The Arab Spring, initiated by the act of self-immolation of a street vendor of vegetables in Tunisia, was an event without precedent in the region of North Africa and the Middle East. It gave hope for political transformation and pro-democratic changes in the Maghreb and Mashreq countries, and aroused many concerns about the situation in this part of the world once the social rebellions had been calmed and several long-time dictators had been removed from power.

Despite the slogans of freedom, liberalization and democratization in the Middle East and North Africa, the Arab Spring seemed to evoke great anxiety among the US administration, which faced a dilemma they had sought to avoid for decades. Should they support the pro-democracy movements and the societies demanding the overthrow of dictators in the name of democracy, or should they continue to support the rigid authoritarian regimes, denying the newly proclaimed ideals in the name of a more pragmatic understanding of self-interest, and thus helping to maintain stability and even a certain secularism in the Middle East and North Africa?

For these reasons, in retrospect, the Arab Spring in Tunisia would seem to be a special case. On the one hand, it led to the overthrow of the longtime dictator, Ben Ali, and the temporary strengthening of fundamentalist forces; however, on the other hand, Tunisia has become a rare example of a country that has gone through its desired transformations without a bloody civil war or the destabilization of the country, as was the case with the other Middle Eastern countries engulfed in the Arab Spring.