



BRILL

MIDDLE EAST LAW AND GOVERNANCE XX (2021) 1-22

MIDDLE EAST
AN
LAW AND
INTERDISCIPLINARY
GOVERNANCE
JOURNAL
brill.com/melg

“Instrumentalize” the Assistance. The Changing Legitimacy of INGOs in Democratizing Tunisia

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Abstract

This study provides two theoretical insights that contribute to the debate on the legitimacy of INGOs that promote democracy to intervene in the third countries' political affairs. First, it argues that the level of legitimacy that political parties endow to INGOs depends on the “instrumental role” that INGOs play in bolstering the achievements of national partners' goals and is not based on the values and norms that the INGOs promote. Second, it suggests that the degree of legitimacy that political parties grant to INGOs has to be understood as temporarily limited and context dependent. Using the case of INGOs involved in democracy promotion during the Tunisian democratization, this article argues that Tunisian political elites welcomed INGOs assistance during the initial phase of the democracy transition (2011–2014) because their assistance was helpful to enhance the establishment of democracy system and its procedures. The article suggests that since 2015, political parties are showing less enthusiasm about INGOs' pressure and interference in national affairs because the action of INGOs is no longer useful to their political agenda.

Keywords

foreign assistance – INGOs legitimacy – democratization – political parties – Tunisia

1 Introduction¹

Between 2012 and 2017 Tunisia has been one of the world's largest recipients of foreign aid and assistance.² Following the demise of the Ben Ali regime, a considerable number of non-state actors, including International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), foreign political foundations, and transnational advocacy network groups entered the country, wielding their influence in national social and political affairs.

The involvement of international democracy promoters in Tunisia's transition has spurred a debate over the ability of these actors to enhance the democratization process. While extensive attention was given to EU democracy promotion,³ other scholars focused on INGOs that promote democracy. Some scholars have underlined the favourable conditions that allowed INGOs to cooperate with Tunisia's transitional elites,⁴ others studied INGOs contribution to the constitution-making process,⁵ and others have compared the methods of intervention among different INGOs.⁶ Yet, no one has focused on the evolution of INGOs assistance during the Tunisian transitional period, with its associated challenges.

Examining the evolution of INGOs assistance in a democratic transition is particularly interesting because of the INGOs agency. There are no clear international laws or conventions governing their action,⁷ and INGOs can enter and

1 The authors wish to thank the participants of to the Workshop "Political and Social Mobilization in The Middle East and North Africa after the Arab Awakening" (March 2020 at Laval University), Elizabeth K Parker-Magyar and the anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier version of this article.

2 Robert Kubinec, "How foreign assistance can hurt not help tunisias democratic transition," *Washington Post*. December 19, 2016. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/19/how-foreign-assistance-can-hurt-not-help-tunisias-democratic-transition/>.

3 Leila Mouhib, "EU Democracy Promotion in Tunisia and Morocco: between contextual changes and structural continuity," *Mediterranean politics* 19, no.3 (2014): 351–372; Assem Dandashly, "EU democracy promotion and the dominance of the security–stability nexus," *Mediterranean Politics* 23, no.1 (2018): 62–82; Vera Van Hüllen, "Negotiating democracy with authoritarian regimes. EU democracy promotion in North Africa," *Democratization* 26, no.5 (2019): 869–888.

4 Pietro Marzo, "International democracy promoters and transitional elites: favourable conditions for successful partnership. Evidence from Tunisia's democratization," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 33, No.3 (2020): 307–329.

5 Karry-Ann Cornwall, *Transitional Constitutionalism: The Role of INGOs in Tunisia's Constitution-Making Process*, Master's Dissertation, (2017). University of Guelph. Unpublished.

6 Leonie Holthaus, "Is there difference in democracy promotion? A comparison of German and US democracy assistance in transitional Tunisia," *Democratization* 26, no.7 (2019): 1216–1234.

7 Erla Thrandardottir and Vincent Charles Keating, "Bridging the legitimacy gap: A proposal for the international legal recognition of INGOs," *International Politics* 55, No.2 (2018): 207–220.

exit most countries with more flexibility compared to state actors or international organizations (IOs).

International Relations scholars conceptualize INGOs legitimacy to operate into a foreign country as fragile and perpetually negotiated with local actors.⁸ Yet, the debate has devoted little attention to whether INGOs' beneficiaries “instrumentally” accord legitimacy to INGOs for achieving specific political goals, or if negotiation with INGOs revolves around the qualitative components of the assistance, that is the democratic norms and values that INGOs promote. In other words, it is worth exploring if the legitimacy that national partners grant to specific INGOs is value-driven or mostly follow the logic of usefulness. Understanding this difference, it is theoretically relevant because it sheds new light on legitimacy fluctuations that political parties endow to INGOs over time. It helps to understand if political parties' openness to INGOs depends on a genuine willingness to embrace INGOs democratizing agency, or is it hinged on the mere opportunity to use democratizing capacity for enhancing political objectives in a specific temporal context.

The Tunisian case offers interesting insights in this respect, since INGOs have been present throughout the ten-year democratic journey of the country's transition. During that time, their priorities, their capacity to deliver programmes, and their dynamics of interaction with national partners have evolved alongside – and have been influenced by – the changing social and domestic political environment. From 2011 to 2014, INGOs filled their agenda with a number of projects that helped Tunisian partners to face the challenges of the transitional period. The main goal driving INGOs' action in Tunisia was to help their Tunisian partners draft a constitution and to hold free and fair competitive elections. In particular, the constitution-making process attracted considerable attention from INGOs and saw a plethora of actors develop osmotic and structured partnerships with national stakeholders, namely political parties, local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the *Assemblée Nationale Constituent* (ANC).⁹ On the one hand, national groups agreed on the

8 Ringo Ossewaarde, André Nijhof, and Liesbet Heyse, “Dynamics of NGO legitimacy: how organising betrays core missions of INGOs,” *Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice* 28. No.1 (2008): 42–53; Oliver Edward Walton, et al, “Understanding contemporary challenges to INGO legitimacy: Integrating top-down and bottom-up perspectives,” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 27. no.6 (2016): 2764–2786.

9 The National Constituent Assembly (NCA) was the organism tasked with the making of a new Constitution after the fall Ben Ali and his regime(?). NCA began work after the election on 23 October 2011 and included a convention of 217 lawmakers representing Tunisians living both in the country and abroad. It also consisted of representatives from the majority of political forces with the exception of those associated with the Ben Ali regime.

need to move away from the Ben Ali authoritarian past by enshrining a new, nationally shared, democratic Constitution. On the other hand, divisions and skirmishes occurred among political parties – especially leftists and conservatives – on basic principles and articles of the Constitution. In addition, ANC members lacked the experience to manage the technicalities of such an important process. Therefore, Tunisian actors involved in the drafting of the Constitution eagerly sought international expertise and granted INGOs a high degree of legitimacy to navigate such technical difficulties and to mediate political parties' negotiations. In short, Tunisian transitional political elites welcomed INGOs' assistance to help establishing the mechanisms of a procedural democracy.

Starting from late 2014, after the ratification of the Constitution and the “success” of the second round of post-revolutionary legislative elections, Tunisian democratic procedures began functioning. Most of the INGOs working in Tunisia increased their budget and the number of employees on the ground. INGOs launched new programs and structured advocacy campaigns to boost the quality of Tunisian democracy. INGOs pursued goals such as expanding civil and social rights, empowering rural areas and marginalized localities, boosting the Tunisian depressed economy, and pushing for more liberal and social reforms and law implementation. Yet, the welcoming attitude that political parties, members of Parliament (MPs), and politically oriented civil groups showed between 2011 and 2014 toward INGOs has been decreasing. Narratives questioning the legitimacy of INGOs' *actorhood* have surged, and INGOs are publicly challenged in a sort of “backlash against international civil society”¹⁰ with questions emerging such as “How democratic are you? To whom are you accountable? And who do you speak for?”¹¹

Why did the legitimacy granted to INGOs during the constitution-making process not automatically extend to ordinary policymaking after 2014?

This study provides two theoretical insights that contribute to the debate on the INGOs legitimacy to intervene into social and political affairs of a third country. First, it argues that the level of legitimacy that national political groups endow to INGOs fluctuates according to the useful role that INGOs

10 Norman Clark, et al, “Research as capacity building: The case of an NGO facilitated post-harvest innovation system for the Himalayan hills,” *World development* 31, no.11 (2003): 1845–1863.

11 Marianne Beisheim, and Klaus Dingwerth, “The Link between Standard-Setting NGO's Legitimacy and Effectiveness: An Exploration of Social Mechanisms,” In Jens Steffekand Kristina Hahn (Eds). *Evaluating transnational NGOs: Legitimacy, accountability, representation*. (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2010), 74–99, 74.

play in bolstering the achievements of their national partners political goals. Second, it suggests that the degree of legitimacy that political groups give to INGOs is not associated with values-driven acceptance of the INGOs' agency, but it has to be understood as temporarily limited and context dependent.

Exploring the Tunisian case, this article shows that Tunisian democratically elected representatives and political parties accept with less enthusiasm INGOs expertise, pressure, and interference in the legislative reform process after 2014 because, contrary to constitution-making, their involvement is not useful to their political agenda. INGOs' campaigns and actions for democratic reforms and political accountability, and their greater interference in national legislative issues, is detrimental to political parties because they affect the fundamental balance of the relations between political parties and their electoral base. In short, they pose a threat to the political parties' agenda.

This article is organized as follows. First it conceptualizes the changing legitimacy that INGOs experience within a democratic transition, from a consensual phase into a competitive one. Second, the article provides empirical evidence from the Tunisian case to confirm the theoretical reasoning.

2 Methodology

This study relies on semi-structured interviews with officials working for INGOs involved in democracy promotion in Tunisia, Tunisian political parties' members, local NGOs' members and ANC members.

Interviews were carried out between June 2017 and March 2020. A first round of 12 interviews was conducted in 2017 and 2018 and explored the interplay between INGOs and Tunisian national partners in the early stages of the Tunisia democratic transition. Particularly, we measured the INGOs contribution to Constitution making process and to the preparation to 2014 legislative elections. While data indicated positive interaction between INGOs and Tunisian partners, evidence of retrenchment on political parties' acceptance of INGOs external assistance and interference in national affairs emerged. We then formulated the hypothesis that Tunisian elected representatives and ruling political parties are accepting INGOs pressure and assistance after 2015 with less enthusiasm because, contrary to the early phase of democratic transition, INGOs' agency is no longer useful to their objectives. In order to validate this hypothesis, we conducted a second round of semi-structured interviews in 2020 with four INGOs, three of which were previously interviewed in 2016, and three political parties' members.

3 Conceptualizing the Fluctuation of INGOs Legitimacy in a Democratic Transition

As INGOs play an increasingly greater role in international governance, issues concerning their legitimacy and accountability have raised interest among researchers.¹² There is a multidisciplinary effort to better understand dynamics of INGOs legitimacy, including scholars of international relations,¹³ public policy and advocacy,¹⁴ anthropology,¹⁵ international law¹⁶ and political geography.¹⁷

Constructivist scholars suggest that INGOs are altruistic and focus on helping others throughout the world.¹⁸ These scholars recognize INGOs as norm entrepreneurs, inherently legitimized by their mission and their achievements. As an example, Berghmans et al. argue that “INGO accountability is likely to do more justice to the INGO as a value driven, public benefit organization which pays attention to listening to the voices of beneficiaries.”¹⁹ Therefore, constructivist research mainly focuses on mechanisms and processes through which INGOs can successfully further international norms into third countries.

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- 12 Sebastian Mallaby, “NGOs: Fighting Poverty, Hurting the Poor,” *Foreign Policy*, no.144 (September/October 2004): 50–58; Steve Charnovitz, “The illegitimacy of preventing NGO participation,” *Brooklyn Journal of International Law*, 36, no.3 (2011): 891–910; 891; Jens Steffek, and Kristina Hahn, *Evaluating transnational NGOs*; Mieke Berghmans, Maarten Simons, and Joke Vandenabeele, “What is negotiated in negotiated accountability? The case of INGOs,” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 28, no.4 (2017): 1529–1561.
- 13 Vivien Collingwood and Louis Logister, “State of the art: Addressing the INGO ‘legitimacy deficit,’” *Political Studies Review* 3, No.2 (2005): 175–192; Ian Clark, “Legitimacy in a global order,” *Review of International Studies* 29, No.1 (2003): 75–95; Erla Thrandardottir, “NGO legitimacy: four models,” *Representation* 51, no.1 (2015): 107–123.
- 14 David L Brown, Alnoor Ebrahim, and Srilatha Batliwala, “Governing international advocacy NGOs,” *World Development* 40, no.6 (2012): 1098–1108.
- 15 Sarah Lister, “NGO legitimacy: technical issue or social construct?” *Critique of anthropology* 23, no.2 (2003): 175–192.
- 16 Steve Charnovitz, “Nongovernmental organizations and international law,” *American Journal of International Law* 100, no2 (2006): 348–372.
- 17 Raymond L. Bryant, *Nongovernmental organizations in environmental struggles*, (New Haven: Yale University Press 2008).
- 18 David Humphreys, “Redefining the issues: NGO influence on international forest negotiations,” *Global Environmental Politics* 4, no.2 (2004): 51–74; Lars Gulbrandsen and Steinar Andresen, “NGO influence in the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol: Compliance, flexibility mechanisms, and sinks,” *Global environmental politics* 4, no.4 (2004): 54–75.
- 19 Mieke Berghmans, Maarten Simons, and Joke Vandenabeele, “What is negotiated in negotiated accountability? The case of INGOs,” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 28, no.4 (2017): 1531.

Other scholars have questioned INGOs “representativeness” and accountability, claiming that INGOs “Act like firms and follow their own interest.”²⁰ Bob suggests that INGOs “choose the ‘clients’ for their advocacy with a view to the marketability of their cause.”²¹ Collingwood and Logister argue that one “Source of criticism levelled at INGOs in this context is that there are conflicts between the constituency that supports them (usually in the North) and the constituency they seek to help (usually in the South).”²²

Walton et al. bridges the work of these two strands of scholars and identifies two main dimensions to measure INGOs legitimacy: *a top-down dimension* that refers to the process by which global norms, regulations, and institutions give legitimacy to INGOs activities; and *a bottom-up dimension*, which refers to the process of gaining legitimacy through localized relations with states and populations.²³ These two dimensions are equally important to understand the legitimacy of INGOs. Indeed, although an INGO can obtain top-down legitimacy by abiding to international liberal norms, its legitimacy to operate within a country can be questioned by local actors (political parties, national NGOs, citizens) if the INGO promotes activities that interfere with national affairs or lead advocacy campaigns that jeopardize the domestic political equilibrium. In this regard, INGOs have been accused of serving as a tool for a foreign state to influence domestic politics in another’s or to introduce norms alien to the host country’s culture and legal framework.²⁴

The intention to further foreign state interests – especially Western – in third states’ politics generated a backlash against INGOs, especially in developing countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.²⁵ In particular, hostilities vis-à-vis an INGO may increase if its funding derives from

20 Andrew Heiss and Tana Johnson, “Internal, interactive, and institutional factors: A unified framework for understanding international nongovernmental organizations,” *International Studies Review* 18, no.3 (2016): 530.

21 Clifford Bob, *The marketing of rebellion: Insurgents, media, and international activism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

22 Vivien Collingwood and Louis Logister, “State of the art: Addressing the INGO ‘legitimacy deficit,’” *Political Studies Review* 3, no.2 (2005): 179.

23 Oliver Walton, et al. “Understanding contemporary challenges to INGO legitimacy: Integrating top-down and bottom-up perspectives,” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 27, no.6 (2016): 2764–2786.

24 Darin Christensen and Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Defunding dissent: Restrictions on aid to NGOs,” *Journal of Democracy* 24, no.2 (2013): 77–91.

25 Rajesh Tandon and David Brown, “Civil societies at crossroads: lessons and implications,” *Development in Practice* 23, no.5–6 (2013): 784–796; Kendra Dupuy, James Ron, and Aseem Prakash, “Who survived? Ethiopia’s regulatory crackdown on foreign-funded NGOs,” *Review of International Political Economy* 22, no.2 (2015): 419–456.

a specific foreign state or a religious institution, because the INGO agenda is then associated with the donors' agenda.²⁶ This has led to tightening regulation for INGOs engaged in advocacy activities, especially those engaged in more politicized work.²⁷

Concerns about INGOs' legitimacy to meddle in national affairs becomes all the more poignant as one considers how deeply they might become involved in processes of regime change and political transitions toward democracy. The political vacuum that the authoritarian breakdown provokes is an ideal context to wield their influence, because some political elites may seek INGOs' aid beyond borders to boost their efforts in moving away from the authoritarian past. Transitional political groups may suddenly show eagerness to collaborate with Western INGOs to establish the milestones of the democratic transition, such as drafting a new constitution or holding free and fair competitive elections. This implies that political parties grant legitimacy to – and welcome assistance from – INGOs, regardless whether they fully align with the INGOs normative framework, their mission and their values.

The legitimacy that local actors accord to INGOs to intervene during political transition is theoretically relevant when it comes to INGOs' assistance in the constitution-making process. Indeed, constitutional scholars resist external influences and, instead, continue to rely upon the notion that only citizens have the authority to write a national constitution.²⁸ The constitution-making process is seen as a nation-building process, which requires only the input of those who will be subject to the constitution. Any foreign attempts to influence the Constitution making process – and exercise *pouvoir constituant* – must be considered an illegitimate interference.²⁹

This traditional conceptualization, however, does not meet the realities of constitution-making during democratic transitions, particularly in non-Western states. Despite the caution against foreign involvement, external interference has often happened in democratizing countries in Eastern Europe,³⁰ in

26 Susantha Goonatilake, *Recolonisation: Foreign Funded NGOs in Sri Lanka*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006).

27 Françoise Daucé, "The government and human rights groups in Russia: Civilized oppression?" *Journal of Civil Society* 10, no.3 (2014): 239–254.

28 Zaid Al-Ali and Philipp Dann, "The Internationalized Pouvoir Constituant – Constitution-Making Under External Influence in Iraq, Sudan and East Timor," *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law Online* 10, n.01 (2006): 423–463; David Dyzenhaus, "Constitutionalism in an old key: Legality and constituent power," *Global Constitutionalism* 1, no2 (2012): 229–260.

29 Sarah Mead, "Protecting popular constituent power: Examining New Zealand's role in the constitution-making episodes of the Cook Islands and Niue," *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review*, 45, no.4 (2014): 577–612.

30 Marlene Spoorri, *Engineering Revolution*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

Asian countries such as Nepal or Indonesia,³¹ and across the MENA region in the case of Egypt and Tunisia.³²

It can be said that the literature on transitional constitutionalism clashes with the classical conception of constitutionalism. In former authoritarian settings, where existing constitutions did not have binding effects on ruling elites' behaviours, transitional political actors may struggle to create a solid, democratic constitution. Scholars suggest that INGOS that promote democracy (and IOs) are often important actors of the constitution-making process, because they diffuse international norms, democratic values, practices and experiences.³³ Transitional political parties may also necessitate external assistance to organize competitive free and fair elections and INGOS have the ability to provide them with logistic and technical support.

In addition, some influential INGOS may become an arbiter that help the resolution of political issues and deadlocks that divide national political groups during the constitution making process. The shortage of legal and technical expertise increases national demands for INGOS and IOs assistance during the initial phase of transition to democracy.³⁴ Political parties, then, grant INGOS that promote democracy with a considerable degree legitimacy and accept their participation in the transitional process, including interfering the constitution making process. It can be argued that national actors often seek INGOS' technical assistance to establish the mechanism of procedural democracy and move away from the authoritarian past.

However, although INGOS may obtain *bottom-up legitimacy* and their assistance is accepted for attaining specific objectives (constitution-making process or the organization of competitive and free elections), it does not mean that legitimacy to intervene is permanent and encompasses ordinary policymaking. Indeed, legitimacy accorded to INGOS may fluctuate and may be withdrawn. In this regard, while scholars argue that INGOS' legitimacy is extremely fragile because it relies on perpetually negotiated agreements with local elites,³⁵ it is not clear if this negotiation depends on the *usefulness* of the assistance in specific times or on the values of assistance.

31 Denny Indrayana, *Indonesian Constitutional Reform, 1999–2002: An Evaluation of Constitution-Making in Transition*, (Penerbit Buku: Kompas, 2008).

32 Karry-Ann Cornwall, *Transitional Constitutionalism*.

33 Catherine Turner, “Transitional constitutionalism and the case of the Arab Spring,” *International & Comparative Law Quarterly* 64, no2 (2015): 267–291; Wojciech Sadurski, “Transitional Constitutionalism Versus the Rule of Law?” *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 8, no2 (2016): 337–35.

34 Pietro Marzo, *International democracy promoters*.

35 Ringo Ossewaarde, André Nijhof, and Liesbet Heyse, “Dynamics of NGO legitimacy: how organising betrays core missions of INGOS,” *Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice* 28, no1 (2008): 42–53.

This article leans with the first assumption and argues that, especially in political transitions, elected political parties use INGOS' assistance when it is "instrumental" to attaining their specific objectives. Yet, eventually political parties may question INGOS' assistance when it is no longer useful to further their political calculations. This change may occur despite INGOS' norms, mission, and values remaining unaltered. Thus, variation of legitimacy does not relate to the INGOS' norms diffusion and conditions of assistance. Instead, INGOS' legitimacy needs to be understood in the "temporal context" in which it is situated (Davies 2014).³⁶ In particular, crises arise when "the grounds for legitimacy with one or more national groups change, creating tensions or contradictions between the legitimacy frameworks of different audiences."³⁷ Hence, in order comprehend the fluctuations of INGOS' social acceptance that underpin INGO legitimacy, scholars have to situate their analysis in a temporal perspective.

In a democratizing country, INGOS that had a particularly constructive interaction with national political parties during the constitution-making process – or in the organization or post-authoritarian round of competitive elections – feel entitled to push for further reforms outside of the context of procedural democratic mechanisms. INGOS mistakenly believe that the openness of political parties to cooperate would be of the same degree after the procedures of democracy are set in motion. In the early phase of the transition, the desire of national actors to move away from authoritarian control and establish the procedures of democracy can align with the INGOS mission – thereby increasing the acceptance of INGOS influence and expertise. The assistance of Western INGOS working on democracy promotion becomes a strategic resource to overcome the challenges stemming from the political transition. By delivering training and sharing expertise to political parties and civil society groups, and by supporting logistically and economically nascent institutions, INGOS have the ability to enhance the democracy transition process, eventually boosting the national partners' ability to establish a democracy system. Furthermore, in former authoritarian states, transitional political parties may be dragged into domestic conflicts on key cultural, social, legal and economic choices that will determine the country trajectories and the power equilibrium among parties. In this respect, granting INGOS with legitimacy to monitor and intervene in the process become instrumental to prevent specific political groups imposing

36 Ian Clark, *International legitimacy and world society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Thomas Davies, *NGOs: A new history of transnational civil society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

37 Oliver Walton, et al., "Understanding contemporary challenges to INGO."

binding conditions onto others. In short, political elites may use INGOs to ensure that the democracy system is inclusive fair and competitive.

Yet, this harmony changes considerably when INGOs' advocacy and push for legislative reforms and implementation questions the nature of the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the constitution. This includes: INGOs leading an advocacy campaign for political reforms or policy implementation that aims at furthering minority rights or social justice; INGOs acting as a watchdog for the respect of the rule of law which the constitution mandates; INGOs shouldering local civil society groups in their struggles for political participation, freedom and inclusiveness and the quest for political responsiveness. It can be argued that as soon as INGOs' influence in a democratic transition stretches from procedures to empowering more qualitative components of a democracy, their actions become more partisan as their proposals for policy implementation and legislative reforms are not divorced from ideological attachments, mission, and values.

The legitimacy of INGOs to carry out their activities in a country may suddenly decrease – and some INGOs can suddenly face tightening restrictions and burdensome bureaucracy – precisely because their *actorhood* is no longer useful to ruling political parties and government. Backlash against INGOs may escalate as they support local NGOs' advocacy campaigns that push for social and political change that interfere with the interest of governments and political parties. Legislation that restricts INGOs' capacity to operate may follow. In this respect, Glasius et al. explain that “the adoption of legislation that restricts and hinders NGOs in carrying out their work turns out to be much more a matter of opportunity than a response to acute threats.”³⁸ In other words, elected political parties accept interference of INGOs with less enthusiasm when these further demands of the people and national NGOs for reforms, institutional accountability, and responsiveness. As governments and elected political parties realizes that their power and interests could be secured by restricting INGOs to diffuse liberal norms, the legitimacy they have granted to INGOs in early transitional phases dramatically decreases. Although direct restrictions to world renowned INGOs may cause reputational risks to governments, diplomatic issues, and damage its image on the international stage, there are many subtle mechanisms to prevent the action of INGOs such as burdensome registration and tightening legislation, among others.

38 Marlies Glasius, Jelmer Schalk, and Meta De Lange, “Illiberal Norm Diffusion: How Do Governments Learn to Restrict Nongovernmental Organizations?” *International Studies Quarterly* 64, no2 (2020): 453–468, 466.

In the next section we apply our reasoning to the Tunisian case, demonstrating that legitimacy granted to INGOs that promote democracy was high in the first years of the transition as it was useful for political parties. Yet, since 2015, acceptance of INGOs that promote democracy has decreased because it is no longer instrumental to political parties in power.

4 The Tunisian Constitution Making Process

The Tunisian Revolution began in December 2010, ending Ben Ali's authoritarian regime and initiating the process of transforming Tunisia into a democratic state. Tunisia's transition period shares common characteristics with other transitional states in the past such as the ones in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and South Africa.³⁹ Like many other transitioning countries, Tunisia needed to fill a 'legitimacy vacuum' following Ben Ali's departure. Post-revolution elites agreed there was the need to write a new constitution that would become the bedrock of the democratic transition and would usher in a new era based on the rule of law.⁴⁰ Unlike Morocco, which opted for a Constitutional Advisory Commission (CCC), and Egypt, which set up a committee of 50 members appointed by the acting-President Al Sisi, in 2011 Tunisians decided to elect the *Assemblée Nationale Constituent* (ANC) to write the constitution. With the elections, the constitution-making process became one endowed with democratic legitimacy. The ANC's composition further reflected the diversity of the country's political sensibilities, constituting it as a place for open debate that was capable of enshrining the constitution of the people and not of imposing it. Indeed, the ANC was composed of figures representing all key political parties, with the exception of political figures and parties with clear association with the demised Ben Ali regime.⁴¹ Constitution-making occurred as a result of the state's radical change. Civil society actors seized the opportunity to work with and make demands of the state. Although divisions and competing visions over particular issues emerged, Tunisian NGOs, unions, and political parties shared the goal of writing a constitution and worked relentlessly for it amid considerable difficulties. Jermanová noted that there was a positive interplay

39 Wojciech Sadurski, "Transitional Constitutionalism Versus the Rule of Law?" *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 8, no2 (2016): 337–355.

40 Pietro Marzo, 2020, *International democracy promoters*.

41 Carter Center, "National Constituent Assembly Elections in Tunisia: Final Report," (2011). https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/tunisia-final-oct2011.pdf.

between constitution makers, a genuine effort to make the process succeed despite structural divisions, especially on the role of religion in politics.⁴²

Relying on INGOs’ financial and ideational support, national actors worked inside and outside of the ANC to lobby and monitor the constitution-making process. Foreign states, experts, and constitutionalists around the world closely watched the Tunisian constitution-making process because it embodied an original experience of real democratic transition in the Arab world.⁴³ External legal assistance, especially that of INGOs, also provided important support to the drafting process. On December 16th, 2011, the newly elected constituent assembly implemented the Provisional Organization of Public Authorities law (commonly referred to using the French acronym OPPP or as the “little constitution”)⁴⁴ reiterating that the goal of the ANC was to write a constitution that reflected the goals of the revolution and discussed how the constitution would be entrenched, among other things. It was decided that each article needed to be ratified by an absolute majority and the whole constitution needed two thirds support in the ANC or it would face a popular referendum.

According to Arief, the development of the constitution represented “the next step in the transition process.”⁴⁵ Following the ANC election, the focus was constitution-making. The constitution was supposed to be completed in one calendar year, but conflicts between differing groups stagnated the process.⁴⁶ These conflicts included, and were framed as, Islamists versus secularists, coastal elites versus interior governorates, and youth activists who led the revolution versus older elected members. One of the most politicized and enduring schisms within the state was between Islamists and secularists, as religion’s place in the public sphere had been a topic of controversy since independence. The Islamist party *Ennahda* attempted to reassure secularists that an Islamic state would not be established and “*shari’a* law” would not be implemented. The leader of *Ennahda*, Rachid Ghannouchi, emphasized that

42 Tereza Jermanová, “From Mistrust to Understanding: Inclusive Constitution-Making Design and Agreement in Tunisia,” *Political Research Quarterly* (2020).

43 Nidhal Mekki, “Le processus constituant tunisien: quels enseignements pour les pays de la région?” *Arab Law Quarterly* 32, no.4 (2018): 358.

44 The OPPP law, adopted by the NCA on Dec. 16, 2011, dedicated only one article to the “constituent power.” The article focused solely on requirements for the adoption of the constitution and specified that an absolute majority of NCA members was required to adopt each article and that a two-thirds majority was needed for the adoption of the constitution in its entirety.

45 Alexis Arief, and Carla Humud. *Political transition in Tunisia*, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011) Vol. 15: 295.

46 Michele P. Angrist, “Understanding the success of mass civic protest in Tunisia,” *The Middle East Journal* 67, no.4 (2013): 547–564, 562.

the political party should not be compared to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, as they were a civic party, not a religious one.⁴⁷ The divisions between secularists and Islamists in the Egyptian case were so severe that these factions refused to work together during their own constitution-making process.⁴⁸ In Tunisia, *Ennadha* wanted to avoid this at all costs. They conceded where they could and chose instead to work together with secularists rather than go without them.⁴⁹ The ANC, following a "roadmap" provided by the *Union Generale Tunisienne du Travail* (The Tunisian General Workers Union or UGTT) and the broader National Dialogue Quartet, decided to have an expert committee with national actors to pass a liberal constitution quickly, especially after the Egyptian coup d'état took place in 2013. The government also vowed to step down in accordance with the roadmap. On January 26th, 2014, 92% of the constituent members voted in favour of the new constitution. What followed this long, deliberate process was the adoption of the most liberal constitution in the region.⁵⁰ On January 26th, 2014, the final draft was ratified with 200 votes for, 12 votes against, and 4 abstaining.⁵¹

While the constitution is very liberal relative to others in the region, it is also conservative (article 7 states that the family is the core of society and the state will protect it). Crucially, as emerged from an interview with a member of a local NGO, the constitution is also not justiciable at times, as there are articles that were added simply for the appeasement of various groups in society. A few contentious points emerged along the process such as the death penalty in article 22 ("the right to life is sacred and cannot be prejudiced except in exceptional cases regulated by law") and article 49 concerning freedom of expression. In short, like all constitutions it is a compromise between competing elites.

47 Alfred Stepan, "Tunisia's transition and the twin tolerations," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no.2 (2012): 89–103, 95.

48 D.D. Kirkpatrick, *Army Ousts Egypt's President; Morsi is Taken into Military Custody*, (2013). Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/04/world/middleeast/egypt.html>.

49 Michele Angrist, "Understanding the success of mass civic protest in Tunisia," *The Middle East Journal* 67, no.4 (2013): 547–564.

50 Duncan Pickard, *Tunisia's New Constitutional Court*, (Atlantic Council, April 2015). Available online: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/tunisia-s-new-constitutional-court/>.

51 Please see: Carter Center, *Tunisian Constitution Making Process, Final Report*, 2014. Available online: https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/democracy/tunisia-constitution-making-process.pdf.

5 “*Help us with Procedures*”: INGOs Assistance During the Constitution Making Process and National Elections

According to M’Rad, the constitution-making process was a triumph for local civil society, but INGOs worked both directly and indirectly, influencing the process and the text.⁵² During its simultaneous regime change and constitution-making, Tunisia warmly welcomed the assistance of these organizations to ensure a successful democratic transition.⁵³ In an interview with the authors, the head of National Democratic Institute (NDI) in North Africa recalled that a few weeks after the revolution he organized a roundtable with the Tunisian top political figures of the transitional periods. During this meeting he obtained a cross-cutting consensus among the spectrum of political parties on the need to cooperate as much as possible with NDI. Transitional political parties such as the Islamic party *Ennahdha*, leftists, liberal and secular parties conveyed to their INGO partners that they all wanted democracy in Tunisia and a competitive system to access political power.

It is worth noting that INGOs involved in democracy promotion such as German Foundations, Democracy Reporting International (DRI), Freedom House and International Republican Institute, as well as Human Rights Groups such as Amnesty International had built relations with Tunisian political activists since the early 2000s.⁵⁴ This previous collaboration eased the interaction after the revolution. Yet, political parties had large ideological distance and low trust among all of them.

Therefore, political parties decided to grant INGOs the legitimacy to influence the transitional to secure that competition did not derail into confrontation. Furthermore, political parties “dragged” INGOs into national affairs to avoid any party imposing its own political preferences. Therefore, INGOs became a sort of “referee” and played an observation role over political parties’ discussion and negotiation, a role that was accepted by the most important transitional political parties. On the one hand, *Ennahdha* Islamist party had interests to show cooperative attitude to Western INGOs – and more in general IOs – and to accept their democracy assistance. It served to show to the international community that political Islam in Tunisia wanted to play the

52 Hatem M’rad, *Le dialogue national en Tunisie: Prix Nobel de la Paix 2015*, (Paris Éditions Nirvana, 2015).

53 Marzo, 2020, *International democracy promoters*.

54 Pietro Marzo, “Supporting political debate while building patterns of trust: the role of the German political foundations in Tunisia (1989–2017),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 55, no.4 (2019): 621–637; Pietro Marzo, “Solving the security–democracy dilemma: the US foreign policy in Tunisia post-9/11,” *Third World Quarterly* 41, No.7 (2020): 1181–1199.

democratic game and was ready to accept Western support. Secular, leftist and liberal parties, for their part, accepted INGOs assistance and intervention to lower the risk that *Ennahdha* could entrench the Islamic law – Shari’a – in the Tunisian Constitutions and de-secularize the Tunisian socio-political system as a whole.

Against this backdrop, INGOs gained the trust of constituent members (most of them representing political parties), political parties and local NGOs due to their perceived expertise on democracy, human rights, and constitution-making more broadly. INGOs effortlessly accessed the state and were given the authority to train, organize workshops with members of the assembly, political parties and civil society actors, and take constituent members abroad to learn “best practices” from other countries’ experiences or the functions of the particular INGO’s home state.⁵⁵

In interviews with the authors, members of local NGOs and political parties stated that the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), International Republican Institute (IRI), National Democratic Institute (NDI), Carter Center, Democracy Reporting International (DRI), Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (FNS), Hanns Seidel Stiftung (HSS), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Article 19 were some of the organizations that supported and trained them. As it emerges from the interviews, INGOs influenced the constitution making process directly and indirectly. By “direct” access, we refer to INGOs working directly with the state, its institutions, and its actors. The institution of consequence to this research is the ANC, while the actors refer to the constituent members and political parties. Although direct access to the state by a non-state, foreign actor is out of the norm, it proved to be an effective method through which INGOs engaged in the constitution-making process.

INGOs officers from German political foundations and US NGOs trained constituent members by providing them with expertise and by organizing workshops. INGOs sponsored programs that took ANC members abroad – mostly to countries of INGOs origin or countries with similar experiences⁵⁶ – to learn how to manage a liberalized democracy and observe the functions of government. ANC members and political party members participated in workshops relating to rights, elections, freedoms, the judiciary, and decentralization,

55 Authors’ interviews with international NGOs officers.

56 Some ANC members were connected with political parties in Eastern Europe, which had lived regime change, democratic transition and Constitution making process following the demise of the Soviet Union.

among others, aimed at bolstering their ability to understand and manage democratic procedures.

All Tunisians actors interviewed indicated that they did not resist these trainings, but rather welcomed the “expertise” that was provided. As bearers of expertise and international law, INGOs were granted full access to the ANC and its members. In fact, it can be argued that this access was at times better than that of local NGOs. Prominent INGOs began to prepare for fundamental changes to the state at the beginning of the revolution. In particular, in an interview with the author, an INGO’s official stated that its organization was carefully monitoring the situation in Tunisia before the fall of the regime. Once it occurred, its INGOs suggested that the ANC needed procedural and substantive assistance, stating that when the constitution-making began, they provided a plan to ensure that they “cut away all the wrong ways of the old system... and make sure they start going the right way and respect human rights and more in Tunisia.”

Other INGO participants were blunter, with one stating that “the ANC relied on [the organization] to be honest,” stressing that they were “involved and collaborated” with constituent members. In particular it provided the ANC with four legal analyses on the constitution drafts and claims some ownership of articles 6, 32, 34, 35, 49, and 127 in the constitution. The ANC recognized this and promoted an open-door policy during the constitution-making process.

Evidence also showed that five to six members of a specific INGO were listed as contributors on the first draft of the constitution. INGOs agreed that the ANC fostered an environment of cooperation and participation and allowed INGOs to fully access and engage in the constitution-making process. In addition, *Ennadha* had a relevant number of party affiliated members in the ANC, which needed expertise but could not easily collaborate with leftist and secularist national actors, who held anti-Islamism stances. The solution was to import this expertise via the INGOs.

A Tunisian constituent member stated “INGOs were more neutral while local experts were not... INGOs, including this organization, gave substantive expertise and MPs were confident in INGOs.” The participant further stated that INGOs were not fearful of religion while local civil society was. Another ANC member stressed, however, that the role of INGOs was not “to replace the ANC members but to train them and help them.” Crucially, he argued “a country like Tunisia needed help at the time that it received help. Tunisia made decisions, the international community did not touch our sovereignty or independence.” Other constituent members agreed that this involvement was necessary, with one in particular arguing that the ANC sought the experience of these organizations.

In short, from interviews with ANC members, a widespread agreement emerges on the work of INGOs during the constitution-making process, whether it was coordinating training sessions and organizing workshops, or providing travel abroad for constituent members to understand and observe other democratic constitutional regimes. Reliance on an INGO during what is deemed a state-building project is surprising but it was effective in this context.

All this notwithstanding, constituent members viewed INGOs as experts, stating that they were observers, and always in attendance and giving suggestions. A constituent member suggested that “a lot of INGOs visited the assembly and gave us a lot of advice,” most of which was accepted because of their perceived experience. A local NGO participant cited Democracy Reporting International (DRI) as an INGO that presented reports to the assembly and worked closely with deputies, stating: “expertise, technical support, and recommendations were also a role of INGOs.”

Local NGOs also benefitted from the networking opportunities provided by INGOs. An INGO member stated that their organization trained forty-five Tunisian organizations on practical skills such as writing effective reports. Most INGOs stated that they worked with civil society to reinforce its capacity by disseminating technical expertise and organizing workshops on various issues. Respondents generally stated that the INGOs helped them to professionalize, write policy papers, navigate political issues, and build capacity. It is generally expected that international and local actors’ network during policy-making. Often the objective of international actors is to develop capacity and support or provide advocacy.⁵⁷

AQ1 6 The Decline of INGOs Legitimacy in Tunisia

The narrative around the legitimacy of INGOs’ involvement in Tunisian political and social affairs changed after the adoption of the 2014 Constitution and the 2014 Presidential and legislative elections. In interviews with the authors, an INGO official stated that the hostility toward INGOs’ assistance did indeed progressively gain momentum following those two events.

By then, elected Member of the Parliaments and political parties’ members, especially from ruling political parties, began to vocally question the

57 Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, “Transnational advocacy networks in international and regional politics,” *International social science journal* 51.159 (1999): 89–101; James Gomez, “International NGOs: filling the “gap” in Singapore’s civil society,” *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 20, no2 (2005): 177–207.

legitimacy of INGOs, claiming that INGOs working towards legislative objectives in line with their understanding of the constitution was actually an attempt to “impose” political, social, and cultural reforms alien to Tunisia. This is because the positive interplay of constitution-making had diminished and policy endeavours driven by the ideological norms and values of INGOs sometimes aligned with the government of the day, but often did not. Lobbying the government in a fashion similar to that of national actors to advance their legislative objectives was not acceptable and was deemed foreign interference.

The law on *Inheritance and the reform of Penal Code* for the decriminalization of homosexuality are examples of controversial reforms where the influence of INGOs, especially human rights advocacy groups, was considered illegitimate. In 2018, the *COLIBE* Commission⁵⁸ published a report that identified all the dispositions of the Tunisian juridical framework that undermined individual rights and it was met with political criticism. An opponent of the Commission accused its members and its associated political and social actors of representing exclusively liberal and progressive ideas. Some leading members of *Ennahdha* and religious leaders spoke out against the Commission recommendations.⁵⁹

According to our interviews, a number of Western INGOs offered support and advice to members of the *COLIBE* Commission in order to enhance their inquiry and reporting ability – through specific consultancy and draft revision activities – and ruling political parties, especially the conservative *Ennahdha*, extended the criticism of the Commission to international NGOs, claiming a partisan and illegitimate interference on a sensitive political issue.⁶⁰ This criticism was directed particularly to human rights groups such as *Amnesty International*, *Human Rights Watch*, and *Article 19* who directly challenged the government.⁶¹ This is interesting because these organizations were involved in

58 The Tunisian Commission for Individual Freedoms and Equality was created in August 2017 by President Béji Caïd Essebsi, who mandated a panel of experts to propose reforms aimed at bringing the Tunisian legal arsenal into conformity with the 2014 Constitution. Published on June 8th, 2018, the report called for gender equality in inheritance, equality in the attribution of nationality, the abrogation of the death penalty, the decriminalization of homosexuality, the abolition of the obligation of the marriage dowry, the equality of the sexes in the attribution of nationality and the choice of the family name, etc.

59 Alia Gana and Ester Sigillò, “Les mobilisations contre le rapport sur les libertés individuelles et l’égalité (COLIBE): Vers une spécialisation du parti Ennahdha dans l’action partisane?” *L’Année du Maghreb* no.21 (2019): 377–383.

60 Author interview with INGOs officers and Tunisian Civil society leaders.

61 Human Rights Watch, “Des proposition historiques sur l’égalité des sexes et le respect de la vie privé,” (July 2018), Available online: <https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2018/07/26/tunisie-des-propositions-historiques-sur-legalite-des-sexes-et-le-respect-de-la-vie>.

the constitution-making process, a process they were theoretically not meant to be involved in. Yet, policymaking, a sphere they ordinarily occupy, had become off-limits at times.

According to our interviews, INGOs traditionally less prone to advocacy were recently paying greater attention to the tone and the narrative of their intervention. INGOs such as IRI, NDI, Democracy Reporting International and German political foundations, whose funding comes from political parties in their home countries, are cautious in their criticism when it comes to targeting the accountability of the government, the assemblies and political parties. They avoid direct criticism, refuse to sign petitions and try to raise issues through carefully chosen formats and language. In short, even those INGOs whose activities do not challenge the government accountability must still confront the changing narrative of their role in Tunisia.

In an interview with the authors, an INGO official stated that although his organization provides nonpartisan technical advice to political parties and MPs – it avoids giving precise recommendations on sensitive political issues – tensions have occurred recently. He recalled that following the publication of a report highlighting a number of governmental weaknesses with respect to their interpretation of the constitution and its mandate, the targeted political parties responded through a strongly worded article in the press accusing the INGO of interference.

It should be noted though that there are still positive interactions between political parties and INGOs on technical issues that do not challenge political parties or on instances when INGOs provide assistance on domains that enjoy national consensus. For instance, the Ministry of Justice welcomes international expertise on a number of reforms such as pre-trial detention, the rights of women in detention, and the legal implications of managing the return of foreign fighters.⁶² Political parties and ministries are open to foreign influence on these issues because they perceive that the INGOs' objectives converge with their policy implementation. Most importantly, these reforms do not engage with divergent interpretations of the constitution, meaning no exasperation of political divisions and no direct implications for the national balance of power. Thus, while INGOs shake the legislative status quo, in these cases their action does not threaten the political status quo. In contrast, when INGOs organize activities that encourage policy implementations or lead advocacy activities that expose elected MPs and Ministries to lack of responsiveness, INGOs encounter narratives of interference and illegitimate resistance.

62 Author interview with a Democracy Reporting International Officer.

An INGO stated that since 2015 they noted less enthusiasm from political parties in participating in workshops about governance problems. Specifically, political parties and MPs avoid interactions with INGOs when they sponsor a project that supports local NGOs in producing reports on political issues that highlight problems with governance. Officials from nonpartisan national institutions are interested in the research and engaged in feedback trying to be constructive in finding solutions, but political parties show little interest in participating. New legislation also tightened the requirements to work as a foreign NGO in the country. In an interview with the author, the director of an INGO working in North Africa on youth empowerment since 2019 (that wish to remain anonymous), pointed out that its organization activities are hindered by the difficulties to be registered in the country and the lack of responsiveness from the Tunisian Interior Minister. The organization had to stop its activity and is now considering leaving the country. While this is certainly a political strategy aimed at demanding more transparency and accountability to foreign NGOs entering the country, the political climate surrounding INGOs has hardened. During fieldwork and informal talks in Tunisia between 2016 and 2020 the authors have spoken to INGOs involved in social and political affairs that are facing political resistance and endless bureaucratic hurdles to officially register their entity in the country, which in certain cases forces these INGOs to reduce their capacity to operate in the country.

7 Conclusion

This article argues that the legitimacy that political parties accord to democracy promoting INGOs depend on the usefulness of INGOs in helping their beneficiaries to attain specific objectives. Notably, the Constitution-making process in a political transition that followed the fall of an authoritarian regime, where unprepared political elites have to deal with technicalities and negotiate issues, may become ground for seeking – opportunistically – the support of INGOs.

This heightened legitimacy granted to INGOs, however, is not a values-driven acceptance of the INGOs' *actorhood*, but is time-bound and needs to be understood in its temporal context. In particular, during a democratic transition, openness to INGOs agency seems limited to help transitional political parties to move away from authoritarianism. The legitimacy to interfere, however, reverts quickly into illegitimacy to meddle in national affairs as soon national beneficiaries assess that INGOs' advocacy is no longer instrumental to their political purposes. In this context, political parties and ruling

elites accept INGOs' interference into national affairs with much less enthusiasm, even though, in theory, INGOs have more capacity and resources to consolidate the process by improving the quality of a democracy. In short, as soon as the work of INGOs stretches beyond the support of democratic procedures and targets empowering the quality of a democracy, they "invade" the battleground of political competition. When that occurs, the INGOs' profile changes: from foreign technical expert and neutral arbiter into a partisan foreign actor advocating for change and urging policy implementation and reforms that are sometimes deemed alien to the country.

The Tunisian case shows that during the early phase of democracy transition, there was a general consensus about the political direction the country had to take. Thus, political parties accorded high legitimacy to INGOs as their agency was useful. Precisely, INGOs' assistance enhanced the establishment of procedural democracy and helped political parties to move away from the authoritarian past. The openness to INGOs' influence extended to the constitution-making process, regardless of theories emphasizing that '*pouvoir constituant*' belongs to national groups and that external interference makes the constitution illegitimate. Amid discussions and negotiations among national groups, INGOs gain legitimacy because they become an external arbiter, which political groups might refer to in order to resolve deadlocks and prevent political exclusion in the early transitional phase.

When the political system became more solid and institutionalized post-ratification, Tunisian political parties began to tolerate INGOs' involvement less, questioning their legitimacy and accusing some of partisan interference. The legitimacy they had during the comparatively more neutral constitution-making process was not extended to the heightened policymaking aspect of democratic consolidation. The narrative of "external interference into the national affairs" began to emerge precisely because INGOs waded into conflicts of interest to political parties, who perceive external pressure for policy implementation as a possible threat to their hold on power. The article finds that since 2015, political parties have been progressively at odds with INGOs meddling into political affairs and they deemed external pressure and advice for legislative reforms illegitimate.

This study limits its reasoning to the relations between INGOs that promote democracy and national partners during the process of political transition toward democracy. It does not explore the role of INGOs who are involved in other activities. Further research could explore the theory of legitimacy based on utility and not on values in a more systematic and comprehensive way.

AUTHOR QUERIES

AUTHOR PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUERIES

AQ1—Section headings have been ordered sequentially as per the journal style. Please check and approve.