

# Justice in Transformation: Rethinking Theory and Practice of the Global Transitional Justice Model

*by Fatima Kastner*

## **Abstract**

This article aims to investigate whether and to what extent the policies of transitions initiated in post-revolution societies in the aftermath of the so-called “Arab Spring” have affected the academic socio-legal discourse on transitional justice. Starting with a brief history of transitional justice as a normative concept, this contribution then presents the standard tools of transitional justice that had been developed for transitioning societies in order to address systematic violations of human rights perpetrated by former dictatorial or authoritarian regimes. In addition to strict retributive instruments like ad-hoc international and hybrid criminal tribunals, further elements of the present global transitional justice model include restorative and restitutive mechanisms such as commissions of inquiry, truth and reconciliation commissions, lustration policies, reparation programs, and memorials. Socio-legal debates on transitional justice usually focus exactly on these standardized elements of transitional justice, weighing the pros and cons of various measures to address a violent past as a means of promoting lasting peace and processes of democratization and reconciliation in post-conflict societies. Current scholarly discussions regarding the Arab uprisings seem to follow that general line of human rights discourse. Yet, given both the cultural particularities of the region as well as the systematic nature of economic wrongdoings committed in many pre-revolution societies, there is a strong demand to widen the present rather liberal understanding of transitional justice both in the direction of local notions of justice as well as economic accountability.

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**Justice in Transformation: Rethinking Theory and Practice of the Global Transitional Justice Model**

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## About the AGYA Working Group Transformation

Popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have had a deep impact not only on the societies in the respective countries, but also on academic disciplines and scientific relations between European and Arab countries. Many of the developments that have taken place in the region are not exceptional, but rather have reflected and accelerated broader global trends. Moreover, the importance of new media, new forms of social mobilization and new instruments of governance is being felt outside the MENA region. Taking a transcultural perspective, the Transformation Working Group of the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) aims to improve understanding of these trends. The working group debates how ideas, norms and concepts are diffused in a context of mutual exchange, and how scientific relations between Europe and the MENA region can be improved.

# Justice in Transformation: Rethinking Theory and Practice of the Global Transitional Justice Model

## ► Introduction

When the Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire on 17 December 2010, he may not have intended to trigger a social-political tsunami that swept across North Africa and the Middle East (MENA), leaving behind fallen authoritarian regimes and former dictators dethroned, imprisoned or even lynched. However, among the reasons that might have forced him to such an act of despair was his bitter hunger for justice and a better life. His dramatic self-immolation was a hopeless call for humanity that was shared by a multitude of protesters throughout the Arab world who then generated that revolutionary wave that is referred to as the “Arab Spring”. Although each individual protester represents a unique human being with specific personal experiences of injustice, common to all demonstrators across the region are the grave human rights violations committed by the former regimes during their hold on power. Facing these dramatic popular uprisings and the following delicate transitional phase, in which the old order has indeed fallen but has not yet completely vanished, socio-legal scholars from Arab and Western countries have emphasized the need to initiate processes of political transitions in accordance with the global transitional justice model in order to help post-revolution societies to overcome their precarious situation of passage from authoritarianism and dictatorship to a new order of society. By this means, so the general reasoning, they can determine how best to address systematic abuses of human rights committed in the past and during the time of transition in order to reconcile divided societies, strengthen democratic institution building and to realise a new just and above all a social order worth living (Fisher & Stewart 2014).

However, by general definition, classical judicial transitional justice instruments such as ad-hoc, special and hybrid international criminal tribunals, or non-judicial restorative and restitutive mechanisms such as commissions of inquiry, truth and reconciliation commissions, lustration policies and reparation programs can be set up only when severe injustice and systematic human rights abuses as practiced typically during periods of dictatorship, autocratic suppression and civil war have come to an end (Schabas & Darcy 2004; Teitel 2015; Mihr 2017). That means transitional justice can only be put to work after a certain regime change and a political process of consolidation have already taken place, or at least after a somehow pacified and stabilised social environment had been realized (Olsen 2010; Eser, Arnold & Kreicker 2012). This includes, for example, the replacement of governments and the renewal of important state bodies and institutions such as the security services and

the judicial system in order to provide grounds for processes of reconciliation, democratization and the establishment of the rule of law (Hinton 2010; Engert & Jetschke 2011; Hazan 2017). In the case of the post-“Arab Spring” societies, some former government leaders did indeed fall and new executive powers took their place, but overall, the hopes and dreams of most of the protesters did not come true. In fact, some turned into true nightmares as documented by the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Syrians and other refugees from the MENA region to Northern Europe, fleeing the deadly threats of civil war, systematic terrorism and inhuman life conditions in their own countries.

However, the transitions being experienced in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings are not finished yet and the future of most of these fragile state entities that have seen some kind of regime change appears to be more than just uncertain (Gephart, Sakrani & Hellmann 2015). Even though some political reforms and transitional justice strategies have been already launched in countries like Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen and Egypt, observers are quite skeptical of the short term results, since transitional justice instruments are highly time consuming measures (Fraihat 2016). One illustrative example of this is certainly Argentina and the decades long fight of the civil society against painful silence and imposed impunity concerning the perpetrators and those responsible for mass criminality committed during the former military regime in the years of 1976–1983. It shows clearly that post conflict justice sometimes can only be achieved, if at all, after decades of efforts to combat politics of repression and systematic human rights abuses by the means of domestic as well as international criminal tribunals including regional human rights courts (Teitel 2003; Sikkink 2011; Mihr 2017). Thus given that function of time in regard of the possible effectiveness of transitional justice mechanisms, it might be simply too early to evaluate the outcomes of transitional justice policies in post-“Arab Spring” societies at least from today’s perspective. However, how would it be the other way around? Have the Arab uprisings eventually altered the discourse of the socio-legal studies on transitional justice? Are there any lessons learned from the extraordinary revolutionary transitions in the MENA region? Could they potentially even have an effect on future attempts to justice in transition?

In the following I will try to give a tentative answer to these questions. Given the embryonic status of most of the social transitions in the region, it is of no surprise that I have to highlight the speculative nature of my statements. However, after a short historical overview of the emergence of the normative concept of transitional justice to a global model of dealing with systematic human rights abuses, I first will outline the crucial steps of developments that have shaped today’s understanding of transitional justice as a certain set of legal and non-legal means that count as tools to foster post

conflict justice and both enable democratic institution building as well as processes of reconciliation in any specific transitional society in the world. In a second step, I then ask whether and to what extent the processes of transitions experienced so far in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings have challenged or modified this general liberal understanding of the present global transitional justice model. Lastly I will reflect in a third step some possible learning effects from the ongoing dynamic processes in the MENA region that might enlarge the existing toolbox of transitional justice and thereby expand or eventually even transform the socio-legal discourse on transitional justice.

### ► **Lex Transitus: On the evolution of the new global legal regime of transitional justice**

The normative concept of transitional justice emerged historically in the period after the geopolitical caesura of 1945. Its first appearance results from the exceptional context of the institutionalization of the international criminal tribunals at Nuremberg and Tokyo after the Second World War. Although some legal scholars are frequently criticizing the ambiguous legality, that is the legitimacy of these trials in the sense of victor's justice that had been dictated by outside actors contradicting fundamental moral principles in criminal law and international criminal law such as “*nullum crimen sine lege*”, the long lasting effects of this first attempt to transitional justice are today without a doubt (Schabas & Darcy 2004; Eser, Arnold & Kreicker 2012; Teitel 2015). Indeed, in the following years international criminal courts were installed to perform transitional justice trials that relied strongly on the legal principles that had been created by the international tribunals of Nuremberg and Tokyo. Both tribunals dealt with war crimes prosecuted before and during the war by the former leaders of the warring parties Germany and Japan. From the very beginning, the trials were tainted by the desire to punish and replace former members of the Nazi regime and the Japanese empire who were considered most responsible for systematic or widespread human rights violations, and to establish international law as a new tool for accountability of individual actions as well as international aggression (Safferling 2011). Notably the latter set with the invention of a new legal principle called “crimes against humanity” a novel precedent that had never been used before in international human and humanitarian law and therewith initiated an extraordinary dynamism of legal and institutional developments in the post war era that modified radically the very nature of the international legal system (Bonacker & Safferling 2013). Since that time, numerous international criminal courts have been created on a global level to deal with large scale human rights violations, including, for example, the international extraordinary tribunals for the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Cambodia,

East Timor, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Following the massive waves of societal and political transitions that occurred in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, and Africa in the early 1980s, these bodies were institutionalized with the goal of achieving recognition for victims and bringing perpetrators to justice, with the broader additional aims of promoting peace, the development of democratic institutions, and the rule of law. Other post-conflict, post-authoritarian and post-dictatorial countries such as Argentina after the end of the military dictatorship, South Africa after the end of the Apartheid regime, and Morocco after the end of the so-called “Years of Lead” used truth and reconciliation commissions to deal with their violent pasts. Such commissions have also been established in other transitioning states with a history of repressive rule, including South Korea, the Solomon Islands, El Salvador, Ghana and the Fiji islands. The general goal of transitional justice tools, be these ad-hoc international criminal tribunals or truth and reconciliation commissions, is to overcome the former suppressive state system by contributing to politics of human rights, democratization and national reconciliation (Teitel 2015; Mihr 2017).

Since the end of the Cold War international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank are increasingly acknowledging these politics of dealing with past human rights violations by, for example, granting public sector loans and supporting economic development in dependence on specific transitional justice policies. Not least due to these redefined lending conditions and standards of development aid of international donors, dealing with past human rights violations has become a global model for action in world society, that has taken the transitional justice model from its beginnings as a normative exception to its present status as a global political rule (see Kastner 2016).

While international organizations have played a key role in the global proliferation of the transitional justice model, the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), a transnationally operating NGO, has served as a further very influential creator and disseminator of this normative concept. This NGO has its headquarters in New York, but also maintains regional offices in Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, in the Maghreb region and in the Near East. In establishing the ICTJ in March 2001, its creators laid the foundation for a global culture of post-conflict justice (Boraine 2006; Kastner 2010; Teitel 2011). The ICTJ has monitored political transitions with the aim of promoting peace, bolstering rule of law reforms, and supporting democratic governance in more than 50 countries worldwide. It has collaborated in creating and implementing international criminal tribunals, truth and reconciliation commissions, and other alternative instruments of transitional justice in post-conflict societies around the globe.<sup>1</sup> ICTJ staff members make their expertise in dealing with past systematic human rights abuses and state rebuilding after political transitions available not only to local protest

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<sup>1</sup> Transitional justice processes have been initiated to date in: Argentina, Bolivia, Burundi, Brazil, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Côte D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Germany, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Indonesia, Liberia, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Tunisia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Uganda, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe. Compare the list provided by the International Center for Transitional Justice: <http://ictj.org/>. See also the list provided by the website of the United States Institute of Peace: <http://www.usip.org/library/tc>.

groups, but also to national and international institutions such as national human rights organizations, the European Union and the United Nations (Kastner 2017b). They advise diplomats and legal scholars in matters related to the judicialization of transition issues, and help social interest groups, research organizations and governments with the work of reconstructing and documenting human rights violations, as well as in preparing and using databases and archives. They provide information on survey methods and techniques for interviewing victims, train people to work with witnesses, and help establish witness protection programs. ICTJ members also offer advice on conducting public hearings and contribute to the development of programs providing restitution and compensation for victims. Their work now also includes consultation on the creation of memorial and commemorative sites, and on formulating and implementing recommendations for political and structural reforms after the respective transitional justice instruments have completed their work. The accumulation and global dissemination of this special expertise in dealing with past state aided human rights violations has also been reflected in a series of notable international conferences, guidelines and resolutions of the United Nations on the normative concept of transitional justice, which even led the United Nations to declare 2009 the International Year of Reconciliation.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, transitional justice is now viewed as a key element of the United Nations toolbox for dealing with post-conflict issues, with the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping even having established a new Security Sector Reform and Transitional Justice Unit (Kastner 2017a).<sup>3</sup> This has further promoted and solidified the process of transnational networking, professionalization and standardization in the realm of activities related to dealing with past human rights violations. In sum, the enlarged normative concept of transitional justice has become a conventional instrument for dealing with the past that has spread globally thanks to the consultation and training programs of the ICTJ and the launching of countless academic journals and books, new research institutes at universities, and other highly specialized international, transnational and local NGOs in the field of post-conflict justice (Kastner 2015a).

As a result of the formation of this increasingly dense context of know-how transmission a world political arena has emerged, in which various actors of politics of dealing with the past appear as protagonists and disseminators of specific norms, standards and institutions of transitional justice. Within this multidimensional, constantly self-reinforcing transnational social field a functionally specified global legal regime of transitional justice has emerged to advocate the following: First: Institutionalized international normative expectations, such as the obligation of the international legal system to investigate past state aided human rights violations and the victim's right to truth. Second: Behavioral routines and post conflict measures such as victim oriented processes of truth seeking, reparation

<sup>2</sup> Compare UN resolution A/RES/61/17, adopted by the General Assembly at its 61st session, 23 January 2007: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/61/17&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/61/17&Lang=E).

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.un.org/en/events/peacekeepersday/pdf/securityreform.pdf>.



and reconciliation programs. And thirdly: Standardized non-judicial institutions such as historical commissions of inquiry, truth commissions and truth and reconciliation commissions, as well as judicial institutions such as ad-hoc international and hybrid criminal tribunals.<sup>4</sup>

The creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2002, a permanent and independent supra-national judicial body that is prosecuting war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity – when national courts of the contracting state parties are either unwilling or unable to deal with these crimes – represents so far the ultimate culmination of this ongoing process of evolution of the normative concept of transitional justice to a global legal regime, that I have called “Lex Transitus” in reference to scholarly works which address in critical and analytical fashion the changing frames of normative orders under the structural conditions of globalization (Teubner 2012; Neves 2013; Calliess 2014; Kjaer 2014; Kastner 2015b; Teitel 2015; Thornhill 2016).

Moreover, in the course of this process, we can observe the world cultural institutionalization of a cosmopolitan ethics that resembles what was described in connection with the Holocaust and the moral outcomes of the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals as the increasing consolidation of a global morality and the associated moral imperative of memory, atonement and commemoration (see Levy & Sznajder 2011). States’ approaches to past state-aided atrocities, war and genocide are now directed by global institutional models that dictate extremely ritualized procedures for confronting past human rights violations. In the context of this global diffusion of discourses and practices of remembering and dealing with violent pasts, the actors involved – individuals as well as collective actors – are constantly observed and evaluated by a transnational civil society network. Even if they merely stage a superficial show of compliance with world cultural norms, standards and institutions of transitional justice, as is the case in many post-conflict states, they are nevertheless confirming them even against their own political will (Sikkink 2011; Calliess 2014; Karstedt 2014). As part of a general process of the dissemination of global cultural patterns of behavior and normative patterns of expectations, which simultaneously overlays the dominant functional structures of global society and the international political system of nation states, transitional justice tools can be described at least from a macro-sociological point of view as transcultural transformers (Holzer, Kastner & Weron 2015). One should take care not to overestimate the evolutionary potential of their broad socio-cultural effects, but we should also not make the mistake of underestimating them (Kastner et al. 2008). Only then we also gain an explanation for the exceedingly remarkable phenomenon that – despite the empirical fact of the global diffusion of the normative concept of transitional justice and with it the world wide proliferation of specific norms, standards and institutions of post conflict justice – to date there has not been a single case in which quite literally the work of dealing with past

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<sup>4</sup> Compare Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter: <http://www.un.org/documents/charter/chapter7.shtml>.

systematic crimes has been “successful” (on this rather paradoxical effect see Kastner 2010).

### ► **Reconfigurations of the present normative concept of transitional justice emerging from the „Arab Spring“ experiences**

Transitional justice has become a conventional global model for action in dealing with past systematic human rights violations. As a result of the different ways of local contextualization that have occurred worldwide so far the normative concept has massively changed since its invention after the Second World War from an originally pure criminal legal, that is to say retributive normative concept to a hybrid, that is to say a restorative cross societal oriented post conflict justice model (Kastner 2015b). This in turn changed the significant actors working in the field of transitional justice. Initially dominated by professional international lawyers, it is now primarily influenced by human rights activists, diplomats, scholars, policymakers, donors, international organizations, and transnational non-governmental organizations such as the ICTJ. These new and diverse actors in the field of post conflict justice conceive the aims and mechanisms of transitional justice not primarily in retributive terms, that is to say in a strict criminal law and perpetrator oriented perspective, but also within more holistic cross societal categories (Boraine 2006). This hybridization of the concept of transitional justice in the form of an increasing amalgamation of legal with social norms also explains the newly achieved recognition of victims’ perspectives within the international criminal law system, as well as the redefined central role of victims within the framework of transitional justice policies (Bonacker & Safferling 2013). Indeed, one of the decisive new institutional elements of the transitional justice concept are truth and reconciliation commissions, where the central procedural focus of investigation lies no longer on the crimes committed by former perpetrators, but on the testimonials provided by the victims and the harms they endured (Kastner 2010). The severe and controversial socio-legal debates that accompanied the implementation of these victim oriented commissions as a non-judicial means of confronting the needs of post conflict societies in transitional contexts have mirrored in a very demonstrative manner the dynamic, adaptive and hybrid nature of the normative concept of transitional justice. This is also one of the reasons why the enlarged normative concept is frequently criticized as having a corrosive effect on the international legal system’s values rather than fostering universal principles (Hazan 2017). In particular the controversial discussion on accountability as one of the key aspect of the international criminal legal justice system, notably ensuring that those responsible for massive crimes committed in the past are held accountable for their wrongdoings, as well as the continuing debate on non-western notions of finding justice for past

abuses that accompanied especially the installation of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, unsettled and rearranged strongly the field of transitional justice studies (Teitel 2015). To take a case in point: During the suspense packed course of the South African transition process, leading figures such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela emphasized the need for a genuinely African approach to transitional justice, primarily by focusing on social forgiveness and collective healing guided by a local justice concept called “Ubuntu” (An-Na’im 2013). They argued that a localized manifestation of transitional justice was very much needed in this context, since purely individual prosecutions according to the Western liberal legal conception would not generate the desired outcome for the entire society (Boraine 2006). The concept of “Ubuntu” ultimately had indeed great influence on the societal, political and moral justification for the transitional justice process in post-Apartheid South Africa, and was explicitly legally fixed in the first post-Apartheid South African constitution of 1993, though the term itself does not appear in today’s valid constitution (see Cornell & Muvangua 2012). Quite similar strategies of combining particular local notions of justice with the globally enacted strategies of the international criminal legal system, in the sense of combining locally legitimate rituals of justice and reconciliation with standardized elements of the global transitional justice model, were also carried out in other post-conflict African societies such as Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda (Lugano 2017). Are there any similar genuinely regional approaches to transitional justice emerging from the post-revolution transitions in Arab countries?

Given the short period of time since the outbreak of the popular upheavals in the year 2011, it is surely too early to give any satisfactory answer regarding possible effects that these transitions might have on the normative concept of transitional justice. However, what can be said to date is that current endeavors in the MENA region to initiate politics of transitional justice have been largely shaped by the objective of establishing classical national retributive judicial institutions rather than by mechanisms derived from the global transitional justice model. Aside from some exceptions like the recently established truth commissions in Tunisia and in the Kingdom of Morocco, most attempts such as the trials against former President Mubarak in Egypt, and other efforts made in Libya and Yemen were in fact purely national retributive proceedings (Gephart, Sakrani & Hellmann 2015).

Following the so-called “Jasmine Revolution” or the “Sidi Bouzid Revolt” as it is referred to in the Arab world, the Truth and Dignity Commission in Tunisia was established by law in 2013 and formally launched in 2014 in order to investigate the systematic nature of human rights violations committed by the Tunisian state since 1955. The Commission was given a four-year mandate (2014 to 2018) with the possibility of a one-year extension. Its purpose is to use both judicial and non-judicial mechanisms. The Commission held its first public hearing in Tunis on 17 November 2016.

Therefore possible outcomes are yet quite uncertain. The other exception is the Kingdom of Morocco with the implementation of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission on behalf of the present monarch Mohammed VI. Its aim was to address gross human rights violations committed during the so-called “Years of Lead” (1956 to 1999). However, this first attempt to transitional justice in the Arab-Islamic world that was launched without having experienced a regime change or a revolution was indeed initiated and realized already in 2004, long before the outbreak of the Arab uprisings (see Kastner 2015a: 277-359).

Given the economic and financial distress and social instability of most of the post-revolution societies, the preference for classical national criminal trials rather than for alternative approaches according to the global transitional justice model might be simply the consequence of the persistence of the old regime’s institutions (army, police, judiciary, etc.), or might be due to other particular reasons, like the need to correspond to international obligations (Safferling 2011; Fraihat 2016).

A vital factor that is shaping current socio-legal debates on transitional justice is the unique feature of political, cultural and religious aspects of the MENA region. Compared, for example, to the transitions in Latin American societies, starting in the early 1980s, in which authoritarian regimes and bloody dictatorships were replaced by a political culture of liberal democracy, post-revolution Arab societies do not seem to share such a political consensus about the best way forward. In fact, the concept of liberal democracy seems to have lost its brilliance, and is no longer seen by a majority of the population as the only solution, but is rather regarded as part of a larger “neo-colonial” problem (An-Na’im 2013; Lugano 2017). This is paired with another unique pattern in the post-revolution Arab societies – notably the rise of so-called political Islam, a long and strongly suppressed religious political movement that is currently disrupting all societies in the Arab world. In lack of a consensus about a common political strategy, it might be also unclear to define specific goals of potential processes of transitional justice in post-“Arab Spring” countries. Therefore possible alterations of the global transitional justice model emerging from the experiences in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings may not be based on western-liberal notions of justice but rather on genuine regional cultural conditions such as Islamic morality, Islamic ethics and Islamic law (Baxi 2015; Fraihat 2016). The resultant challenge for the present understanding of the global transitional justice model is then the question of how and to what extent a combination of these contradicting value systems would be indeed socially applicable. That is to say how a generally secular and democratic oriented notion of a genuine liberal transitional justice model can indeed engage with some illiberal elements of the so-called political Islam, for instance with regard to the rights of religious minorities and gender equality (An-Na’im 2013; Al-Azm 2015)? Though at this point one should also recall that neither religion

in general, nor the contested category of Sharia in particular was originally behind the motives of the protest movements at the outbreak of the Arab uprisings, where there was on the contrary an urgent call for universal values and human rights. However, the unexpected collapse of a multitude of totalitarian Arab regimes only allowed the advent of what was massively oppressed for decades by the former regimes of repression. This could also be an explanation for why there are so many references to Sharia that can be found in almost all recently reformed and newly adopted constitutions in post-revolution Arab societies (Sakrani 2015). An increasing process of de-legitimization of secular concepts of justice and re-legitimization of illiberal elements and religion both as an instrument and as a central goal of politics that is in fact criticized by local lawyers and human rights activists as well as socio-legal scholars from abroad (Gephart, Sakrani & Hellmann 2015; Fraihat 2016).

A further peculiarity of the transitions in the MENA region, which is regarded as a centric element that has to be taken into account for future attempts to transitional justice, is the attention being given to the issues of poverty and unemployment as well as corruption and other economic and financial wrongdoings committed during the former authoritarian and dictatorial regimes that drove the revolutions of the “Arab Spring” (Fischer & Swart 2014). This newly developed access that is highlighting economic injustice and economic problems as important challenges to transitional justice’s aims of social peace and reconciliation could serve as a source for innovative approaches to future attempts to transitional justice, since the conventional global model is indeed prioritizing civil and political rights over other rights (Teitel 2015). Therefore both legal academia and scholars from the social sciences are increasingly debating the need to expand the actual liberal model of transitional justice in the direction of economic crimes and therewith economic accountability in order to be able to address the systematic nature of economic abuses and financial criminality. Though at this point one has to admit that current debates about the inclusion of economic and financial wrongdoings into the actual international criminal legal system are nascent and remain to be elaborated (Jefsberger 2014).

## ► Conclusion and outlook

In this paper, I have argued that transitional justice has become a global model for action in dealing with past systematic human rights violations. As a result of the differing social foundations and local contextualization of transitional justice that occurred in a multitude of countries in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania since the early 1980s, the normative concept of transitional justice has undergone continuous change since its invention following the Second World

War, evolving from an originally pure perpetrator oriented retributive legal instrument into a victim oriented restorative post-conflict justice model. The intense socio-legal debates that accompanied this transformation from an originally pure criminal law model into a more holistic tool that connects legal with social norms mirrored the very dynamic, adaptive and hybrid nature of the normative concept of transitional justice, which has evolved into a functionally specified global legal regime that I call *Lex Transitus*.

Legal academia and scholars from the social sciences are currently discussing two possible alterations to the present global model of transitional justice emerging from the “Arab Spring” experiences. One of these changes may be based on regional cultural factors such as Islamic morality, Islamic ethics and Islamic law. This poses a potential challenge for the present liberal, secular and democracy oriented conception, insofar as it remains unclear how and to what extent a combination of these contradictory value systems – that is, combining locally legitimate notions of justice with standardized elements of the global transitional justice model – would be socially, politically and legally applicable. A second alteration emerging from the post-uprising transition policies as yet realized in some Arab countries could be the demand to include economic and financial crimes within the present normative concept of transitional justice. However, it remains to be seen whether these local solutions can or will in fact reconcile divided post-revolution societies in the MENA region and thus have any ability to inspire future attempts to transitional justice.

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