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Abstract of my thesis topic

The Role of International Actors in the Writing of the Tunisian Constitution
From the 2011 Tunisian uprising to the new challenges faced by Tunisia

The principal objective of my research project is to study, analyze, and understand the democratization process that has taken place in Tunisia in the last three years. In particular, the main goal of the research is to determine whether there has been an external influence on the writing of a pluralistic constitution in the Tunisian cultural soil. My analysis focuses on the role that the international community and various international organizations have had in the constitution making. In particular, the organizations taken under considerations are the European Union, the Venice Commission and the United Nations Development Programme.

After having determined the magnitude of the external influence of these three main organizations, the research focuses on how binding the external intervention in Tunisia has been, with particular regard for the constitution-making process. In the analysis, great space is devoted to the analysis of the controversial concept of democracy, its various meanings and its multiple aspects. One of the main interesting but controversial aspect will be to analyze the different idea of democracy that the different players involved have and have had, and especially how these different ideas have converged into an approved, democratic constitution.

Historically under the Western influence as many of the others countries in the region, Tunisia and its recently approved constitution represent today the only success among the movements that have shaken the area since 2011. In this regard, the ambition of this research will be to determine in which proportion this constitution-making process has been a direct outcome of the the effective democratization of the Tunisian context, and to what extent it is attributable to external influence.

How the trip contributed to my research

I am researching on the role of International Organizations, and in particular on the role of European Union and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the context of the Tunisian Constitutional Assembly. Part of my research needed to be done on the field, since it was of primarily importance for me to get in direct contact with the organizations that worked with the National Constituent Assembly. Moreover, since I am working on the Constitution of the country, I thought it would be of fundamental importance for me to be exposed to the Tunisian social and political context.

For this reasons, I planned a journey to Tunisia. In Tunisia, where I stayed for four days, I had the opportunity to directly work with members of the United Nations Development Programme who agreed to be interviewed and to share information and documents with me. Moreover, I worked with researcher Mohamed Limam, and with professor and politician Hamadi Redissi, both experts of Tunisian politics.

The information that I collected during the trip resulted to be not only extremely interesting but also fundamental for the realization of my thesis. Through interviews to members of the UNDP, I understood how the UNDP organized its work within the assembly, how it sustained—political and economically— the constitutional process, and how it interacted with the national forces to create and inclusive process. Thanks to talks with Mr Limam and Mr Hamadi Redissi, I could better understand the functioning of the Tunisian politics, the new challenges that Tunisia is facing and the principal dynamics of Tunisian elections.

The trip to Tunisia also helped me to have a broader picture of the social and political Tunisian environment, again fundamental aspect for my researches. My trip was especially helpful as I was in the country during the first political elections after the revolution. With Mr Limam and Mr Redissi I participated to a congress of the Nidaa Tounes party, the party that eventually won the elections. During my staying there I had the possibility to directly talk with member of the civil society, young people, taxi divers, bar tenders, and collect their opinions on the current political context.

In general, my trip to Tunisia was inspiring and generally extremely useful for my research.