, "Launching Revolution".

41 For examples of distinction of grievances, see: Doherty and Schraeder, "Social Signals and Participation in the Tunisian Revolution"; Barrie, "The Process of Revolutionary Protest".

42 For more on economic grievances in the region, see: Özlem Tür, "Challenges of Demographic Pressures and Resource Scarcity on the Political Economy in the Levant & MENA Region," *Uluslararası İlişkiler,* Vol. 15, No. 60, 2018, p. 75–87.

43 Killian Clarke, "Aish, Hurriya, Karama Insaniyya: Framing and the 2011 Egyptian Uprising", *European Political Science,* Vol. 12, No 2, 2013, p. 197–214.

44 Similar socioeconomic grievances were cited as a cause of another form of contentious politics, terrorism, in the MENA context, see: Katerina Dalacoura, "Democracy as Counter-Terrorism in the Middle East: A Red Herring?," *Uluslararası İlişkiler,* Vol. 8, No. 32, 2012, p. 101–14.

H_1: Higher economic grievances increased the likelihood of participation in protests during the Arab Uprisings.

H_2: Higher political grievances increased the likelihood of participation in protests during the Arab Uprisings.

On the other hand, in an authoritarian regime, protesting against the government may have serious repercussions, ranging from being beaten up to imprisonment and even to death in some cases. In fact, retrospectively looking at the protests in Tunisia and Egypt, the protestors suffered from these dangerous outcomes. Since they had lived under the rule of those repressive regimes, the citizens had been aware of the possible dangers of participation in protests even before they left their homes. Nevertheless, some of them decided to protest, while others did not. This variation potentially stems from their different perceptions of opportunities.

Since I focus on the individual decision-making process leading to a decision to protest, objective opportunities are not really helpful to explain the variation. However, following Kurzman's approach, citizen perception of opportunity may have played an important role in the protest movements in Tunisia and Egypt. Therefore, seeing a light of opportunity that either 1) they could win or 2) the response would not be as harsh could have helped the citizens to decide to take to the streets against their respective regimes.

H_3: The citizens with higher perceptions of opportunities to protest were more likely to participate in protests during the Arab Uprisings.

Grievances and opportunities can shape participation in protests, either separately or together. However, as a third potential path, these two factors may also reinforce each other. In other words, aggrieved individuals may participate in protest only when they see opportunities and others with weak grievances may decide to stay at home even despite the presence of opportunities. Therefore, the interaction of these two factors might be an important channel for participation in protests.

H_4: The citizens with high grievances were more likely to protest if they had higher opportunity perceptions during the Arab Uprisings.

Research Design

The Arab Uprisings spread out to most of the Arab world even though the protests were on a smaller scale in some cases. Despite the wide range of protests, I analyze the protest patterns in two countries, Tunisia and Egypt, for two reasons: First, these cases are the first and main countries where protests were seen. The Uprisings started with the protests following Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Tunisia. Egypt was the first country to experience large-scale protests after the removal of Tunisian President Ben Ali from his position. The massive protests in Egypt and removal of President Mubarak sparked the light of the protests all over the Arab world. For this reason, these two countries have a symbolic importance for the Arab Uprisings. Second, both cases showed unprecedented relative success. In both cases, removals of presidents were followed by an attempt to start transition to democracy in which first parliaments were elected through free and fair elections. Although Egypt experienced an authoritarian backlash while Tunisian democracy survived, these early successes in both cases made them even more salient.

To analyze the causes of participation in protests in Tunisia and Egypt, I use survey evidence from the second wave of the Arab Barometer project.[45] The surveys in this wave were conducted in Egypt in June 2011 and in Tunisia in October 2011, which were still the early months of the revolutions. In both cases, the founding elections had yet to take place and the protests were still going on despite the removal of the former dictators. For this reason, I expect that grievances and perceived opportunities had not changed by that time.

As my dependent variable, I use participation in protests. Unlike other countries in the survey, the Arab Barometer asked the Egyptian and Tunisian respondents if they had participated in protests during the respective two-week periods before the removal of their former dictators.[46] According to the data, 16% of the respondents in Tunisia and 8% of the respondents in Egypt reported that they had participated in these protests.[47] Since my dependent variable is a dummy variable, I use logistic regression models. I also use post-stratification weights to account for sampling design.[48]

In order to find out the best indicators of grievances and opportunities in Tunisia and Egypt, I first conducted an exploratory factor analysis. I identified the questions in the surveys that relate to opportunities and grievances in order to see to run a factor analysis to see the latent factors driving the respondents' answers to those questions. The exploratory factor analysis provided me three latent factors as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Uniqueness
Economic Situation	**0.6703**	0.0655	-0.0755	0.5408
Future Economy	**0.5690**	-0.0065	0.2929	0.5904
Equal Treatment	**0.5523**	0.2250	0.1613	0.6184
Medical Treatment	**0.6114**	0.0820	-0.1095	0.6075
Trust Police	0.1424	**0.7081**	-0.0301	0.4774
Trust Judiciary	0.1312	**0.7481**	0.2412	0.3649
Trust Army	-0.1206	**0.6281**	-0.0055	0.5909
Influence Government	0.0958	0.0642	**0.7910**	0.3611
Join NGO	-0.0398	0.0078	**0.7566**	0.4259
Free Protest	-0.0396	0.3131	**0.6029**	0.5370

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45 The replication dataset for the analysis can be found on the Harvard Dataverse: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/IVDL2Y

46 This is another reason why focusing only on Egypt and Tunisia as the main cases is justifiable. For the rest of the countries, the survey asks respondents if they participated any protests in the three years prior. While that timeline goes well before the Arab Uprisings, it also makes comparison between these two counties and the rest unfeasible.

47 These percentages may seem low; yet considering the whole population and the representativeness of the surveys, this suggests that about 1.7 million people in Tunisia and 6 million people might have participated in protests.

48 The protesters used social media extensively during the protests throughout the Arab Uprisings to spread the word, recruit more people and communicate for organizing demonstrations. For that, I use participation in protests through social media as a secondary dependent variable to see if there is any different pattern for different types of protests. The results for that can be found in the Appendix. For more on the role of social media in the Arab Uprisings, see: Zeynep Tufekci and Christopher Wilson, "Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square", *Journal of Communication,* Vol. 62, No 2 2012, p. 363–79; Howard and Hussain, *Democracy's Fourth Wave?*; Nugent and Berman, "Ctrl-Alt-Revolt?"; Clarke and Kocak, "Launching Revolution".

The first factor includes questions about perceptions of the current and the future economic situation, plus equal treatment for citizens and access to medical treatment. In this regard, this factor represents more economically-oriented statements of citizens and negative evaluations can be a good proxy to understand economic grievances. The second factor covers trust in certain state institutions such as the police forces, the judiciary and the army. The important point is that these institutions are central parts of the authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Tunisia. Even when some other questions about trust to more representative institutions (such as parliament, civil society and Islamist parties) are added to the factor analysis, trust to these authoritarian institutions stand out as a separate factor. Therefore, this factor indicates the trust and content to authoritarian institutions/regime and the reverse of this measure can be a good proxy for political grievances of the respondents. The third and the final factor includes questions about respondents' opinions on whether or not they can influence government decisions, join NGOs and have freedom to protest. This set represents the perceived opportunities in the eyes of the citizens.

Using the results from this factor analysis, I predicted the three latent variables that drive the assessment of respondents on these areas. These three factors correspond with the three determinants of participation in protests that I am interested in: economic grievances, political grievances and opportunity perceptions.[49] I further created an additive grievances index based on economic grievances and political grievances, in order to carry out additional tests.

Finally, I use a set of control variables. Along with demographic controls like age, gender, college education, employment and residence in urban areas, I control for an individual's interest in politics, following the news, associational membership, trust, religiosity, support for democracy and internet use. I did not use income as a control since there is significant missing data for that variable, which limits the number of observations in the analysis. Yet, I have added models controlled for income in the Appendix Table A2, which yielded similar results despite the loss of statistical power.

Findings

Logistic regression results indicate diverging patterns in Tunisia and Egypt. Grievances in Tunisia and opportunity perceptions in Egypt emerge as the stronger factors affecting individual decisions to participate in protests.

Table 2 illustrates the main models for participation in protests in both countries.[50] The results show that grievances were important for the Tunisian citizens' decision to protest. Both in the additive index (Model 2) and separate grievances measures (Model 4), the indicators for grievances are statistically significant. Therefore, the Tunisians who were aggrieved because of the political and economic situation in their country participated in the protests against the Ben Ali regime more in comparison to their less aggrieved counterparts. However, citizen perception of political opportunity structures did not play such a significant role in Tunisians' decisions to protest.

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49 For the predicted variables of economic grievances, political grievances and opportunities, higher values represent higher grievance and more opportunities.

50 The full models can be found in the Appendix, Table A1. Participation in protests through the internet shows very similar results to actual participation in the streets. As presented in the Appendix Table A3, political grievances in Tunisia and opportunity perceptions in Egypt significantly predicts which citizens use social media to support the protests.

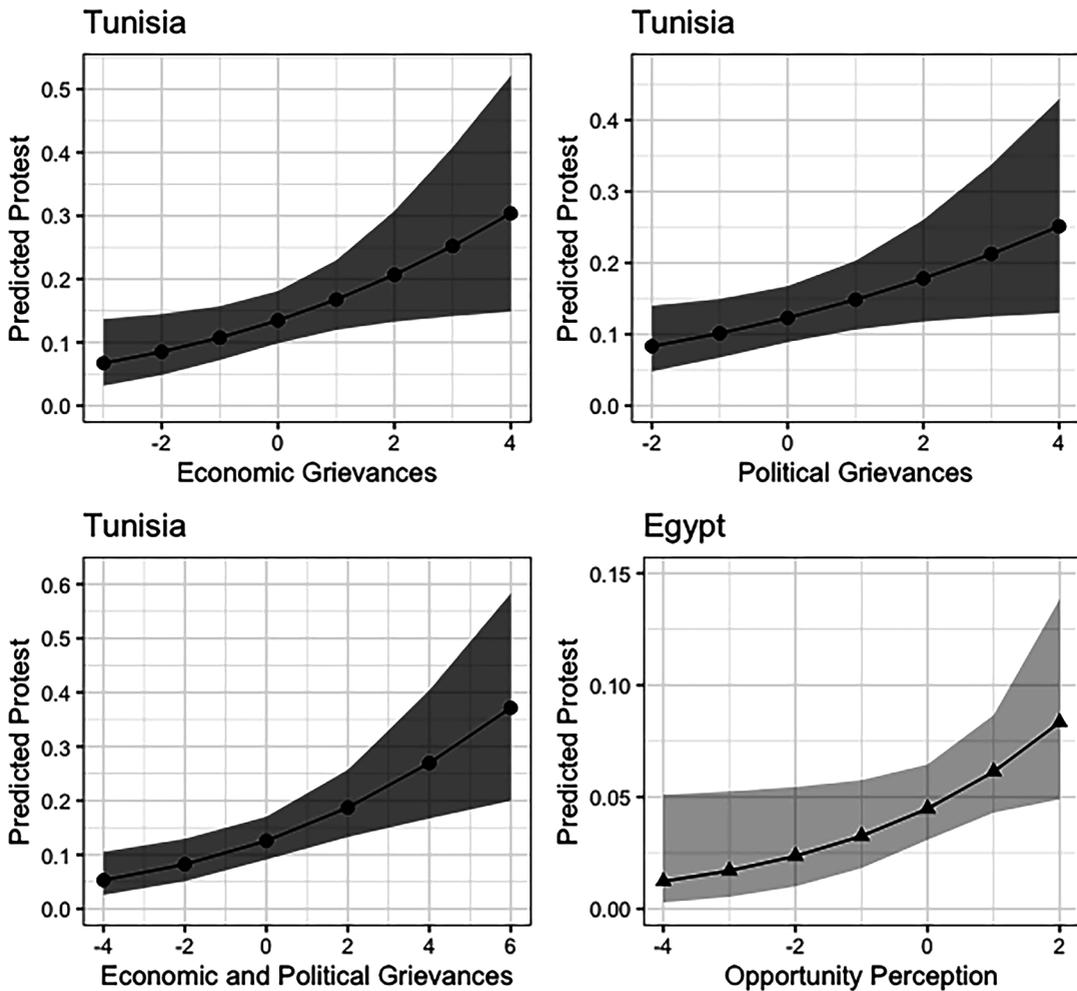**Table 2:** Impact of Grievances and Opportunities on Participation in Protests

	Egypt (1)	Tunisia (2)	Egypt (3)	Tunisia (4)	Egypt (5)	Tunisia (6)
			Participation in Protests			
Grievances	0.139	0.236**			0.071	0.272**
	(0.101)	(0.074)			(0.118)	(0.084)
Economic Grievances			0.084	0.257*		
			(0.132)	(0.113)		
Political Grievances			0.211	0.218*		
			(0.149)	(0.101)		
Opportunity	0.348*	-0.045	0.331*	-0.039	0.337*	-0.100
	(0.158)	(0.115)	(0.159)	(0.117)	(0.158)	(0.129)
Grievances * Opportunity					0.139	0.068
					(0.120)	(0.073)
Constant	-5.348***	-1.702*	-5.332***	-1.707*	-5.446***	-1.724*
	(0.956)	(0.705)	(0.958)	(0.705)	(0.962)	(0.706)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	944	697	944	697	944	697
Log Likelihood	-237.143	-276.583	-236.986	-276.524	-236.659	-276.021
AIC	504.287	583.166	505.972	585.048	505.317	584.043

+ $p<0.1$; * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$

In Egypt, on the other hand, having grievances is not a significant factor to initiate protest. The citizens probably had grievances against the regime as well. In fact, the direction of the arrow indicates that there is a positive association between grievances and participation in protests in Egypt; yet, it is not statistically significant, which means that the degree of grievances was not a meaningful determinant of participation among Egyptians. The Egyptian citizens, who thought that the conditions created certain opportunities for themselves, participated more than the others who did not perceive such an opportunity. Therefore, while opportunity perception did not play a determinative role in Tunisians' decision to participate, it was among the primary determinants for the Egyptians' decision.

The Models 5 and 6 show the interactive models with grievances and opportunities. If significant, these models would indicate that the effect of grievances on participation in protests was more pronounced in the case of higher perceived opportunities. However, in both Egypt and Tunisia, the interaction terms are not statistically significant. Therefore, the impacts of grievances and opportunities are not conditional on the other factors. This further supports the findings that the impact of these two determinants in Tunisia and Egypt was indeed separate.

Figure 1: Predicted Probabilities of Grievances and Opportunities on Protest

The predicted probabilities in Figure 1 help us to understand the role of grievances and opportunities better. In Tunisia, a person with very high levels of economic and political grievances combined took the streets almost seven times more likely than someone with very low levels of such grievances. In Egypt, on the other hand, opportunity perceptions had a similar effect as well. While people with very low perception of opportunities remained at home, others with high perception of opportunities went out to protest about three times more likely than the former.[51]

How did Grievances and Opportunities Shape Participation in Protests in Egypt and Tunisia?

What should we understand from all these results and how can we interpret them? First of all, these findings do not necessarily indicate that the protests were solely the outcome of these factors. Grievances in Tunisia and opportunities in Egypt can be factors driving people to the street along

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51 Predicted probabilities for the non-significant associations can also be found in the Appendix.

with other structural and institutional factors. More specifically, the main argument that can be made from these findings is about the variation among the citizens within countries. Rather than answering why protests started, these findings explain why some people in Tunisia and in Egypt protested while others did not. Therefore, the Tunisians with deeper grievances protested against the authoritarian regime more than the Tunisians with less grievances. The Egyptians who perceived opportunities more were more likely to take to the streets than their counterparts with less of such perception.

These findings also indicate that the participation in protests in Egypt and Tunisia were not entirely driven by the same factors. It is difficult to explain this divergence based on the available data; yet, we can speculate the underlying causes for this divergence. The sequencing of the two protest movements is helpful to explain this outcome. The Tunisians were the first movers, as the Tunisian Revolution was the first protest movement of the Uprisings and started at a time that nobody was expecting.[52] There had also been no significant change in the structural level that could create new opportunities for the Tunisian protesters before the protests started. The outbreak of protests based on grievances and despair is actually represented well by the symbolic self-immolation of Bouazizi. In the absence of any perceivable opportunity, Tunisians took the street to reflect their grievances.

On the other hand, the Egyptian Revolution was the successor of the Tunisian one. When Egyptians first took the streets against the Mubarak regime, the Tunisian dictator Ben Ali had already escaped from the country and the protests in Tunisia had already inspired the Arab people across countries. First time in decades, the Arab publics noticed that a dictator could be overthrown. This changing air had definitely created some new opportunity structures in the region and this might have correctly perceived by the Egyptian public. The case study evidence supports this argument as well. Based on interviews with the brokers of the early protests in Egypt, Clarke argues that the Egyptian activists' attitudes toward mobilization, political transformation, and cooperation changed and they became more willing to take risks. In fact, he quotes a leader of the protest movements who says "We watched as the Tunisian revolution took off and then toppled Ben Ali from power. And we looked at ourselves and said: 'we can do that too.'"[53] Therefore, the fall of Ben Ali in Tunisia, its impact on the Egyptian state and the perception of these changes as an opportunity to overthrow Mubarak have helped Egyptians to take the streets against the regime.

In order to explore whether being the second country shaped the role of opportunities in determining participation in protests in Egypt, I carried out an additional analysis. First, Model 2 in Table 3, re-substantiating the earlier findings, shows how opportunity perceptions played different roles in Egypt and Tunisia. The interaction term indicates that, in Egypt, increase in the opportunity perception significantly increased participation in protests than in Tunisia. As a reference, grievances do not have such a divergent role between the two countries, as seen in Model 1.

Model 3 then turns to the predictors of that opportunity perception in Egypt. If the experience in Tunisia had created a perception of opportunity among Egyptians, we would expect that people who followed what was going on in Tunisia more closely would be more susceptible to developing such a perception. The revolution in Tunisia was such a major event in the region and probably

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52 F. Gregory Gause III, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2011, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-africa/2011-07-01/why-middle-east-studies-missed-arab-spring.

53 Mohamed Adel, one of the leader of the 6 April Youth Movement, quoted in: Clarke, "Unexpected Brokers of Mobilization", p. 388.

almost all Egyptians knew what happened in Tunisia in early 2011. However, the mere knowledge of protests in Tunisia would not necessarily lead to developing such a perception. The ones who follow the developments in Tunisia more closely, on the other hand, can actually understand better how a protest movement can reach a level to overthrow a dictator. After all, someone who was exposed to the strategies of the protest movement and observed how shocked and paralyzed the Tunisian regime was in response to this could perceive that such a protest movement could also be successful in Egypt.

Table 3: Opportunity Perceptions in Egypt

	Participation in protests		Opportunity Perception
	Both Countries	Both Countries	Egypt
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Grievances	0.249***	0.218***	
	(0.074)	(0.059)	
Opportunity Perception	0.103	-0.064	
	(0.093)	(0.115)	
Egypt	-0.992***	-1.097***	
	(0.204)	(0.213)	
Grievances * Egypt	-0.079		
	(0.120)		
Opportunities * Egypt		0.447*	
		(0.193)	
Follow News	0.539***	0.561***	0.142**
	(0.134)	(0.135)	(0.050)
Follow on Internet			0.117*
			(0.052)
Follow on TV			-0.052
			(0.042)
Follow on Press			0.003
			(0.024)
Follow on Radio			-0.046
			(0.028)
Constant	-2.410***	-2.494***	-0.634*
	(0.640)	(0.640)	(0.279)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1,606	1,606	892
R^2			0.077
Log Likelihood	-511.727	-509.501	

$+ p<0.1; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001$

It is not possible to know, based on the Arab Barometer surveys, if the respondents followed the developments in Tunisia or not. However, there are proxies that allow us to infer such a connection. If an Egyptian follows the news more closely, we can expect that person to have a higher perception of opportunity. Moreover, since the conventional media under the regime's control circulated the news in a rather limited extent, and the social media was the main source of information during the protests, I also expect that citizens who follow the news through the internet, over other means, to be influenced more by the Tunisian experience and develop perceptions of opportunity.

Figure 2: Opportunity Perception among Egyptians based on Following News
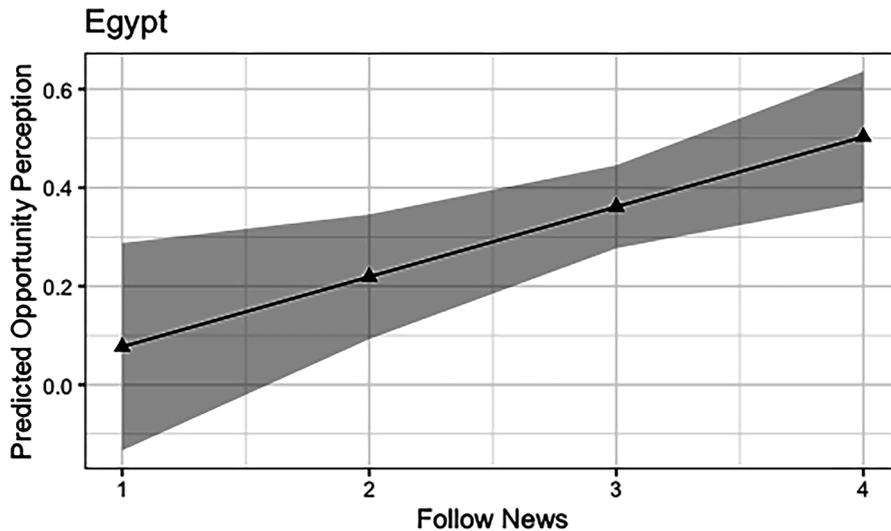
The Model 3 in Table 3 supports this expectation. It shows that Egyptians who follow the news more regularly have a higher likelihood of perceiving an opportunity for political action. As seen in Figure 2, citizens who follow the news most are about three times more likely to perceive the opportunity than the ones that follow the news the least. Furthermore, Model 3 shows that while sources of information such as TV, press or radio do not create a significant change in the perceptions of opportunity, following news through the internet significantly increases that perception. These results support the explanation above that observing the Tunisian example probably helped the Egyptians to reach the threshold to decide on protesting by creating the perception that they could succeed as well.

Finally, the findings do not necessarily indicate that the Egyptians did not have grievances against the Mubarak regime. In objective terms, Egyptians had a lower average per capita income than Tunisians when the protest movements emerged. In addition, the Egyptian state was more repressive than the Tunisian state in many aspects. Therefore, they surely had grievances; otherwise they would not take the streets just because they had an opportunity to do so. In that sense, rejecting the role grievances of the Egyptian public cannot be a correct interpretation of these results. Yet, a sounder interpretation would be that even though grievances were present for Egyptians, those were not by themselves enough to make them decide to protest against the authoritarian government. The Egyptians needed a sign that they could not only protest but that they could succeed against the Mubarak regime. Therefore, it is not that they did not have grievances; but that the grievances of the Egyptian public without opportunities were not enough for widespread anti-governmental protests.[54]

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54 To further support this point, I have carried out causal mediation analysis for grievances and opportunities, that can be found in the Appendix. The analysis shows that in Egypt, grievances are mediated through opportunities; however, they do not have a significant direct effect on participation in protests. This finding indicates that while Egyptians indeed had grievances, this was not enough by itself for them to protest; but it had an indirect effect when mediated by opportunities.

Conclusion

In this paper, I followed the debate on the grievances and opportunities in order to explore participation in protests during the Arab Uprisings. The protest movements, starting in late 2010 and spreading out all around the Arab world that led to the fall of several dictators and the outbreak of cycles of violence, have been some of the most important events in the region during the last two decades. Even though this process gave birth to a bourgeoning literature focusing on these protest movements, participation in protests was not directly explored through the prism of the grievances and opportunities framework. For that reason, looking at the individual-level and understanding the causes behind the individuals' decision to participate in protests is very crucial.

Using survey data from Egypt and Tunisia, the two most important cases of the Arab Uprisings, I found that there have been different factors in each of these countries defining the individual decision to protest. In Tunisia, grievances have been very salient and played the central role in the participation to protest against the Ben Ali regime. In Egypt, grievances were not enough by themselves for citizens to take the streets against their dictator. The success in the Tunisian case and the new hope of democracy created some new opportunities for the Egyptian public and the perception of these opportunities helped Egyptians to start protesting against the regime. Especially those who follow developments more closely were affected by the Tunisian experience more. As a result, grievances in Tunisia and opportunities in Egypt emerged as the determining factor distinguishing the decisions of the protestors and the non-protestors to participate.