


T.C

BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

THE DEPARTMENT OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS



**UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL ART ON THE ARAB
SPRING: A SURVEY RESEARCH TO DETERMINE THE PERSPECTIVE OF
YOUNG PEOPLE**

MASTER'S THESIS

DINA MOMANI


ISTANBUL 2023

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THESIS ADVISOR: OZGUR UNAL ERIS

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL ART ON THE ARAB SPRING: A SURVEY RESEARCH TO DETERMINE THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

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Master's Program in Global Affairs

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Özgür Ünal Eriş

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This thesis is an investigation into the role of political art during the Arab Spring and how it shaped the conscience of young people to overthrow brutal regimes. This research is an evaluation of how political art was used as an effective tool and how many forms of political art spread the message of standing against the tyranny in the four countries, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, and Syria. The literature has revealed different political visual art in the streets of these countries which demonstrated the defiance of the population against the tyrants. However, almost a decade it is interesting to understand how that visual art became a significant tool in the hands of youth. In this research-rich, the young population from the four countries were identified through personal links and via departmental search. A survey questionnaire was prepared to get the responses of all the participants. The survey link was sent to the potential participants, and they were asked to complete the survey. Moreover, all the participants were provided with details of the survey and how their data is going to be used. 56 responses were obtained and these revealed interesting findings. The majority of respondents believed that political art is a tool for revolution and popular uprisings. Furthermore, respondents also revealed that they have

engaged in different forms of political visual art such as graffiti, and paintings. The respondents also stated to utilize social media as a medium to propagate their visual art and spread their message of rising against brutal regimes. In this way, the respondents favored the use of visual art during popular uprisings.

Keywords: Political Art, Graffiti, Arab Spring, Social Media, Street Art



ÖZ

TEZ

SİYASİ SANATIN ARAP BAHARI ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİNİ ANLAMAK:
GENÇLERİN BAKIŞ AÇISINI BELİRLEMeye YÖNELİK BİR ANKET
ARAŞTIRMASI

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Bu tez, Arap Baharı sırasında siyasi sanatın rolüne ve acımasız rejimleri devirmek için gençlerin vicdanını nasıl şekillendirdiğine dair bir araştırmadır. Bu araştırma, Mısır, Lübnan, Libya ve Suriye olmak üzere dört ülkede siyasi sanatın nasıl etkili bir araç olarak kullanıldığının ve kaç formda siyaset sanatının tiranlığa karşı duruş mesajı yaydığının bir değerlendirmesidir. Literatür, bu ülkelerin sokaklarında halkın zorbalara karşı meydan okumasını gösteren farklı siyasi görsel sanatlar ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bununla birlikte, görsel sanatın gençliğin elinde nasıl önemli bir araç haline geldiğini anlamak ilginçtir. Araştırma açısından zengin bu dört ülkeden genç nüfus, kişisel bağlantılar ve departman arama yoluyla belirlendi. Tüm katılımcıların yanıtlarını almak için bir anket formu hazırlanmıştır. Potansiyel katılımcılara anket linki gönderilmiş ve anketi doldurmaları istenmiştir. Ayrıca tüm katılımcılara anketin detayları ve verilerinin nasıl kullanılacağı anlatıldı. 56 cevap alındı ve bunlar ilginç bulguları ortaya çıkardı. Ankete katılanların çoğunluğu, politik sanatın devrim ve halk ayaklanmaları için bir araç olduğuna inanıyor. Ayrıca, yanıt verenler grafiti ve resim gibi politik görsel sanatın farklı biçimleriyle uğraştıklarını da ortaya koydular. Katılımcılar ayrıca görsel sanatlarını yaymak ve acımasız rejimlere karşı ayaklanma mesajlarını yaymak için sosyal medyayı bir araç

olarak kullandıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bu şekilde, yanıt verenler halk ayaklanmaları sırasında görsel sanatın kullanılmasını desteklediler

Anahtar Kelimeler: Politik Sanat, Grafiti, Arap Baharı, Sosyal Medya, Sokak Sanatı



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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Arab Spring swept like a Tsunami wave in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in 2011 and changed the geo-political dynamics of the region. The epicenter of the uprising was the immolation of a Tunisian street vendor, against the corrupt regime of Tunisia. Consequently, a series of street protests started in Tunisia, which swept through countries like Syria, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen (Khondker, 2019). Western political analysts labeled these movements as the Arab Awakening and a positive sign towards the democratization of Arab monarchies. The turmoil in the Arabian states was owing to brutal monarchies, social inequalities, and global interference. Moreover, the origin of uprisings can be traced back to colonial times, when artificial boundaries were imposed and restructuring was done in the post-colonial era (Alp, 2022). The authoritarian regimes consolidated their power and continued to rule with impunity. The emerging leaders of the Arab states became tyrants and failed to uphold the promises of democratization. Thus, the Arab Spring was a product of global political ineptitude and the economic suffering of people. The Arab Spring revolution articulated a movement for social justice and political, civic, and economic freedom.

The authoritarian governments of the states that were swept by the Arab Spring had long deployed art as a part of their ruling ideology. For instance, in Egypt, the Ministry of Culture controlled the art and propagated the propaganda of the regime (Tubbs, 2021). The intellectuals who conformed to the regime were permitted to perform in public media. There was no space for dissident artists, and they were demoralized in the national media. Visual arts in the form of art performances, literature, and music depicted repressed energy which is presented as political revolt. However, when the wave of Arab Spring started some dissident artists started to communicate their dissatisfaction with the socio-political environment. For instance, in Egypt, artists joined the Kifaya movement which purported a change of leadership to improve the socio-economic condition of the country (Allali, 2022). Mohammed ElBradie led the campaign and called for democratic reforms. These

art-based movements communicated the political message to the common people who started to demand their democratic rights (Maged, 2020). Before the Arab Spring, ruling elite and powerful authoritarian leaders dominated the art scene in states such as Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, and Libya. The art remained disconnected from the local realities which increased the resentment among the population. The blockade of traditional modes of communication further turned the dissidents in this region towards political art. The population of the above-mentioned countries used political art in the form of graffiti to demonstrate their resentment towards the brutal policies of an authoritarian regime.

1.2 Political Art

Art is an image in the form of music, painting, literature, sculpture, and graffiti which express ideas and underlying emotions. Art has been at the forefront of shaping human history. Political art is also a form of art that opposes the status quo and provides a medium for the marginalized section of society to speak up against segregation (Asavei, 2018). Concisely, political art is a form of art that delivers a political message. It was argued that there is no possibility of mixing art with politics, and politics is an outside reality for art. However, there is evidence that art has a relationship with this outside entity as seen in numerous popular uprisings. Thus, political art is a critique of the status quo to enable the marginalized sections to get their social, political, and economic rights.

Political art is not confined to one field of study, but it is linked with other social sciences such as political science, anthropology, and art history. However, there are no metrics to quantify political art. The study of political art revolves around understanding relating the hidden political messages in the art and how it critiques the status quo (Asavei, 2018). Art has become a medium of protest during the period of suppression and marginalization. The Arab Spring provides a good example of political art when protesters used public art as a medium to demand political and social reforms. The protestors used the surfaces and walls of the city as a canvas to create graffiti and murals. In this graffiti, the protestors created art on topics related to regime brutality, making calls to the public for collective actions and pleas to nonviolence. Social media also used these artworks and motivated more people to rise against the brutalities of regimes.

Art has also been used as an instrument for propagating political agendas. Human history is replete with arts being used for ideological or national causes. The protestors often pair

the images created in art with the slogans to rally support for their cause. The father of Behaviorism, John Watson has also supported the fact that images give more details and clarity to a message (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2020). Thus, art serves as a powerful tool during popular uprisings as seen during the Arab spring.

According to the theories of attention, art with visuals has a higher power to capture the attention of the population (Carrasco, 2011). This power is compounded with auditory messages. The activists use art with their auditory messages to gain support and spread their voices. For instance, Hitler also used art to create a negative image of Jews. Similarly, art is also used to create one's image such as Uncle Sam of the United States of America. This form of art has created divisions and enabled the violent actors of society to justify their atrocities against others. Furthermore, the use of posters and cartoons also create images that imprint in the minds of protestors, and they are often used as a tool for propaganda campaigns.

Art has also been used to address cultural oppression, social inequalities, and political instability. Numerous artists use graffiti murals to highlight social injustices and force society to seek social equality. For example, Banksy used graffiti murals to eliminate social injustice in society (Hansen, 2016). In this way, art has been used as a medium of social commentary. Furthermore, in another social movement in India, street art is used to voice dissent against government policies. The state authority reacted by concealing art installations to limit the impact of political art on public minds.

Political art exposes power structures and changes the way people perceived power (Bseiso, 2018). It has been seen that governments try to hold on to their power but hesitate to uncover the power structure. This is because some of that power is derived from the exploitation of the public. For authoritarian leaders such as Muammar Gaddafi, Husani Mubarak, Zine al-Abidine, and Bashar al Asad, it was important to control the visuals and maintain their political power. Therefore, artists who provided unfiltered analysis of the political sphere of these countries acted in resistance to the regimes. One researcher argued that the political art has the potential to translate the socio-political sphere into aesthetic particularities or aesthetic revolution (Beech, 2021). This power of political art is exceptional as it turns demands into aesthetics. Moreover, when culture is the fuel of art, it becomes a strong revolution and artistically conveys emotional messages to deliver in

an effective manner (LeVine, 2015). Similarly, in the countries that were swept by the Arab Spring, revolutionaries used graffiti and other modes of art to demonstrate their political resistance.

1.3 Research Objectives

One of the most important tools of any resistance movement is self-expression and the ability to freely communicate. However, under brutal authoritarian regimes, the citizens of Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria were under strict censorship and surveillance. State machinery controlled the media outlets and only displayed the state-sponsored narrative. The artists who deviated from the pre-established narrative of the state were charged with libel and other cruel charges. There was also surveillance of bloggers, and they were also subjected to custodial torture. The extent of censorship in these countries can be gauged from the jail sentence of editor Ibrahim Eissa for insulting Mubarak (Radsch, 2016). The states expanded their censorship in the name of national security and public order. Furthermore, the art scene in Egypt, Syria, Libya, and Tunisia was dominated by a political elite that discouraged any political dissent. When the traditional modes of political communication were blocked, the people of these countries turned towards political art to demonstrate their political resistance. Thus, it is important to analyze how political art inspired the citizens of these countries in such an atmosphere of censorship. The specific objectives that will be analyzed in this research are the following:

1. To understand the usage of political art by protestors during the Arab Spring.
2. To determine the impact of graffiti as an effective tool during the Arab Spring.
3. To understand how social media was used for the propagation of the political art.

1.4 Significance of Study

This research has significance as it helps to provide a framework for political activists to better use art to achieve their political objectives in closed states such as those of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Syria. Furthermore, this research will help to analyze the conflicts and

artistic responses to those conflicts. I have chosen political art such as graffiti, digital art, and political cartoons to examine in this research to prepare a robust framework for making art an effective medium during uprisings. I will be accessing the different types of art produced during the Arab Spring to demonstrate how each of these affects the people.

1.5 Methodology of the Study

In this research, I will conduct an in-depth examination of the political art and the work of artists in four countries Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Syria. In this report, the role of art and culture in motivating people to stand against dictators will be analyzed. Furthermore, the current research will provide practical models of political art as a medium of popular uprising and proposes the necessary conditions to make political art successful to achieve democratic peace.



Chapter 2

Relationship between Art and Political Activism

This chapter provides comprehensive details on the art and activism. Moreover, it will highlight, how art has become a tool in the hands of the oppressed to oust tyrants. Previous literature is explored to develop the theoretical foundations for this research. George Orwell once said that a person's creativity and political ideology is inseparable, and the aesthetic judgments are painted in political beliefs and prejudices. Therefore, it is easier to say that during the Arab Spring, art has been used as a political tool to awake the public against the prevailing dictatorship in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Syria. Furthermore, the art is produced in the public realm which makes the viewer a participant in art-based activism. The following sections will explore the concept of art, activism, and Arab Spring in detail to formulate a theoretical framework for this research.

2.1 Art and Activism

It is a question of function to define artistic activism because neither the stylistic framework nor the artistic media field can determine it. In activist art, different techniques are used including street art, performance, songwriting, social media broadcasting, and publishing. Artistic activism can exist in both the indigenous culture as well as in the mainstream culture (Wilcox, 2009). It emerges from dissatisfaction with the socio-political and economic situation. It demands for equity and equality in all spheres of society. Artistic activism has taken a central place in contemporary context including art, cultural, economic, and political (Wilcox, 2009). The intermingling of art and politics has changed the nature of art to a broader social force that goes beyond aesthetics.

Activist art directly communicates with the audience in open spaces as seen during the Arab Spring, rather than in closed spaces such as galleries. The interaction is achieved through a participative street action or the use of symbols as visible in the streets of Palestine against the occupation of Israel. The literature on artistic activism is relatively new, but the concept of using art as a form of activism is old. One researcher defined

artistic activism as Artivism, which he called a hybrid term explaining the interaction between activism and art in the public space (Korpe, 2013). However, it is imperative to understand the variation between artivism from case to case. During the Arab Spring, artistic activism came from professional activism that utilized art to agitate the public against a common social problem. According to another researcher, the relationship between activist art and aesthetic art is pragmatic in nature (Milohnić, 2015). When the goal of an artistic activism is to achieve a political action, the activist uses relative autonomy to secure oneself against possible legal restrictions. However, the majority of artistic activists does not affiliate with this relative autonomy as they consider it inefficient and lowers the political efficacy of any artistic activity.

2.1.1 Art Undermining the Authority

Art has been used as a tool in the Middle East and several governments have used it to reinforce their authority. The Twentieth century is full of artistic models in the communist and fascist dictatorship, the leaders of these societies used their sculptures and posters in the streets and squares to remind everyone of their authority and power. These artistic models can still be seen in Rome, Moscow, Berlin, and Pyongyang. The authoritarian leaders understood the importance of dominating the visual landscape to win the battle for imagination. In this way, these leaders projected their power in everyday life and also ensured that no alternative image or imagination should intrude. The assumption behind such posturing through street art is to maintain political order and to convince the onlookers that subordination is the norm of their society. Similarly, in the Middle East, before the Arab Spring protests started, visitors to the major cities can easily see massive posters and artwork on the streets of leaders such as President Ben Ali, President Hosni Mubarak, and President Muammar Qaddafi, and President Bashar al Assad. In these posters these leaders could be seen in a variety of guises to show off their glorious revolutions and regimes. The posters and street art in these countries have not been similar to that of Saddam Hussein's in Iraq, yet the intended message was the same.

During protests or unrest, these posters and street art became the target of protestors who defaced and destroyed these symbols of power. For instance, during the 2004 uprising in the Kurdish regions of Syria, the Kurdish protestors defaced the posters of the Syrian

President in an attempt to gain greater political autonomy (Droz-Vincent, 2014). Similarly, in 2008, the portraits of Egyptian President Mubarak were also destroyed and trodden by the workers of textile factories (Tripp, 2012). The regime brutally dealt with the public who dared erase the powerful messages of the dictators. Moreover, the photographers and publishers were arrested and imprisoned who shared the visual defiance of workers against the regime. However, the attempt of the regime to suppress the visual defiance failed owing to social media and the images of defaced posters of president were disseminated across the world.

These sporadic outbursts of public in the Middle East against the regime demonstrated the power of visual defiance. The images of protestors standing against the regime communicated a powerful message of alienation of the public and the despair of the government to disguise protests as a small issue rather than a mass uprising. The events of 2011 demonstrated the unexpected power and drama of defiance against the brutal regimes in the Middle East. However, any keen observer of visual arts and literature of the region would be aware that political dissent and social protest as the main feature of artistic productions in this region. This asserted that the artists started to demonstrate a shifting power balance in the region. For instance, the artistic work of Muhammad Abla revealed that violence faced by Egyptians at the hands of regime forces. Moreover, the paintings of 2004, *No More Killing* and *How Much Is the Life of an Egyptian Worth* revealed the underlying corruption and violence in the regime of President Mubarak (Tripp, 2012). Likewise, in Syria, the artwork of Yusuf Abdelke also revealed the grim situation of the country and the brutal suppression of citizens at the hands of President Assad's regime (Mejcher-Atassi, 2013). These artworks are a few of the many that represented the awe of the state and the fear of the regime. Numerous artists underlined the brutality of the regime and helped to weaken the grip of dictators on the ruled. Therefore, it would be unfair to exclude art as a role changer in the Middle East. Art played a significant role in changing the relationship between dictators and the ruled population prior to the 2011 uprisings.

2.1.2 Political Cartoons

Both the revolutionary uprisings and political protests are characterized by violence and agitation. However, some movements also have an element of humor which is often portrayed in the form of jokes, satire, and cartoons. The purpose of humor in social movements is to create a broader social identity among the marginalized sections of society. According to a researcher, there two potential ways in which humor can benefit social movements, one is that it creates a unity among people against a common foe, and second is that it undermines the existing structures of status quo (Kingsmith, 2016).

Cartoons are one major form of humor in socio-political movements. In Syria prior to the 2011 uprisings, artists were allowed to create cartoons and they took advantage of this medium of expression to demonstrate their political dissent. However, this form of expression was also not free from rules and regulations of the Syrian regime. For instance, a cartoonist Ali Ferzat provided a brief detail of this situation in an interview, he stated that “You couldn’t target the president or those around him with jokes or drawings. Criticism had to be more symbolic and subtle. You could criticize the president, as long as it was the president of Nicaragua” (Flores Borjabad, 2018). He used symbolism in his artwork to represent the political conditions, for example in one of his cartoons he created an empty chair depicting the Syrian government (Tripp, 2012).

Moreover, it was generally believed that artists never used art to mock the dictator or head of the state in the Middle East prior to the 2011 Arab Spring. However, in 2011, artists came to the fore such as Mohammad Anwar in Egypt who challenged the status quo by creating cartoons of dictators and portrayed the attempts to overthrow them (Kingsley, 2014). Similarly, artists in Syria also started to make fun of Assad’s regime, giving a semblance of hope to the public to rise against the tyranny. These cartoonists in both countries were aberration against the norms and provided an alternative view to the public. The regime countered these political cartoonists in a brutal way by punishing them, imposing heavy fines, and detaining and imprisoning them, but the counter measurers did not deter the cartoonists to change their political dissents. *Figure 1* below demonstrates a cartoon of Assad in which the artist depicted the attempts of Assad’s regime to stifle political protest in Syria.

-Syrian Reform -



Figure 1: Syrian Reforms (Source: Emadi, 2011)

The first image portrays that Assad is calm and controlled everyone in Syria through the “Emergency Law”. The second image depicts the tension on the face of Assad when he lifted Emergency laws to allow freedom of expression. This image also shows the concern that Assad face by allowing freedom movements. The last image depicts the new brutal law in the form of an anti-terrorism act to counter the freedom movement and this image also shows that Assad is now more happy and complacent (Emadi, 2011).

These images demonstrate the laws and brutal regulations Assad enforced in Syria in the event of the April 2011 protests. The country had remained under the military coup state since 1963 and enabled the government to infringe the human rights of citizens with impunity. These emergency and anti-terrorism acts have vague crimes which stifled the space of freedom of expression of Syrian people. Furthermore, cases under these laws were tried under Supreme State Security Court which was not bounded by a general legal framework and abused human rights (El-Hakim & Harding, 2010).



Figure 2: Bashar Snorting Destruction (Source: Boylan, 2015)

Similar, another cartoon published in the South China Morning Post that demonstrated Bashar Snorting Destruction as shown in Figure 2. This image demonstrated the moral depravity and arrogance of Assad that he was willing to destroy Syria for the sake of his regime. Moreover, the above displayed political art also reveals the addiction of President Assad, he considers destruction of Syrian building is necessary to keep his regime strong (Boylan, 2015).

In Egypt the artists created Graffiti on street walls to demonstrate their political dissent against the brutal regime of Mubarak. Artist Ganzeer invited all the people to create graffiti in the streets to oppose the martyr Islam Rafaat (Pruitt, 2018). This campaign ignited the whole Egypt and people started to share it on social media. Ganzeer made appeals to other artists to rise against the brutality of regime, the figure 3 below demonstrate the artwork of Ganzeer in which the state of affairs in Egypt are portrayed (Gustafsson, 2012).



Figure 3: Tanker versus Biker (Source: Gustafsson, 2012)

This mural was created in an abutment of bridge in Cairo which connects the western Agouza. The protestors that gathered at Tahrir Square passed through this bridge. Thousands of protestors saw this mural which further inflamed their sentiments against the regime of Mubarak. In this way, the artists presented his political dissent to the pedestrians and onlookers.

2.2 The Production and Reclamation of Public Space in the Middle East

The locus of Arab Spring was artistic reclamation of public space. The public art became the medium of defiance in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Syria. The street artists inscribed past memories and their struggles on the walls of streets. These walls became a public space with personal meaning and people started to gather and discuss the political and social condition around the walls. One researcher termed the streets “political streets” which signifies “the collective sensibilities, shared feelings, and public judgment of ordinary people in their day-to-day utterances and practices...The Arab Street... should be seen in terms of such expression of collective sentiments in the Arab public sphere

(Bayat, 2013).” The figure 4 below demonstrate the state of affairs in Tunisia and artists showed support to the Tunisian revolution.



Figure 4: Don't Fall in Love with Power (Source: The Observers, 2011)

Besides graffiti, signage was also used as a visual representation of political dissent during the revolution. This signage included posters with subversive texts, and slogans of dissent. These different forms of artwork created solidarity among the community and made them stand against the brutal regimes. Street artists also painted murals with signs of wounded demonstrators, and revolutionary martyrs. Ganzeer, a street artist was detained by the military regime stated that “I chose graffiti over other types of artistic expression because there was a need for alternative media... street art is the only way we can tell our story.”

Regardless of the government's attempts to contain the protests, graffiti is a unique attempt to challenge the status quo that cannot be ignored in urban environments. The unauthorized messages on the walls highlight the atrocities of the tyrants while those who create these messages remain untraceable. In times of change, graffiti acts like people moving in the streets - it takes over public spaces. This kind of occupation fights against strategies of surveillance. As pointed out by criminologists Mark Halsey and Ben Perderick, graffiti on walls is an effective way of refreshing a cityscape (Gunnell, 2010).

It creates disruption and to some extent, undermines the existing order within urban areas. Graffiti is an effective way of establishing a social and interactive relationship with the city and its citizens, while also reconfiguring the visual landscape for other people. Not only does this interaction occur on a local scale within the city, it can also be influenced by global events.

During the protests at Tahrir Square, a truck was painted with 'Down with Mubarak' written in Arabic, while the words 'The End' were scrawled over it in large black letters (Figure 5). The combination of Arabic and English in this photo from Tahrir Square is significant as it has a much wider reach than just those present at the scene. The words act as an international call to action, with one example being the airline ad visible in the top right corner (Figure 5). It symbolizes a protest can transcend geographical boundaries. This fortuitous photo is a reminder that city places are not just physical, but global entities as well. Images of clashes can be broadcast across the world in an instant via social media platforms like Twitter and Al Jazeera. Likewise, even distant locations can be brought to close observation via sites like Flickr. Iman Mersel, a poet from Egypt who was living in Canada during the revolution, wanted to still be connected to it. She looked beyond the usual newspaper sources and searched for pictures of her homeland online; immersing herself in the graffiti-coated walls that told a story of revolution (Lennon, 2014). For Mersel, the walls were her connection to the revolution - from a faraway distance. They became her symbol of hope and solidarity - the reminder that she was part of something much bigger than herself, 'from the early days of revolution onwards, the walls became us'.



Figure 5: The End (Source: Wilson-Goldie, 2011)

The graffiti is a testament to the phenomenon of the global street. It serves as an illustration of how those who are powerless partake in civic initiatives, which then reach out to a larger, worldwide audience. A unique visual narrative is starting to develop around Cairo, with graffiti on trucks, art pieces beneath the 6th of October Bridge and powerful declarations scribbled on stone lions of the Qasr al-Nil Bridge (Lennon, 2014). All of these symbolically depicted the city's status during the unrest. However, when political graffiti is sprayed onto those walls, it changes them and adds a new layer of ideological identity. It alters the city in an extraordinary way. Revamping the infrastructure to give its spectators a personal connection with their environment. The walls become a representation of diverse identities and revolutionary aspirations of the local community, thus forming an interactive exchange of thoughts.

During the moments of transformation in Cairo, graffiti can be viewed from a Deleuzian perspective of an 'assemblage'. This concept refers to the way certain distinct components are connected and interact with each other, creating a unique identity or atmosphere. Taking a closer look at the individual components of an assemblage is not enough to discover it. It is only after we understand its purpose and what it can do that we can figure out what an assemblage actually is. According to Chimelewska, graffiti can be used as

way to express local identity and Cairo's walls are filled with various graffiti that each individual artist had made to express their revolutionary ideas (Lennon, 2014). While these graffiti are all separate messages, the collective eye and mind can link them together and gain an understanding of the overall message they bring. While reading graffiti, our eyes move from one piece of art to another, and this allows for a connection between them. It's in this way that the shared character or essence of protest gets built up and continually evolves. Reading graffiti is a way of claiming a place and making it one's own. It creates an ever-shifting 'territory', something that can be shaped, re-shaped, and re-claimed over time.

2.3 Summary

The Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria was a result of brutal suppression of regime and the artists have portrayed it prior to the events of 2011. Once the protest gained momentum, many visual artists took to the streets to regain the public space by creating artwork on the walls. The artists used political cartoons, and graffiti to help people understand the imaginative aspects of resistance and power. However, the literature is unclear that how art actually inspired people to stand against the long-developed norm of following the dictator. This will be assessed in the current research and a framework will be developed to demonstrate the impact of art on the governments during public protests.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter discusses different steps taken to conduct this research. It will provide the details of the survey, research design, sampling access, survey distribution and evaluation and data analysis. To understand the perspectives of the perspectives of young people from four countries that were swept by Arab Spring uprisings survey research was deemed appropriate to cover all the aspects of the research questions. In this research project, statistical generalization and analytical validity was made by using quantitative and qualitative responses. Specifically, we conducted an online survey questionnaire in an effort to measure participants' views on art, its role in protests during Arab Spring, how it influenced popular uprisings as a source of information and communication, and the experiences of participants with political art. Through careful analysis of the data collected this way, we hoped to uncover valuable insights that could inform how we understand the dynamics of social movements and collective action.

3.1 Research Design

The survey was designed to assess the impact of political art in the Arab Spring. It sought to answer three related questions: what young people experienced through political art, why political art was preferred during the uprising, and the outcome achieved through political art during the Arab spring. Additionally, the governmental censorship was also assessed to review how governments in the four countries tried to silence the dissenting voices. This survey consisted of three main sources of data: measurements of participation, attitudinal questioning, and social demographics. To promote flexibility, respondents were also given the opportunity to identify any activities that weren't included in the survey. This approach was used to demonstrate variation in respondents' engagement in the survey, based on how individuals answer a question like "What change do you notice in political art before and after the Arab Spring?" A distinction was made between those who answered 'yes' and asked questions about their participation and 'no' responses which focused on their non-participation. This allowed respondents to define participation for themselves beyond whatever activities were listed in the survey.

3.1.1 Survey

This project was conducted to determine the perspective of people from Syria, Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt regarding the political art and how youth utilized it during their political participation in the Arab spring. Surveys proved to be the ideal method for political science studies as they are able to provide comparable information and measurement across respondents (Fowler, 2009). This project specifically utilized surveys in order to better engage with the available literature on this topic, as well as develop stronger qualitative accounts based on student interviews. In recent years, surveys have advanced significantly thanks to the use of online questionnaires. According to Bethlehem (2009), they are preferred social research instruments because they can be launched quickly, and their distribution costs are lower than postal surveys. While some may express concerns about survey coverage - since internet access is not evenly available. Kaplowitz et al. (2004) found that it's not a problem for certain populations such as university students who typically have university email accounts with free on-site internet access and access to mass student mailing lists. The survey was created using Google Forms, which provided the flexibility to customize questionnaires and host them on secure and accessible web addresses. It was practical and efficient when constructing a questionnaire that reflected the research design requirements.

3.1.2 Sampling, Access, and Ethics

The design of a survey is important, but distribution can be even more important when it comes to overall effectiveness. Previously, surveys focused on student protests tended to be spread solely over one campus (Blackstone and Hadley, 1971; Clarke and Egan, 1972). Online surveys make it a lot easier for questionnaires to be sent out to multiple university students in no time via mass emailing. This method of communication allows researchers the ability to quickly reach students in bulk. The estimated sample size was around 200 participants. However, we received responses from 56 participants. To ensure data anonymity and security during collection, due care was taken not to include any information that could potentially lead to criminal activity being disclosed. Furthermore, email addresses were stored on secure servers with password encryption, while emails from unresponsive participants were deleted after delivery or prize offering (if needed).

3.1.3 Survey Distribution and Evaluation

The targeted distribution of the survey began on April 15, 2023 and ran until May 10, 2023. It was sent out to potential participants via a variety of departmental mailing lists. Additionally, this mass-mailing approach sometimes resulted in the survey being forwarded on without our prior knowledge. For this reason, the responses were regularly monitored to ensure that only relevant participants accessed the survey and responded to the questions. Our survey research design and method of distribution were extremely successful. This success was due largely to the flexible sampling design used, in addition to efficient strategies google form survey. Given the size of our dataset, we had an increased scope for what types of analyses could be done using the survey data.

3.2 Data Analysis

Survey data preparation was the initial step of this project. Excel was used to convert the raw dataset into a binary format suitable for SPSS 19, allowing for an effective analysis. Duplicate and voided questionnaires were identified, while certain clusters of variables were used to detect mono-response questionnaires.

The decision to seek a representative sample was perceived as limiting the potential for utilizing more advanced quantitative data methods. The survey only included 56 respondents who participated in protests during the Arab, which resulted in a low yield that restricted the survey's capacity to compare social demographics of different participatory types. It was possible to increase this small sample by purposive sampling through messaging activism group Facebook pages and encouraging them to participate in this research. However, this could have distorted the survey's representativeness and risked causing undue burden on interviewees and gatekeepers.

Chapter 4

Findings and Analysis

4.1 Demographics Statistics

Descriptive statistics was performed to determine the demographic characteristics of included participants. The mean age of the included participant was found to be 28.10 years with the highest recorded age to be 55 years and lowest to be 20 years. This shows that during the Arab spring most of the participants who actually participated in the protests were youth of 20 to 30 years of age. Furthermore, among the participants 13 belonged to Egypt, 11 belonged to Libya, 8 from Syria and 7 from Tunisia. However, 17 participants did not disclose their nationality and age. The figure below shows the percentage of participants belonging to the four main countries where the Arab Spring protests started.

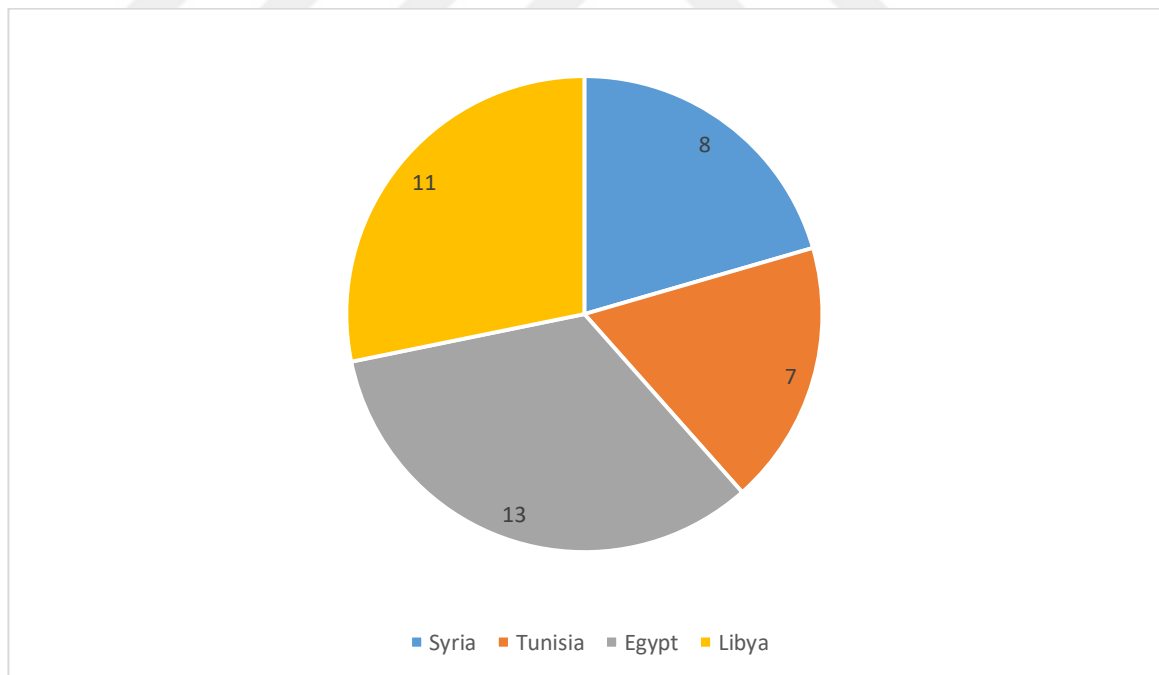


Figure 6: Pie Chart of Nationalities of Participants

Furthermore, the descriptive statistics of different variables assessed in the survey is presented in the **Table 1** below. Among the 56 responses 75% reported to know about political art and 85.7% believed that art is a significant tool in popular uprisings. 60.7%

participants reported that they have used social media to share political art. 66.1% participants stated that they have engaged in sculptures, graffiti, and paintings to create visual art. 87.5% believed that art was used as an effective form of protest during the Arab spring. 55.4% stated that political art is effective in raising awareness among public, informing the world about problems and gaining support of public. Furthermore, 87.5% agreed that social media and new technologies can promote popular uprisings. 67.95 stated that young adults were at the forefront of protests during the Arab spring. When asked about the rationale of artistic activism, 51.8% said that it helped in achieving strategic purposes and to invoke deeper emotions. Regarding graffiti, 50% participants stated that it delivered the message of standing against the political tyranny. 89.3% agreed that social media and new technologies are helpful in promoting culture and art. Lastly, 57.1% reported that different forms of censorship and surveillance were enacted by the governments including ban on artists, gatherings, social media and detention of artists.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Participant Responses

Variables	Frequency (n=56)	Percentage
Do you know anything about political art?		
<i>Yes</i>	42	75
<i>No</i>	14	25
Do you think that art is a significant tool in popular uprisings?		
<i>Yes</i>	48	85.7
<i>No</i>	2	3.6
<i>I am not sure</i>	6	10.7

How did you engage with different forms of political art during Arab spring?		
<i>Using street as a stage for graffiti</i>	8	14.3
<i>Printed graphics on buses, billboards, t-shirts</i>	5	8/9
<i>Using social media to shape political art</i>	34	60.7
<i>Created new posters against the tyranny of rulers</i>	7	12.5
What form of visual art was used during the Arab spring?		
<i>Sculptures</i>	1	1.8
<i>Graffiti</i>	11	19.6
<i>Paintings</i>	6	10.7
<i>All of above</i>	37	66.1
Art was used as a form of protest during the Arab spring?		
<i>Yes</i>	49	87.5
<i>No</i>	7	12.5
Political art shaped public relations during the Arab spring?		
<i>Raised awareness about political victimization</i>	11	19.6
<i>Informed the world about prevailing problems</i>	5	8.9
<i>Gained support of public</i>	9	16.1

<i>All of above</i>	31	55.4
Do you agree that social media and new technologies promote popular uprisings?		
<i>Yes</i>	49	87.5
<i>No</i>	0	10.7
<i>I am not sure</i>	6	0
Mostly young adults were engaged in the Arab spring protests?		
<i>Yes</i>	38	67.9
<i>No</i>	5	8.9
<i>I am not sure</i>	12	21.4
Why did the artists opted for artistic activism to spark popular protests?		
<i>For strategic purposes</i>	3	5.4
<i>To invoked deeper emotions among public</i>	11	19.6
<i>Both of above</i>	29	51.8
<i>Don't know</i>	12	21.4
How does different forms of art function as an activist tool?		
<i>Questioning the status quo</i>	22	39.3
<i>Speaking out about beliefs</i>	20	35.7
<i>Inspiring others to take action</i>	7	12.5
<i>Communicating new perspectives</i>	6	10.7

What was the message of the graffiti during the Arab spring and who is it pointed to?		
<i>Stand against the political tyranny</i>	28	50
<i>Over through the corrupt regime</i>	16	28.6
<i>I don't know</i>	10	17.9
Do you agree that social media and new technologies supported the promotion of culture and art during the Arab spring?		
<i>Agree</i>	50	89.3
<i>Disagree</i>	1	1.8
<i>Neutral</i>	4	7.1
What sort of censorship and surveillance was done against the political art during the Arab spring?		
<i>Ban on artists</i>	1	1.8
<i>Ban on gatherings</i>	7	14.3
<i>Ban on social media</i>	11	19.6
<i>Detention of activists</i>	4	7.1
<i>All of above</i>	32	57.1

Correlation analysis was conducted to determine association among two dependent variables and ten independent variables. The findings revealed that there is a significant association between political art shaped public relations during the Arab spring and the belief that art is a significant tool in popular uprisings at significant level $p=0.003$

(<0.001). Similarly, social media as an effective tool to promote popular uprisings was also reported to be statistically significant at $p=0.002$ (<0.001). The other factors that were found to be statistically significant included participation of young adults in protests at $p=0.020$ (<0.001) with the belief that art was used as a major tool during protests in the Arab spring. Similarly, the factor artistic activism sparking popular protests was also reported to be statistically significant $p=0.003$ (<0.001). These findings are demonstrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Art is a significant tool in popular uprisings	Art was used during protests of the Arab Spring
Engaging with different forms of political art	0.780	0.430
Visual art during the Arab spring	0.125	0.501
Political art shaped public relations during the Arab spring	0.003**	0.064
Social media and new technologies promote popular uprisings	0.002**	0.064
Young adults were engaged in protests	0.330	0.020**
Artistic activism sparked popular protests	0.291	0.003**
Different form of art function as activist tool	0.245	0.577
Message of graffiti during the Arab spring	0.879	0.095

Social media and new technologies supported promotion of culture and art	0.796	0.641
Censorship and surveillance during the Arab spring	0.159	0.936

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Furthermore, the participants were also asked about the changes they have noticed in the political art before and after the Arab spring. This was a qualitative response as the participants provided their thoughts. The striking observations were made by 40 participants while the remaining skipped this question. For instance, one participant reported that *“In my opinion it has change a lot even how the people think they make sure that they supposed to have their voice to say what they think.”* One another participant stated that, *“Not sure but I guess people especially the youths become more outspoken and open to the truth.”* Similarly, another participant stated that, *“Young generation learned expressing their feelings through music and pictures.”* Furthermore, one participant provided an elaborated response, *“people had a freedom of thoughts and finally were able to speak out loud about the ongoing dictatorship in my country. Till that day many walls are still covered with cartoon forms graffiti of Gadhafi, people do not erase them in my city Tripoli.”* One thing is clear from these responses and that is the people have become more vocal about their rights and express them openly without any fear of repercussions. This theme remained consistent in all the responses of the participants.

4.2 Analysis

In the years leading up to 2011, visual art was a means of expressing dissent in the Middle East. This was often done indirectly through allegory; however, with the uprisings of that year, dissident graffiti became more explicit in spelling out messages of rebellion across the walls of Middle Eastern cities. Street art gained strength and demonstrated the resistance and confidence of citizens who fought the authoritarian regimes. As a result,

visual symbols and depictions were not just signs of political competition in the Middle East; they also had a hand in determining the course of political destiny of the Arab nations (Tripp, 2012). Moreover, they helped establish a fresh type of political community, one that was diverse and contentious, and which opposed traditional, homogenous methods of regulation. Similar observations are reported the present study in which majority of participants believed that political art is an effective tool in popular uprisings. It was further reported that the visual arts played an important role in mobilizing citizens and succinctly summarizing the struggles in different places. They helped to focus attention on those in power and remained significant in the politics of contention that has followed the overthrow of the dictators (Tripp, 2012).

In the present study, when participants were asked how they participated in political art during the Arab spring, majority reported to use social media. However, in a previous study it was reported that, a street artist named Amor Eletrebi utilized abandoned military or police vehicles to create meaningful artwork in Tahrir square (LeVine, 2015). The artist involved young children to paint the vehicle with vibrant colors and image. This kind of street art was unusual in its scope and duration, with the vehicles Eletrebi painted remaining in place for many months before eventually being removed. Moreover, Egyptian and Tunisian artists developed larger installations that gave rise to a new kind of art called "concept pop (LeVine, 2015). This art form moved beyond the meaningless appropriation of everyday objects that had characterized pre-revolutionary contemporary art in the Arab world, and instead pointed viewers to the revolutionary implications of the events they represented.

Additionally, the participants of the present study reported to use multiple type of visual art such as sculptures, graffiti, and paintings. Similarly previous reports also suggested that young people engaged in graffiti, wall chalking, paintings and murals during the Arab spring (Hansen, 2022). One study reported that, graffiti has been discovered to be a way of presenting an alternate perspective of the political environment and expressing opinions that often contradict those of the government (Rizk, 2015). This alternative narrative is communicated to the public through urban walls, projecting socially and politically significant messages that resonate with viewers. Graffiti has thus become closely

associated with the revolutions in both nations, and its social significance has impacted the way artists and art enthusiasts perceive it (Rizk, 2015). According to graffiti artists in Egypt and Tunisia, their main motivation is political expression. They view themselves as revolutionary artists who can effectively communicate their message to the government, citizens, and raise awareness about the current state of affairs in their countries through their creative work. According to a Tunisian graffiti artist, the aim of their work is to communicate messages through images, preferably in a public space to attract the attention of passersby and convey their ideas and ideology (Rizk, 2015).

In the present study, the participants reported that political art help raising awareness among public about political victimization, informing the world about prevailing problems and gaining public support for popular struggle. Similarly, research revealed that Egyptian graffiti artists recognized the significance of their art in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, meaning that art can contribute to and challenge existing notions, ideas, and images in society. Incorporating Egyptian cultural icons, such as famous actors, singers, proverbs, and quotes, is a common practice among graffiti artists. Tunisian graffiti artists, such as Aboul Kasem al-Chabbi have used poems in their artwork to invoke deeper emotions of the audience. This aligns with Lethem's (2007) idea of the "next generation of creators" who satirize, sample, and reframe culture and art, as seen in the case of graffiti. These artists are able to add layers of meaning to their work through cultural references and artistic techniques. The Tahrir Revolution and Gezi Protests have changed people's perspectives on graffiti, making it a more acceptable and esthetically pleasing way to express anti-conformist views (Tas, 2017). In another research it was reported that, political cartoons were actively used to reflect the socioeconomic and geopolitical conditions in Tunisia after the 2011 revolution. Tunisian cartoonists portrayed the status quo through a combination of verbal and non-verbal elements that were used to create meanings and convey messages. The primary objective of these artists was to shock the audience and provoke them to stand against the tyranny of autocratic leaders. Furthermore, some of the major themes in the artwork of Tunisian cartoonists were ousting of the president, freedom and liberty, elections, threats to the revolution, the threat of terrorism and extremism, financial corruption, and political uncertainty (Mhamdi, 2017).

The participants of present study revealed that social media is effective in promoting popular uprisings. These observations are in consonance with previous research that reported new media outlets, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Tumblr, have allowed ordinary citizens, activists, and artists alike to contribute to the revolution through cultural means, rather than solely by rallying support for the resistance (Sacranie, 2013). Moreover, another research reported that Facebook is spreading new cultural values that prioritize human rights and political freedom, especially the opportunity to participate in free elections. This underscores Libya's shift from an authoritarian government to a democratic one. The request for free elections, with the support of Western nations, is driving Libyan society to adjust its cultural values to align with the new democratic framework (Papaioannou & Olivos, 2013).

Moreover, the participants of the present research reported that graffiti spread the message of standing against political tyranny. This is similar to previous reports graffiti is seen as a way to reclaim urban space from the state, which has traditionally held a monopoly over it (Elansary, 2014). By marking their nicknames on walls, graffiti artists assert their control over the streets. Graffiti is an important way of challenging the state's authority and re-claiming the city. It is a way of marking safe zones for dissenters and is an achievement of resistance. The Tahrir Revolution and Gezi Protests have changed people's perspectives on graffiti, making it a more acceptable and esthetically pleasing way to express anti-conformist views. As per Khatib, Graffiti and street art can serve as a means of exhibiting collective strength and reclaiming the concept of community-based nationalism (Elansary, 2014). Street art is based on shared cultural experiences, allowing individuals to express their perspectives and document their journey as a group. Murals in Egypt portray images of martyrs and battle scenes, stirring the memories of citizens and increasing their awareness. This fosters a sense of community and solidarity among them, promoting mutual support. Moreover, it reinforces their sense of territorial identity by reminding them of their cultural heritage (Elansary, 2014).

Additionally, the participants of current study also revealed that the government of four countries used various tactics to counter the political art protests during the Arab spring. Censorship is not a new phenomenon, and it has been seen in the Western countries as

well. For instance, in France censorship of visual culture was prevalent and remained consistent despite changes in regimes or forms of government (Goldstein, 2012). However, the level of censorship varied greatly depending on the type of visual culture, which provided insight into the government's priorities and objectives. In addition to famous cases involving prints, paintings, and sculptures, many other objects and images were suppressed. These included items such as flags, cockades, hats, clocks, suspenders, and tobacco boxes adorned with political images. Jewelry, busts, kerchiefs, and pipes were also among the objects subjected to censorship during this time. Several entities such as political groups, government and religious groups oppose the creative content and resort to censorship of art and artists. The act of silencing artists and advocates of artistic freedom is often a result of questioning social and religious norms or expressing political views that contradict prevailing narratives (Freedberg, 2016). Despite the justifications provided by censors for removing or oppressing art, such actions may ultimately serve to heighten its significance. Political narratives that dominate the world stage are causing polarization and leaving no room for critical thinking in the arts. The authoritarian governments attack the musicians, artists, novelists, and other performers who are critical of government policies and ideologies. Nationalism, particularly religious nationalism, has been used to suppress artists in Poland, Hungary, and India, where governments have given religious bodies increasing power to determine what is suitable for the public space (Freedberg, 2016). This trend is contributing to the global underfunding of culture, making it more vulnerable to attack. As a result, the appointment of unprepared and unprofessional individuals to key cultural positions has become a systemic issue.

The majority of participants reported that political art has given voice to the youth to express their opinions. These observations are similar to previous research art is a medium that can be used to convey political messages when artists create works with such intentions and audiences interpret them as such. In her analysis of Ellen Gallagher's exhibition "Watery Ecstatic Series," Chan (2017) explored how art can serve as a metaphor to communicate messages relevant to the current politics of Black Americans by retelling old African myths. Contemporary art is characterized, at least in part, by its narrative qualities and the use of metaphors to convey meaning (Chan, 2017). Art is more than just a finished product; it is the result of the artist's intentions and ideas during the

creation process, as well as the meaning they impart (Chan, 2017). Art can serve as a medium for artists to express their thoughts and convey certain truths to the public. However, the interpretation of art heavily relies on its definition and whether or not viewers perceive it as political (Chan, 2017). Art is an effective tool for viewers to comprehend the intricacies of social change, using conceptual and metaphorical messages that reflect the current social climate and the viewer's personal biases (Braida, 2017). Political art does not follow a specific stylistic approach but rather conveys a thematic message, engaging with the audience in a political manner (Sunne, 2019).



Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Main Findings

To summarize, this dissertation presents a unique addition to the field of political art and popular uprisings. It accomplishes this by examining the actions of artist-activist groups who utilize street art in various governmental settings and levels of representation. This research addresses the previous lack of consideration given to activist practices under authoritarianism, as well as the insufficient examination of aesthetic involvement in contentious politics. Street art is not solely an aesthetic occurrence. It has the capability to influence individuals in political manners, motivating them to protest, rebel, reclaim, and assert their rights. Street art is often associated with four key claims – shaping the public relations, promoting popular uprising through social media, engaging young adults in popular protests and sparking popular protests. These claims make the art a catalyst for revolution and a modern form of political protest. People from various nations use this art form to express their socio-political situations, making it a powerful tool for standing up against the status quo. As long as people continue to turn to art as a means of expressing their discontent, street art and graffiti will remain an essential aspect of contemporary political expression.

The Arab world has been going through a radical transformation since 2011, which has drastically changed the state of politics and culture. Despite the emergence of Islamist governments with repressive social policies in Tunisia and their downfall in Egypt, the struggle is far from over. In the modern-day, secular elements of society are being pitted against Islamists in a battle for superiority. The lower class have had enough of the rich autocrats that try to keep their power by any means necessary. Beyond the political and military realms, this conflict is being fought in a multitude of ways by the men and women of the Arab world. In some cases, it is conducted in plain sight, in others, behind closed doors. Either way, it is an integral part of everyday life for many individuals. Through the Arab Spring, we saw a clear connection between protests and art. In Tahrir Square (Martyr Square) of Egypt's revolution, each restriction the government put created even more

artworks. Some forms of artwork were perfect for this kind of uprising atmosphere than others. Popular culture, not 'high art' was the driving force of the uprisings.

The iconic institutions of arts were too exclusive and inflexible to be a part of this revolutionary movement. Everyday citizens with their unconventional works symbolized the true spirit of these protests. Music has been a cornerstone of youth culture for decades, and the introduction of technology gave people the power to create and distribute their own content independently. Graffiti is a powerful expression of nonconformity as often times it's graffiti that goes against certain laws. Therefore, it's fair to say that graffiti carries strong political connotations. Graffiti is a great medium of expression for politically oppressed societies. It is an anonymous yet loud voice that allows revolutionaries to make their point heard, where other forms of political opposition are not given a space. The struggle against injustice takes multiple paths - from joining street protests to filing court cases, and even influencing culture. Activists are using all these methods to bring about change. Young Arabs who have been dissatisfied with the status quo now have the chance to voice out their concerns through the revolutions. This has also provided them an avenue where they can communicate in a language of their choice. One scholar emphasizes that the Tunisian revolution has allowed the people to regain their right to voice their opinions both publicly and privately. One thing is clear that after the Arab spring revolution, people were uncertain what they could say in public or even inside their own home. Everyone was watched and monitored as if the walls had ears - but at least this revolution brought one thing: freedom of speech.

5.2 Limitations of Research

The use of the survey questionnaire for data collection in this study had limitations, specifically the inability to generalize the results to a larger population due to a small sample size. For the purpose of generalizing to a greater population, quantitative survey data would have been more useful. However, when seeking intimate details regarding the personal processes of political actors, survey data is insufficient. Collecting longitudinal data and conducting an ethnographic study were not feasible due to time constraints. Since I gathered data from a small sample, it would have been better to conduct one-on-one interviews for in-depth understanding of political artwork in the Arab spring.

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