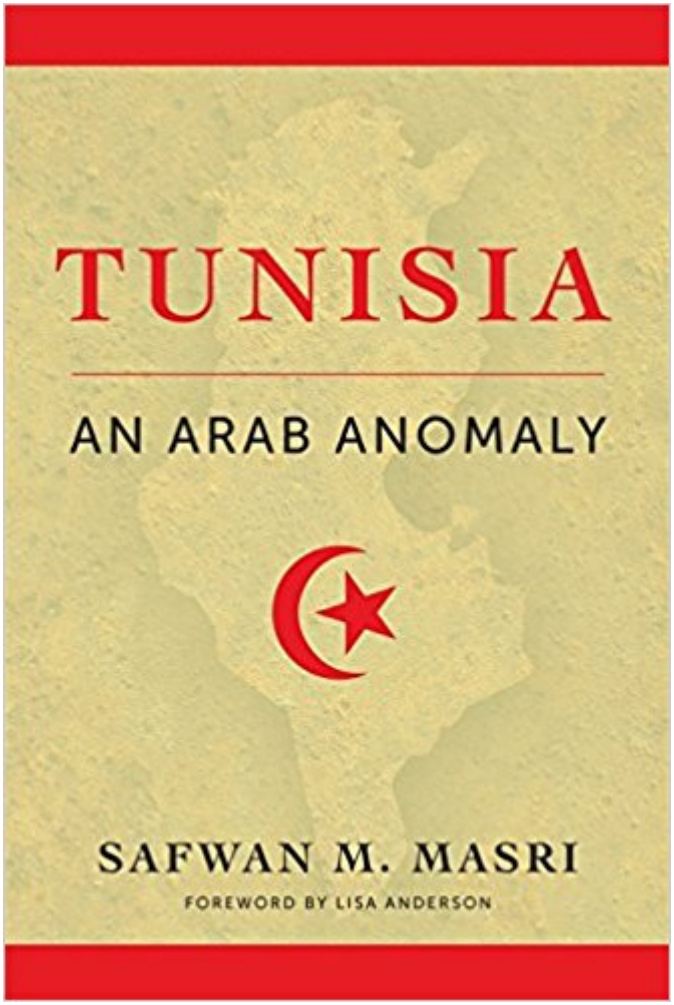
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# Tunisia: An Arab Anomaly




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## Synopsis

The Arab Spring began and ended with Tunisia. In a region beset by brutal repression, humanitarian disasters, and civil war, Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution alone gave way to a peaceful transition to a functioning democracy. Within four short years, Tunisians passed a progressive constitution, held fair parliamentary elections, and ushered in the country's first-ever democratically elected president. But did Tunisia simply avoid the misfortunes that befell its neighbors, or were there particular features that set the country apart and made it a special case?In Tunisia: An Arab Anomaly, Safwan M. Masri explores the factors that have shaped the country's exceptional experience. He traces Tunisia's history of reform in the realms of education, religion, and women's rights, arguing that the seeds for today's relatively liberal and democratic society were planted as far back as the middle of the nineteenth century. Masri argues that Tunisia stands out not as a model that can be replicated in other Arab countries, but rather as an anomaly, as its history of reformism set it on a separate trajectory from the rest of the region. The narrative explores notions of identity, the relationship between Islam and society, and the hegemonic role of religion in shaping educational, social, and political agendas across the Arab region. Based on interviews with dozens of experts, leaders, activists, and ordinary citizens, and a synthesis of a rich body of knowledge, Masri provides a sensitive, often personal, account that is critical for understanding not only Tunisia but also the broader Arab world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A wise and carefully drawn analysis of one of the mysteries of the Arab Spring. Safwan M. Masri explains why Tunisia, where the revolt germinated, has been the only country to give birth to a real

democracy. In examining why Tunisia succeeded, Masri shows why other Arab countries failed. They lacked TunisiaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s culture of tolerance, moderation, and coexistence, which had been nurtured by decades of educational and social policy. Bottom line: Democracy needs deep roots, which sadly donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t exist in most of the Arab world. (David Ignatius, Washington Post)Why did TunisiaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Arab Spring experience succeed when others have failed? Drawing on TunisiaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s history of modernism, independent thought, and, most crucially, a progressive education system, Safwan Masri demonstrates that the country has a unique identity that sets it apart from the rest of the region, and accounts for a diverse culture and a spirit of moderation. Richly researched and analyzed, and based on a compelling historical narrative, this is a provocative book that will make a valuable contribution to the understanding of North Africa and to the body of work on the modern Arab world. (Roula Khalaf, Deputy Editor, Financial Times )MasriÃ¢â ¬â„¢s work shines both through his incisive points of view and comprehensive factual data without losing itself in the details. No decisive phase of Tunisian history escapes him...Tunisia: Ã¢â ¬â An Arab Anomaly is an exciting work for those who want to understand the deep meaning of the political and social upheavals of the whole Arab world, using Tunisia as a lens. (Yadh Ben Achour, Professor at Carthage UniversityÃ¢â ¬â ,Ã¢â ¬â Former President of the High Authority of the Revolution (TunisiaÃ¢â ¬â ), and Member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee)Safwan M. Masri offers an informed history and an astute assessment of the case of Tunisia, specifically focusing on the countryÃ¢â ¬â„¢s distinctive blend of modern Islam and secular democracy. He provides an extended and authoritative contemplation and a unique synthesis of the phenomenon that is Tunisia. (Brinkley Messick, Columbia University)Drawing on TunisiaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s rich history, Safwan Masri offers a convincing interpretation of why Tunisia has succeeded while other Arab states have not. (L. Carl Brown, Princeton University)This is a book that demanded to be written. Clearly, one of the great questions of our time is why some democratic movements succeed while others fail, either at birth or through erosion over time. And the story, and example, of Tunisia is at the core of that critical inquiry. Masri brings to the telling and the analysis of this modern tale of democracy what virtually no other author could: the lived knowledge of both the Arab and American worlds, a deep sensitivity to the evolution of societies, and a passion to understand what is on the surface, at least, a contemporary mystery of societal development. (Lee C. Bollinger, president of Columbia University)

Safwan M. Masri is Executive Vice President for Global Centers and Global Development at Columbia University. He holds a senior research scholar appointment at Columbia’s School of

International and Public Affairs and is an honorary fellow of the Foreign Policy Association. Previously vice dean of Columbia Business School, he earned his Ph.D. from Stanford University in 1988. Masri lives in New York and Amman.

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