After the Revolution

A Decade of Tunisian and North African Politics

**The Monographs
of ResetDOC**

Anderson, Benalla, Boughanmi, Ferrara,
Grewal, Hamzawy, Hanau Santini,
Laurence, Masmoudi, Özel, Torelli, Varvelli

edited by Federica Zoja

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Edited by

Federica Zoja

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Contents

9 Foreword
Soli Özel

17 Introduction
Federica Zoja

Part I
An Arab Winter?

25 The Arab Spring at Ten – How Egypt’s Democratic Hopes Faded Away?
Amr Hamzawy

31 Libyan State Building in a Proxy War Context: From Failed Revolution to Failed State?
Arturo Varvelli

39 Prevention as a Cornerstone of Counter Terrorism in Morocco
Zineb Benalla

45 The Algerian Puzzle: Between Social Liberation and System Adaptation
Pasquale Ferrara

51 The Arab Spring a Decade Later: A Balance Sheet
Lisa Anderson

59 Arab Turmoil between Change and Resistance
Stefano M. Torelli

Part II
The Tunisian Exception in Context

69 Consociational Democratization: The Tunisian Experience from 2011 to 2019
Aymen Boughanmi

87 Tunisian Democracy, Ten Years In
Sharan Grewal

93 Post-revolutionary Tunisia at 10: Pitfalls of the 'Twin Tolerations'
Ruth Hanau Santini

97 How has Tunisia created a *real* democracy?
Radwan Masmoudi

103 What Role for Islamist Parties in Tunisia's Democratic Future?
Jonathan Laurence

115 Authors

Foreword

Soli Özel

Almost at the zenith of the enthusiasm for the Arab Revolts when the Syrian struggle had not yet turned into the macabre story that it is, Yemen was not a total calamity and Libya still held together, the duo of Robert Malley and Hussein Agha wrote what in retrospect turned out to be a very prescient, pessimistic assessment that went totally against the current of the times.

In their article "This is not a Revolution" Malley and Agha wrote: "Darkness descends upon the Arab world. Waste, death, and destruction attend a fight for a better life. Outsiders compete for influence and settle accounts. The peaceful demonstrations with which this began, the lofty values that inspired them, become distant memories… A scramble for power is unleashed, without clear rules, values, or endpoint. It will not stop with regime change or survival. History does not move forward. It slips sideways." Not only did they foretell the demise of that hopeful moment, just like in 1848 'the springtime of nations', they even predicted, tragically on target that "Fatah and the PLO will have no place in the new world. The two-state solution is no one's primary concern. It might expire not because of violence, settlements, or America's inexpert role. It might perish of indifference".[1]

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[1] Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, "This is not a Revolution", New York Review of Books, November 8, 2012 issue https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2012/11/08/not-revolution/

And unlike 1848 to which the Arab revolts were indeed compared to, the context regionally or internationally was not nearly as propitious as that of the mid-19th century that made it possible the realization of the goals of the rebels even if these were enacted by conservative forces. That may have been the inexorable push of history at a time of an ascending new order, cognitive orientation, idealism and creativity. And perhaps despite the violence used to quell the revolts the distance between the rulers and the ruled was not nearly as unbridgeable as that which obtained in the Middle East and both a sense of noblesse oblige and competence in statecraft not to mention the transformative dynamism of capitalism helped shape a new domestic order.

The context for those countries that had experienced the hopeful turmoil of that brief moment of elation was very different. A population explosion that coincided with substantial environmental degradation made the management of societal demands ever harder. “Shortages of freshwater, drought, desertification, extreme heat, and dust storms have already shown the region’s climate trajectory during this decade. Climate change was a contributing factor to the Arab Spring. Crop failures, food shortages, and higher food prices worsened the living conditions of the masses.”[2] These conditions that had contributed immensely to the outbreak of bloody conflict in places like Syria and Yemen continue to deteriorate relentlessly and will be affecting a region whose population is estimated to reach 1 billion by the end of the century with the resources needed to manage that growth nowhere to be seen for the moment.

Even the oil rich countries of the region are not as comfortable as they used to be mainly because the oil era is gradually fading away and with the additional push of the pandemic and growing concern about climate change accelerated the growth of alternative energy. Low oil prices will exacerbate problems in these countries as well. To balance their budgets Algeria needs a barrel price of $120. For Bahrain the price is $82, for Libya $75, for Saudi Arabia $62, for Kuwait. $60, for Iraq $52 and for Qatar $30. The average price of oil for the admittedly abnormal year of 2020 was 40.66 down from $64.04 in 2019. Unemployment is a pressing problem and more seriously according to ILO’s figures “one in five young men and women were out of work in the Arab region, compared to a global youth unemployment rate of 11.8%”.[3]

This is the bleak picture of the region a decade after the momentous popular uprisings that concentrated in urban areas. As such, its own particularities notwithstanding the Arab revolts were part of a wave of rebellions that shook different parts of the world from Hong Kong to Chile from Ukraine to the United States from Turkey to Brazil. In almost all cases the urban rebellions failed to get concrete results mainly because what was legendary about this massive wave of protests globally. i.e. that they had no hierarchies, leadership, political affiliations, particular demands and were based on communicative power was also their greatest weakness. A social movement no matter how popular, widespread and vibrant does not by itself generate desired political outcomes. And in the case of the Arab revolts, dignity the rallying cry of the crowds particularly the desperate unemployed youth both unskilled and uneducated and more dramatically and in higher percentages the educated, did not translate in a sustained desire for democracy, however democratic the movement itself may have been. Three processes made the Arab revolts possible by creating the conditions of deep discontent and vast accumulated grievances according to Paul Kingston:

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[2] Saltanat Berdikeeva, The Arab Spring and its Aftermath: A Review of the Decade, *Inside Arabia*, January 1 2020 https://insidearabia.com/the-arab-spring-and-its-aftermath-a-review-of-the-decade/

[3] https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/employment-policy/lang--en/index.htm

1) the turn towards neoliberal economic policies in the region and the resulting increase in poverty levels, unemployment, and concentrations of wealth;

2) the narrowing of political networks of power in the region – as symbolized by the increasingly prevalent move toward family rule, if not dynastic succession, among the republics as well as the monarchies; and

3) the increasing reliance of all regimes on the coercive and surveillance power of their police and security forces.[4]

At the end of the day counterrevolution at the regional level came out triumphant in many of the countries that experienced the breeze of freedom and quest for justice. Tunisia, the exception that proved the rule had in its well institutionalized even if half-way coopted trade union UGTT an actor that could act as a counterweight to powers that be. Today, even if many of the economic and social conditions in Tunisia have not been taken care of, the political system remains open. Elsewhere the hopes have been drowned either by brutal regime responses as in Syria or regional power interventions or by the sheer incompetence of the new rulers as well as by the maneuvers of conniving institutions such as the Egyptian military. The latter not only overthrew a remarkably unprepared and unsuccessful Ikhwan government but took back the regime that it built after 1952; not only from the Islamists but from rival security services that gained in prominence under the Mubarak regime. In Yemen and Libya as well as Syria the hell of civil war and the destruction it wrought arguably wiped out the future of at least a generation. The coincidence of the revolts and the counterrevolution they triggered with the accelerating indifference to, if not retreat by the United States from the region also led to a reconfiguration of the power balances there. The global power's desire to settle its account with Iran and wash its hands off the conflicts in the Gulf led to the nascent alignment between the Gulf Arab countries and the state of Israel unified by their enmity to, fear of and anger against the Islamic Republic. As disarray in the Arab world continued and the number of failed or semi-failed states rose, three non-Arab countries – Iran, Israel and Turkey – strategically became more important in determining the geopolitical fate of the region. Islamism in power actually failed in its test of managing complex countries and actually in producing a governance project. Instead, it could only offer an ideological model that fell far short of the needs and aspirations of modernized urban societies, particularly the mobilized Egyptian youth. Moreover, the ideological zeal was not even a poor substitute for lack of governance, provision of employment, generation of better living standards and presenting a transparent administration that actually heard and responded to the public's demands. Parts of the legacy of the Arab revolts were actually related intimately to the ill-advised, ill thought-out and ill-fated American misadventure in Iraq. The sectarian divisions/battles that began to spring in the immediate aftermath of the Iranian Revolution but did not fully penetrate populations came to full flowering in the wake of the Gulf War. More consequentially, the Iraq War changed the order of things in the Mashreq. The ouster of Saddam Hussein and the empowerment of the Shia combined to generate a geopolitical *cum* ideological divide that was exacerbated by the emergence of Jihadi fury. The absence of good governance/state failure, the manipulation of sectarianism for political purposes and the inability to build a nation or a sentiment of common purpose for society opened the gates for ISIS, that whatever its undesirable and brutal characteristics provided order and a mode of governance. That was built upon hatred of the Shia and the subjugation of women

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[4] Paul Kingston, "The Ebbing and Flowing of Political Opportunity Structures: Revolution, Counterrevolution, and the Arab Uprisings", in *Protest and Democracy*, Arce, M., & Rice, R. (Eds.). (2019) Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press.

and a reign of violence probably was its Achilles' Heel yet there was no time to test this as they were wiped out by superior force.Ten years after that moment of elation, despite the disappointments, tragedies and failures remarkably hope is still alive. 2019 was a particularly good year for the mobilization of the public in Sudan, Algeria, Iraq and Lebanon. One remembers Samuel Beckett's quip: “Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” Public pressure in Sudan secured the ousting of the long serving genocidal dictator Omar Al Bashir and led to a surprising change of regime. Algerians who patiently protested every Friday against the candidacy of their half alive President Bouteflika managed to get rid of him and many of his associates, but the military dictatorship did not relent on its prerogative of appointing/securing the “election” of its own candidate as President. Were it not for the Covid-19 pandemic, the demonstrations would likely continue. In Iraq and in Lebanon the anti-corruption anger of the suffering populations led to protest movements, lethal in the Iraqi case, that manifested a post-sectarian aspiration in politics. After the massive explosion at the Beirut port that devastated a city whose population was in the throes of a financial calamity caused by massive corruption, financial mismanagement and chronic elite betrayal of public interest the same post-sectarian spirit erupted again. It was a noble but once more failing attempt. Such developments are what keep hope alive. A youthful population despite. All odds continue to ask for better governance, accountability, prospects for a better future. Given the fact that the post pandemic world, particularly the Western world will be much less welcoming than even before to people from the region the task at hand will be totally localized and it will be up to the new elites and the publics of the region to continue to fight the good fight. There is enough reason to despair of the outcome if the past is the prologue. But there is as much certainty as social sciences are capable of

providing that what exists, no matter the amount of repression, is unsustainable. The spirit and the energy of the Arab revolts, repressed but not extinguished, will come back and against all odds may yet succeed in transforming a region whose elites continue to stonewall.

Is post-sectarianism upon us? Can societies this time around prevail over power structures? Would the rapacious elites of the region finally see the advantages for stability of an effort to build a coherent system?

This is the challenge and urban youth provide some hope and aspiration. Particularly if outside powers would be more wisely helpful.

Introduction

Federica Zoja

Ten years after the beginning of a season of unprecedented uprisings and political and social change in North Africa and the Near East – which went down in history's first draft as the "Arab Spring," later downgraded to something closer to Winter – we observe change that was unimaginable at the time, both at a domestic level and in terms of the balance of power in the region.

This yearning for democracy – at the origin of revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen and protest movements in Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq – has not been extinguished, but has only to the smallest extent been fully achieved over the past decade. The through-line moving across Arab societies in this third millennium moment of the years 2000 is precisely this overall feeling of incompleteness, which has made any prospect of economic revival even more dismal due to the grave health crisis of Covid-19.

Without hoping to provide an exhaustive portrayal of what is now happening on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, Reset DOC arranged – under the aegis of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation – to provide ideas for debates and reflection on the most important hotbeds of regional crises. This debate involved well-known scholars and analysts, who held a first day of discussions dedicated to the Arab Winter amidst disregarded expectations and glimmers of hope, and were introduced by Soli Özel (a senior professor at the Istanbul Kadir Has University, author of the preface for this monograph). The event was followed by a second day dedicated to the Tunisian Exception, as fragile as it is precious in an increasingly arid context as far as democracy is concerned. The results of that two-day conference held on December 14 and 15, 2020, are collected in this increasingly timely publication. In Egypt, the presidency of former General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi increasingly has assumed the characteristics of an absolute monarchy. Taking advantage of the health emergency, the regime has consolidated its control over all that is most essential for the country, from defense to health, from education to the public administration, from energy to the manufacturing industry. There is no room left for dissent; it is believed that there are now over 60,000 political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. The Constitution has been shaped so as to guarantee the rule of the current president for another ten years. Amr Hamzawy (Stanford University) provides a lucid and updated portrayal of Egyptians' democratic expectations, which in this historical moment are frozen by an ever-present enemy: fear.

The Libyan scenario, the most unstable and confused in the region, is the one that continues to cause the international community the most concern (in spite of the recent creation of a united transition government that aimed to "carry" the country to elections in late 2021) – seeing that the ceasefire declared by the parties involved in the civil war is regularly disregarded in vast areas of the country. The Libyan war has above all confirmed its status as an international conflict following a speedy "Syrianisation" process. Turkey and Egypt are nowadays settling ancient scores in Libya, respectively supported by minor political – certainly not economic – players such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates as well as international institutions such as the United Nations, the European Union, the League of Arab States. However, there are also Russian special units as well as French, British and Italian intelligence services on the ground in Libya. Arturo Varvelli, Head of the Rome Offices of the European Council on Foreign Relations, has written an analysis for Reset on the Libyan state's structural frailty. The essay by Zineb Benalla (al-Akhawayn University) addresses Morocco and the strategies faced by Rabat in the battle against the jihadist threat. Only partially affected by the 2011 uprisings, in the course of the past decade the kingdom has devoted all its efforts to economic development, setting aside all social and economic demands. Such an approach proved to be successful until the at times strong growth silenced the democratic debate, but turned out to be a failure when the coronavirus halted all economic progress and cleared the political fog. It was thus that protests in the Rif, a historically alienated peripheral region, and those of the more disadvantaged citizens, violently returned to make the headlines, for the moment with no positive outcomes for free speech in Morocco. In the same way, a revolutionary 'situation' in Algeria did not produce revolutionary 'results'; the North African country that distinguishes itself for its immense economic potential, is currently paralyzed by a never-ending transition. The essay by Pasquale Ferrara, former Italian Ambassador to Algiers, revisits the nature of the demands presented by the Hirak movement and by anti-system public opinion, amidst points of strength and ruinous choices. Lisa Anderson, formerly president of the American University in Cairo now teaching at Columbia University, adopts an overall perspective in her analysis, setting the season of the Arab Springs within broader regional and global history. It is a flow in constant evolution marked by Barack Obama's presidency with America theoretically intentioned to play the leading role in the MENA region; by the refugee crisis – mainly Syrians but not only – regards to which the West showed all its political impotence; by Donald Trump's administration, in open conflict with Iran and increasingly close to Saudi Arabia and Israel. In the meantime, “bread, freedom and social justice” remain powerful and immortal aspirations that have only momentarily been silenced. Change and political resistance are at the centre of the article by Stefano Torelli, an expert on North Africa and the Middle East who works at the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), and among other subjects analyses political Islam’s internal clash. There is a harsh battle between the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabism, within the Sunni world, as well between Sunnis and Shias in the broader Islamic galaxy. The political, social and economic route followed by the Tunisian republic stands out for its total uniqueness in the scenario of states in the MENA region and it is for that reason that an entire part of this monograph is devoted to this subject. Overcoming successfully critical issues in its recent history, including the risk of civil war in the immediate post-Ben Ali period and destabilisation caused by armed jihad, the country has equipped itself with solid foundations – the 2014 Constitution – on which to build a common home to protect the rights of individuals as well as those of the community.

However, the lack of effective strategies for economic development and more recently the Covid-19 emergency, have created an atmosphere of increasing mistrust among the people as far as politics are concerned. Pluralism and the democratic process seem to be hanging on by a thread, with new political players taking a place in the spotlights of a stage deserted by yesterday’s stars.

Ennahda’s moderate Islamists and Nidaa Tounès’ liberal modernists, worn out by a decade of managing power, are now sitting on the side-lines, while the last elections held, both a general and a presidential election, resulted in the advancement of conservative and populist movements and even those nostalgic for the ancien régime. The situation is particularly delicate; faced with a new season of protests and strikes, the

current government and the presidency of this republic appear to be even more divided than in the past. In the meantime, Islamists and reactionary forces, having forgotten the common good, fight for public opinion’s approval with growing rage. Articles by Aymen Boughanmi (Kairouan University), Sharan Grewal (Brookings Institution), Ruth Hanau Santini (Università l’Orientale in Naples), Radwan Masmoudi (Center of the Study of Islam & Democracy) and Jonathan Laurence (Boston College) are all dedicated to the Tunisian scenario in all its criticality. While awaiting a new, peaceful scenario to comment on and celebrate, we leave to readers to enjoy this in-depth analysis, well-aware that the historical season discussed is still underway and a long way from being filed away.

Part I

An Arab Winter?

The Arab Spring at Ten – How Egypt's Democratic Hopes Faded Away?

Amr Hamzawy

Repression imposes paranoid fear on the ruler and the ruling elite: fear of conspiracies and alleged conspirators, fear of latent or apparent public anger, and fear of the societal repercussions of injustices and violations, which are difficult to estimate and predict. Authoritarian regimes have an insatiable will to hold a monopoly on information and to know all the details of the citizen's life. They have a tendency to keep citizens oblivious to the real situation of the state and society, and they falsify people's awareness as an additional tool for control and oppression. These governments and systems dread losing their control over the citizens, and constantly fear uprisings or revolutions.

There are two main reasons for that and many disastrous consequences. The first reason is the constant oppression, the lack of justice and liberties, and the continuous violations of human rights. Violations range from large-scale eradication to torture and inhumane treatment of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. Regardless of the extent to which liberty is curtailed, whether targeting political opposition groups or affecting all segments of the populace and social movements, the consequences of oppression, injustice, and violations will ultimately be the collapse of the government, the regression of society, and civil strife. On another level, authoritarian regimes, and particularly their security services, recognize the limited long-term effectiveness of repression. But no matter how fierce and violent authoritarian regimes can be, oppression and injustice provide impetus for some citizens to gradually shift from supporters (cheering or remaining silent) to terrified retreaters, or from passive opponents of injustice to active resisters seeking efficient alternatives.

In Egypt, it is perfectly clear today that authoritarianism was established in 2013 on the ruins of a failed democratization process. Its first political goal was to remove the citizens from the public sphere, liquidate independent civil society, suppress the opposition, eliminate free media, and close the public sphere. The aim was to restore the lost era of “one leader, the symbol of the nation and the heart of the state” that fell in 1967. To this day, the successive governments in Egypt have not recovered from this delusional era. Everyone is aware today that the regime is controlled by the military and security forces, assisted by a group of technocrats, university professors, and Egyptian experts working in international financial institutions. Dealing with public affairs, these ruling circles completely separate serving the nation through the management of economic, social, and service issues, on the one hand, and human rights conditions and liberties, on the other. The latter do not mean much to them and do not push them to reject the government that accumulates daily violations. Since 2013, the regime has sought to consolidate the state’s military, security, and civil institutions after the years of the uprising and the democratic revolution between 2011 and 2013. Supported by a great number of people, it seeks to confront terrorism and the major security challenges on national (Sinai) and regional levels (the western borders with Libya and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam are two main challenges). However, the regime’s desire to annihilate political life, stifle the opposition, and restrict the public sphere prompted it to ignore the importance of ceasing to violate human rights and of safeguarding public liberties.

An objective reading of Egypt’s situation today shows that the government has managed to achieve several economic reforms, such as floating the national currency and changing energy and food support policies. But the heaviest burden of these reforms falls on the poor and low-income citizens who also lack social support. The government seeks to silence these social classes and uses political and media propaganda to diffuse the discourse of “we all have to be patient to build the nation”. It also restricts them through the violence and repression at the hands of the security services, restoring the walls of fear that fell during the years of revolution and the democratic uprising of 2011-2013. But this attitude toward the lower classes is extremely dangerous for community stability and national consensus. The poor should not carry the burden of building the nation alone. Moreover, the walls of fear can be too fragile to maintain. Therefore, it is not surprising that the new authoritarianism in Egypt denies the crisis caused by difficult economic and social conditions, which are mainly borne by the poor and low-income families. The official circles deny the injustices and violations of rights and freedoms or depict them as isolated cases. Some officials are also involved in inciting the collective punishment of opponents. It is finally no surprise to anyone that the limited public resources are drained between the budget’s inflation of the security and intelligence services and the high cost of “major projects” presented without any serious preparatory scientific studies. Loans and debts continue, while sustainable development opportunities face severe decline.

It is no secret that the government in Egypt will not renounce its authoritarian path, reduce the control by military and security forces, or explore political and societal requirements to strengthen the state. There is no way to comfort those who believe that the Egyptians have the right to protect their rights and freedoms and that their country has the right to a balanced economic, social, and political development that does not replicate the situation of the "single leader" era, but actually helps to avoid dangers to state and society – similar to those faced after the crushing 1967 defeat. Censorship of independent websites and newspapers has even escalated in 2019. One of the main objectives of these censorship policies is to prevent the circulation of information about the country's economic and social situation as well as in relation to human rights violations.

There is very little in Egypt's current political landscape to suggest that, a decade ago, the country embarked upon an attempt at democratic transformation. Today, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is now serving his second term. According to the 2014 constitution, this term was to end in 2022 and should have been al-Sisi's last. That changed on 16 April 2019, when the Egyptian parliament – whose majority consists of the president's acolytes and representatives of the security establishment– passed constitutional amendments that extend al-Sisi's current term into 2024 and enable him to once more seek reelection; al-Sisi could now remain in office until 2030. The package of constitutional changes, confirmed in a referendum on April 20-22 2019, also expands presidential powers vis-à-vis the justice system and confers a political role on the army.

Egypt is caught today between two evils: on the one hand, systemic corruption on the part of the new authoritarianism, involving official circles and economic, financial, media, and party elites who accept submission to the regime in exchange for protection and benefits and, on the other, the use of different authoritarian narratives to impose submission on citizens. Egyptians are caught in fear and intimidation and are therefore forced to ignore public matters. The war on freedom t costs Egypt a great price. In order to fight corruption, it is necessary to fairly allocate public and private resources to the beneficiaries and to implement an official and popular surveillance of the executive power responsible for assigning

resources. To overcome the systemic waste of public and private resources, it is necessary to apply the rules of transparency and accountability and foster a fearless public debate able to trace, document, and expose negligence. While terrorism is a criminal violation of the right to life and an absolute denial of liberty, the only way to overcome it is to secure justice, rights, and freedoms, to commit to the credible promise to stop all violations, and to use military and security tools within the rule of law. Finally, violence, which results from inhumane extremism spread in unjust environments lacking sustainable development and social justice, can be overcome only by the exercise of liberty of thought, liberty of peaceful and public expression, liberty of public debate guaranteeing its objectivity, and liberty to ask for justice and to activate its mechanisms vis-à-vis the individual, the community, and the state.

However, the majority in Egypt seems to be headed in a different direction due to the government's effective use of authoritarian narratives. The voter-turnout rate, which was close to 50 percent from 2011 to 2013, has sunk to about 25 percent over the subsequent years. And if sinking turnout rates could be understood as reflecting disinterest in participating in elections where the outcome is a foregone conclusion, opinion polls conducted by Princeton University's Arab Barometer Project show that a considerable segment of the Egyptian population has backed away from demands for democratic government. In June 2011, almost 80 percent of Egyptians surveyed considered democracy to be the optimal political system. As of 2016, this number had fallen to 53 percent. Egyptians' dwindling support for democracy is clearly linked to dramatic shifts in their perceptions of economic and security conditions, as well as to declining public confidence in political actors. Between June 2011 and the first half of 2013, the number of Egyptians who took a positive view of their economic and security situation plummeted. In both these areas, confidence in the current state of affairs has since bounced back. In 2013 only 7 percent of the population judged the economic situation to be good, down from 23 percent in 2011. In 2016, three years after the end of the democratic experiment, 30 percent of respondents were satisfied with the economy. As mentioned above, the number of Egyptians who regarded the economic situation as a top priority in 2016 dwarfed the number who prioritized the formation of a democratic government.

Still more dramatic changes have occurred in the public's assessment of the security situation. In 2011, a majority of 53 percent had a generally positive outlook on this issue; in 2013, this figure slipped to 20 percent; by 2016, it rose again to almost 80 percent. Political parties in particular appear to have borne the brunt of popular discontent, as citizens' trust in parties sank from 58 percent in 2011 to 20 percent in 2016. Confidence in state institutions generally declined less precipitously, with trust in the armed forces remaining at 85 percent (compared to 99 percent in 2011).

The perceptions of the majority of the Egyptian population thus seem to be in many ways aligned with the current discourse of the authoritarian regime, which depicts the democratic uprising of 2011 and the ensuing political changes – or, in the regime's language, the "occurrences"– as harmful events whose repetition would only inflict further damage on the country. In 2016 a majority of 82 percent of Egyptians opined that political reforms, if any, should be introduced very gradually, with the government closely supervising their introduction. In that same year, public confidence in the government was 65 percent. In 2021, Egypt is an anxious nation and Egyptians are uncertain with regard to the future course of their country.

Libyan State Building in a Proxy War Context: From Failed Revolution to Failed State?

Arturo Varvelli

Ten years after the revolts that led to the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011, Libya still hasn't emerged from chaos. The initiated revolution was never completed, while all the weaknesses and structural problems of the country, that have violently emerged since the fall of Gaddafi's regime, have progressively exacerbated until reaching the point of preventing the formation of a viable and stable state.

A review of the structural problems haunting Libya

The first, deep-rooted structural problem characterizing the endless Libyan crisis can be identified back in the political construction of Gaddafi's regime and in its well-entrenched rentier nature. It is indeed 'rentierism' that has allowed Gaddafi to stay in rule for over 40 years while purposely surrounding himself with an extremely weak institutional apparatus. While playing the role of the essential income supplier for Libya, an instance which allowed him to develop a 'personalistic' management of the country, Gaddafi consciously avoided to build institutions that would have represented an alternative pole of attraction to his personal control. This is the reason why, differently from the cases of Tunisia and Egypt, the collapse of Gaddafi's government not only engendered a change in leadership, but also led to the breakdown of the weak Libyan state, which was solely based on the figure of the leader and on his capacity to informally govern the country. Once headless, the Libyan rentier state, which derives most of its income from oil and gas, did not – or could not – encourage democracy. After all, as a general rule, rentier states do not need to tax their people, who consequently have no leverage to exert pressure on the government to respond to their needs. The second structural problem haunting Libya concerns what we could call the country's 'multiple identities'. The Libyan nation state is indeed a very recent construction, resulting from the bloody transition from the Ottoman control to the Italian colonial rule at the beginning of the 20th century. Both King Idris al-Senussi and Colonel Muammar Gaddafi were very much aware of this structural weakness. King Idris himself, when offered the Crown in the 1940s, was deeply concerned about the popular acceptance of his leadership, fearing that his Senussi origin could be disregarded by other local communities. On his side, even if somehow artificially, Gaddafi tried to build a new Libyan national narrative by leveraging the population's anti-colonial and anti-imperialist feelings, desperately looking for an external enemy in order to bring the Libyans together around a common cause. Alongside the national identity, or the lack thereof, other identities are intertwined on the Libyan scenario: on one hand, regionalism has emerged during the civil war that erupted in 2011. This can be described, at least partially, as a revolt of the region of Cyrenaica against the region of Tripolitania. Indeed, there exists an historical rivalry among the three Libyan regions – Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan – which represented autonomous administrations under the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, localism and tribalism have recently undergone a new revival, filling that vacuum of power which was left by the collapse of the state. This way, tribes and local mechanisms of belonging and dominance have somehow

resumed their historical role of social mediation, while sometimes contributing to lightening up rivalries also from a military point of view. All in all, these 'multiple identities' participate in the disintegration of the country, which appears to be divided not only between east and west but also among cities and clans within each one of these two blocs.

Finally, another disrupting factor is represented by the growing competition between regional and international actors which arose on Libyan soil in the post-Gaddafi period. While foreign players have been repeatedly supporting one Libyan contender over another in line with their own geopolitical and economic interests, the conditions on the ground in Libya have accordingly started to mirror current geopolitical divisions at the international and regional level. In this framework, the rivalry between domestic factions, backed up by their international supporters, reached its climax in the summer of 2014, when the country became de facto split into two parts: the east under the control of General Khalifa Haftar and the newly elected House of Representatives (HoR), based in Tobruk; the west controlled by what later developed to be the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), based in Tripoli, led by Fayez Serraj but also supported by revolutionary and Islamist leaning militia leaders and by the militias of the city of Misrata.

A proxy war context

Following the proxy-war logic that has progressively absorbed the Libyan conflict, the most recent evolutions epitomize the increasing influence on the ground of Middle East and North African powers vis-à-vis global and European ones. The current distribution of forces in Libya reflects one of the main geopolitical rifts of the region, one which is played around the political, economic and symbolic competition for regional leadership between Arab Sunni majority States. On the one hand, Turkey and Qatar endorse a model based on an interpretation of political Islam inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood. This vision traditionally translates into support for a bottom-up political change in the region, occurring through the electoral victories of Islamist parties within republican systems – a real challenge to the status quo of military-led regimes and monarchies alike. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt aim at preserving the current political status-quo, while supporting a more conservative understanding of political Islam which advocates for a top-down approach where it is up to governments to preserve the public morality of their citizens. As a consequence, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Cairo tend to oppose any political group, including Islamist parties, which calls for a societal change inspired by an interpretation of political Islam that is different from theirs. In Libya, Turkey, and to a lesser extent Qatar, back the GNA, which is also supported by militias ideologically linked to the Muslim Brotherhood; on the other side of the barricade, Egypt, UAE and to a lesser extent Saudi Arabia, are among the main sponsors of the HoR and its affiliated Libyan National Army (LNA).

Support from regional actors is certainly not merely political: Ankara recruited thousands of mercenaries to support the GNA and, perhaps more importantly, provided it with weapons, defense systems and unmanned combat aerial vehicles. Thanks to its NATO membership, Turkey has access to a way more advanced technology than its rivals, and this has been a real game-changer in the Libyan conflict. Turkish intervention should not only be explained by Ankara's support for the Islamist-inspired militias that compose the GNA, but also by political and economic reasons. From a (geo)political perspective, Turkey perceives itself as an assertive regional power with legitimate ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean, and it considers Egypt to be its main rival. From the economic point of view, the major motivation driving Turkey's active involvement in Libya can be understood in light of the current rivalry for gas in the EastMed. Shortly before Turkish intervention in Libya, Ankara and the GNA signed an agreement on the delimitation of their respective Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), thus providing Ankara with a claim to conduct gas explorations in a maritime area which Greece considers part of its EEZ. On Turkish side, such an agreement has a double objective: conducting drilling operations in that portion of sea while preventing Turkish purposeful exclusion from regional energy routes to Europe. Finally, another economic driver of Turkish engagement in Libya is represented by the will to control the rich and promising local energy market.

On the opposite side, Egypt and the UAE have provided strong political and military support to the LNA of General Haftar, which proved decisive for its advance on Tripoli in 2018-2019. For years, these foreign powers treated the Tobruk-based chamber as the only legitimate representative of Libya, and they have established strong links with the main political actors of the HoR. Moreover, they have supposedly provided Tobruk forces with military equipment, including several jets, and might have even carried out operations on the ground. Besides the regional and ideological struggle against the Turkish-Qatar axis, Abu Dhabi and Cairo have in turn several political and economic interests in Libya. From the political point of view, Egypt considers the final settlement of a GNA hosting an Islamist component in neighboring Libya as a threat to its internal security due to its harsh contraposition to the Muslim Brotherhood. Cairo is also careful to prevent the risk of instability at the border with Libya, from where attacks of jihadist groups on its national territory may be launched. Moreover, Egypt is concerned for its Libya-based citizens, who in 2015 were about 750,000 out of a Libyan total population of less than 7 million. For what concerns economic opportunities, Cairo cherishes the idea of a future exploitation of Libyan oil, as its internal production does not cover Egyptian overall demand (although it is not currently possible for the HoR to sell oil on the international market). Similarly, given the UAE's attempts to diversify its income source, Libya does represent a juicy investment opportunity for the energy, logistic and transport sectors, as well as a natural gate to the Mediterranean Sea.

What follows is that Libya is far from only being the theatre of a confrontation between local rival factions; the engagement of external actors, with their competing when not opposing interests, has deeply complicated matters on the ground, especially when UN's peace endeavors are involved.

Latest evolutions: is it just the umpteenth phase of failing negotiation, or is there light at the end of the tunnel?

In the last few years, the conflict in Libya has proved to be extremely dynamic and volatile, alternating periods of fighting and periods of negotiations where the above-explained contextual problems have constantly hindered the possible solutions. To be fair, matters on the ground have been constantly changing, so much that it is feared that the recently signed countrywide ceasefire could be nothing but a new, temporary phase in Libya's relentless quagmire. Just to provide a quick idea of what we are talking about: in late 2015, the old parliament in Tripoli (the General National Congress-GNC) and the HoR even signed a comprehensive agreement in the city of Skhirat (Morocco), which paved the way for the formation of the GNA. In 2016, the lack of broad national consensus around this agreement resulted in a flawed implementation of many parts of the deal, ultimately undermining its effectiveness. In 2017, Khalifa Haftar declared the agreement to be null and void and decided to implement a military operation to conquer the west of Libya. Despite this progressive increase in political violence, the UN had been launching several initiatives at the local level to manage the crisis, within the framework of the Libyan National Conference Process. The advance of the LNA troops in April 2019, which ultimately reached the outskirts of Tripoli, marked the virtual ending of this round of negotiations.

In 2020, international leaders increasingly recognized the influence and impact of external powers in the conflict at a diplomatic level; it followed that the focus of the talks on the Libyan crisis shifted from local to international actors. During 2020, several States of the region started to launch their own peace initiatives: in January, Turkey and Russia promoted the Moscow Peace Process, which was shortly followed by the UN-endorsed Berlin conference, organized by the German government. After the military defeat of Haftar in Tripoli, in June Egypt launched the Cairo initiative; also Morocco has been organizing several rounds of talks between Libyan rival factions, while trying hard to play the role of a benevolent and neutral mediator.

In the last few months, the local UN peace-process has also restarted. The current ceasefire, signed in Geneva in October 2020, has enabled local representatives to meet within a new framework, yet discussions on a new unity government are not yet completed.

All these elements intertwine to compose the extremely complicated puzzle of the current Libyan quagmire, shedding light on the sadly well-entrenched reasons why the country is undergoing such a crisis and is often defined as a failed state. It remains to be seen whether recent peace endeavors will be enough to solve this puzzle; what is sure is that, should it work and not be disrupted by further conflictual evolutions, the transitional period is expected to last for a long time.

Prevention as a Cornerstone of Counter Terrorism in Morocco

Zineb Benalla

Introduction

The UN and the EU global counter terrorism (CT) strategy reflect a multidimensional approach to terrorism and violent extremism (VE) to combat and reduce the risk from terrorism on a sustainable basis. Both the UN and the EU strategies include a prevention pillar (P), which addresses the root causes of vulnerabilities; it focuses attention on emerging risks, emphasizes early action and strengthens local capacities to build resilience. Morocco, an active member in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, has also adopted a comprehensive counter terrorism strategy to combat terrorism and prevent violent extremism that includes vigilant security measures, regional and international cooperation, and counter-radicalization policies.[1] However, Morocco continues to face terror threats from small, independent extremist cells affiliated or inspired by ISIS[2]. A key issue faced by the Moroccan government is a growing population of impoverished, politically, and socio-economically excluded youths, who are more susceptible to radicalization. Most of the cells dismantled by the Bureau Central d'Investigation Judiciaire (BCIJ) are youth with little formal education and who were working low-paid jobs.[3] Our research team developed a programming model, which is ‘evidence based’ and target at risk communities to combat terrorism and prevent violent extremism among youth in Morocco. This policy paper is a contribution to ResetDoc book and focuses on prevention as a cornerstone to countering terrorism in Morocco to tackle one of the main emergencies facing the country in the last ten years.

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[1] https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/morocco/

[2] Eirene Associates. Int. http://www.eireneassociates.com/

International strategies

In 2006, the UN adopted the UN global counter terrorism strategy, which reflects a multidimensional approach to terrorism and the global consensus on addressing terrorism.[4] This strategy urges states to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, preventing and combatting terrorism, building states capacity and strengthening the role of the UN, and ensuring human rights and the rule of law.

In 2005, the Council of the EU had already adopted the EU counter terrorism strategy, which comprises four important pillars for reducing the risk from terrorism on a sustainable basis: Prevent, Protect, Pursue, and Respond.[5]

The UK’s government counter terrorism strategy, CONTEST, is based on 4Ps – Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks. Protect: to strengthen protection against a terrorist attack.

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[3] https://jamestown.org/program/the-ongoing-fight-to-contain-terrorism-in-morocco/

[4] Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism strategy, United Nations, 2006.

[5] The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Al33275

Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack[6] –with an overarching aim toreduce the risk to the UK and its citizens and interests overseas.

Morocco’s approach to counter terrorism

Morocco’s counter terrorism and counter violent extremism strategy intervenes at five levels: the religious level, the security and judicial level, the socio-economic level, human rights and rule of law, and international cooperation.[7] In 2019 The US Department of State country report on terrorism reaffirmed the government of Morocco commitment and comprehensive CT strategy to combat terrorism and counter and prevent violent extremism that includes vigilant security measures, regional and international cooperation, and counter-radicalization policies.[8]

The State Department report mentions that the country did dismantle several operations of more than 25 cells and the arrest of over 125 individuals for their alleged involvement with ISIS throughout the year. In January 2019, the BCIJ dismantled a 13-person cell for inciting terror crimes in several cities, including Casablanca, Mohammedia, and Sale.[9] The report mentions also that the country did not witness any terror-related incidents in 2019. The last major terrorist incident in Morocco was in December 2018, the killing of two Scandinavians tourists. The killers, poor and uneducated, self-radicalized individuals, who became absorbed in a violent Islamist ideology in social media and in their cell phones. They pledged allegiance to ISIS and planned the killing of the two Scandinavian tourists and shared their recording on social media. Moroccans are also considered as one of the main suppliers of fighters to ISIS. Based on 2019 official statistics by the BCIJ in Morocco, 1600 Moroccan combatants joined Syria. 785 joined "ISIS", 100 joined "Cham Al Islam", 52 "al-Nosra" and 500 died. About 300 minors and 200 women and children joined and about 59 women returned to Morocco with 13 children.[10] Morocco's government decided to accompany its counter terrorism approach with a program dubbed "Moussalha" (reconciliation), seeking to reintegrate prisoners convicted of terror-related activities into society.[13] The reintegration of returnees in Moroccan society is today one of the main challenges facing the Moroccan government and Moroccan society.

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[6] CONTEST, The UK strategy for countering terrorism, June 2018. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716907/140618_CCS207_CCS0218929798-1_CONTEST_3.0_WEB.pdf

[7] https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/RuleOfLaw/PCVE/Morocco.pdf

[8] https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/morocco/

[9] https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2020/06/306791/us-department-moroccos-counterterrorism-efforts-mitigate-risk-of-terrorism/

A sustainable counter terrorism in Morocco

Prevention is fundamental in any comprehensive and multidimensional CT strategy because the pursue and respond streams which mainly involve security agencies can not by themselves address the complex nature of violent extremism, such as the grievances, and the ideologies that contribute to the violent radicalisation, mobilisation and recruitment of individuals and groups. Therefore, understanding the context, root causes and factors of violent extremism is necessary to prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalisation on a sustainable basis, using evidence and targeted interventions specific to a country, and a region. The UN plan of Action for Preventing Violent Extremism highlights the presence of certain recurrent factors, which are common among many countries and regions and which lead sometimes in isolation and sometimes in combination with other factors to radicalisation and violent extremism. However, radicalisation is a complex concept and the factors that lead an individual to becoming radicalised are highly complex and varied and differ from one individual to another. The most well-known radicalisation model is the 'Push/Pull framework'[11]. Push factors are structural /environmental conditions that can create grievances prompting individuals to support violent extremism. Pull Factors are those which make violent extremist ideas and groups appealing or more proximate factors of violence. This model is used in USAID programming. However, there is another model used by EU programmes. The model examines: structural motivations, enabling factors, groups network dynamics and individual incentives[12] .

- *Structural motivators* – for example, repression, corruption, unemployment, inequality, discrimination, a history of hostility between different identities, external state interventions in the affairs of other nations.
- *Individual incentives* – for example, a sense of purpose (generated through action in line with perceived ideological views), adventure, belonging, acceptance, status, material temptations, fear of repercussions by VE entities, expected rewards in the afterlife.
- *Enabling factors* – for example, the presence of 'extreme people and groups' (including religious leaders, individuals from social networks, etc.), access to 'radical' online communities, social networks with VE associations, a comparative lack of state influence, an absence of familial support.

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[10] https://fr.le360.ma/societe/vers-un-retour-des-marocaines-de-daech-detenues-en-syrie-201714

[11] The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency: Putting Principles into Practice" USAID Policy, USAID, September 2011. www.pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacs400.pdf

[12] Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE II) in Kenya. https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/strive_ii_manual_final_web_version.pdf

– *Group-based dynamics* – for example, peer pressure, values and norms of groups that contribute and encourage recruitment, radicalisation and support for VE.[13]

A key issue mentioned above and faced by the Moroccan government is a growing population of impoverished, politically, and socio-economically excluded youths, who are more susceptible to radicalization. Most of cells dismantled by BCIJ are youth with little formal education and who were working low-paid jobs[14]. Therefore, strengthening the preventive pillar in Morocco's CT and P/CVE strategy is key to prevent youth from being radicalised. Furthermore, allocating a *youth prevention fund* that recognizes that the marginalisation of youth in Morocco is detrimental to building sustainable peace and preventing violent extremism, will have a long term positive impact on peace and stability in Morocco. In that vein, our research team developed a programming model, which is 'evidence based' and target at risk communities to prevent violent extremism among youth in Morocco.[15] We use both the radicalisation 'Push/Pull factors' model and the structural motivations, enabling factors, groups network dynamics and individual incentives in our field research to understand radicalisation among youth in Morocco. This programming model is based on thorough research both qualitative and quantitative in communities that experienced a high recruitment of ISIS ('at risk-communities') in Morocco. Our pattern recognizes that the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism vary significantly across countries and communities, and promotes responses that are grounded in local realities.

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[13] Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE II) in Kenya. https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/strive_ii_manual_final_web_version.pdf

[14] https://jamestown.org/program/the-ongoing-fight-to-contain-terrorism-in-morocco/

[15] Eirene Associates.Int Model. http://www.eireneassociates.com/

The Algerian Puzzle: Between Social Liberation and System Adaptation

Pasquale Ferrara

I would like to start my remarks by contesting the metaphor of the seasons (Spring, Fall, and Winter, without ever mentioning the Summer) related to the Arab uprisings since 2010.

In general, I find the narrative of the 'failure' of the so-called Arab Springs very superficial. The reasons for the social malaise in the region are still present, and go back, in their current form, to at least twenty years. The UNDP Arab Human Development reports have been consistently highlighting the sense of alienation and lack of social empowerment in the region, including the insufficient level of human security.

The causes of the setbacks of the processes of change, or 'revolutionary waves', are many and often external – trans-nationalized civil wars (Libya, Syria), proxy wars (Yemen), political restoration (Egypt), geopolitical constraints (Iraq), international or regional exposure (Lebanon).

In my opinion, we must look at the Algerian events of 2019 in the wider context of the 'Mediterranean streets' (the Arab popular movements). This new wave of protests (that includes Sudan, Lebanon, Iraq and to some extent Iran) is part of a process of political and social change that is advancing painfully and in a non-linear way.

In 2019 it was very clear that the rotation at the top of the governance does not necessarily imply the collapse of the system, as the Egyptian case amply demonstrated. In Algeria and Sudan, respectively, the fall of Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Omar al-Bashir represented only the beginning of two different processes.

More importantly, the change demanded in the MENA region goes far beyond the model of electoral democracy and requires, instead, profound socio-economic reforms, as the cases of Iraq and Lebanon clearly demonstrate.

As for Algeria, millions of people (in a given Friday, according to official sources, 18 million Algerians would take the street) have chosen the path of public demonstrations in a predominantly peaceful way and without direct ideological or religious references.

More than a demand for democracy in its legal and formal meaning, it has been a question of social justice and accountability of the ruling elites.

In Algeria and elsewhere people ignored and even challenged the narrative of order and disorder (terrorism, civil war, nationalist rhetoric, conspiracy theories, ethnic and religious fractures) that paralyzed civil society for many years. These mechanisms suddenly stopped to work as inhibiting factors, and at any rate, they were overtaken by other priorities, such as human security and legal security (rule of law).

As for the agenda setting, the ‘claims’ of the Algerian street have been:

_ separating the military from the civilian dimension, even though the Army in the country is generally respected and enjoys popular support;

_ fight against corruption (kleptocratic oligarchs and ‘deep state’ interests) that led to a sort of operation ‘clean hands’ with less than perfect judiciary procedures;

_ ending the dilapidation of national resources (especially oil and gas, but also some opposition to shale gas exploitation in the south);

_ liberalization of the social, civil, cultural and media fields;

_ demand for real jobs and employment opportunities (dignity as a socio-political program);

_ generational change not only in the political-institutional camp but also in the economic and social field;

_ a real participatory political system, especially in favor of the youth and women.

As for the ‘features’ of the popular movement, we can identify the following elements:

_ the choice to adopt peaceful modalities of protest (also from the side of the security forces);

_ the absence of a preexisting political organization before the mass mobilization;

_ fragmentation and improvisation;

_ the difficulty (or reluctance) to express a unitary leadership (“there is only one hero, the people”, reads one of the slogans of the Algerian street);

_ the unwillingness to negotiate with the ruling elites without pre-conditions (“dégage” – get out! – was another typical slogan);

_ distrust of the process of representative democracy for lack of trust in its governance.

It was, borrowing from Charles Tilly[1], a ‘revolutionary situation’, which did not produce a ‘revolutionary outcome’. The concept and practice of revolution are rooted in the Algeria society since the war of Independence in 1962, but the movement of 22 February 2019 looked more like a social liberalization movement than a political revolution. After the national shock of the black decade (*la décennie noire*) in the ‘90s with the internal terrorism and the military and para-military reaction of the system, in 2019 the Algerians were able to re-occupy public places both physically and metaphorically as the public sphere. The fall of Bouteflika was the direct consequence of the *hybris* of the regime, challenging and potentially humiliating an entire nation with the fifth mandate of a sick President already unable to fulfill the forth. One popular joke that I particularly like said the “an election without Bouteflika is like a world cup without Italy” (referring ironically to the exclusion of the Italian football team from the FIFA World Cup in 2018).

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[1] See Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978).

Nevertheless, the popular movement (al-Hirak) brought about profound changes in the governance and induced a process of reform that is still in progress. Whatever we think of this political dynamic (whether we can call it a transition or a mere adaptation), the popular movement has not been able to complete its own transition ‘from streets to seats’. Today it appears heavily damaged and weakened both for not having been able to take up the challenge of the presidential elections in December 2019, and for having been jeopardized by the restrictions imposed as a consequence of the pandemic.

The system (*le pouvoir*) played a masterful game. It had some ground in accusing the popular movement of asking for a ‘designation’ of unelected ‘wise men’ with an unclear task, while, with a peculiar reversal of roles, the Army was requesting an ‘election’.

In comparison to the Tunisian case, the recent constitutional reform did not happen through an ad hoc convention (National Constituent Assembly), but was an emanation of institutions and consultative bodies not recognized as representative enough by the popular movement, which, quite contradictorily, rejected any attempt to be involved.

Before the recent evolution, the Algerian political system was classified as a hybrid system (competitive authoritarianism?). Now the elements of hybridization increased even more. Significant changes occurred in the political-institutional system after Bouteflika; however, they do not entirely reflect the much deeper changes that have taken place in society in terms of transformation of political culture.

Echoing the title of a book edited by Luis Martinez and Rasmus Alenius Boserup already in 2016 (*Algeria Modern: From Opacity to Complexity*[2]), the expression “a more open society in a less closed political system” seems to describe well the current state of Algerian evolution.

One peculiar feature of the Algerian popular movement was that of requesting systemic changes and a complete refoundation of the policy as a precondition, postponing the economic reforms to a second stage. The conventional wisdom among the analysts is that the outgoing Algerian complex oligarchy was able for decades to buy social peace by a generous scheme of subsidies and welfare measures. However, there is a strong consensus even in the popular movement about maintaining the social character of the Algerian economy vis-à-vis ideas of liberalization and globalization. I just want to point out that many sectors of the popular movement strongly opposed the new law on hydrocarbons, approved in December 2019. They considered that reform, more open to foreign investments, as the product of a delegitimized political class; however, to some extent this was also a manifestation of ‘economic sovereignism’ on the Algerian natural resources. However, maintaining the present level of social protection in the economy would imply, in absence of international loans by financial institutions (that the present ruling parties do not intend to seek), high fiscal internal revenue. This would be impossible without a drastic diversification of the economy towards industrial production and services. The softening of the restrictions to foreign investments (in particular keeping the limitation of the 49/51 rule as an exception, applicable only to strategic sectors, like energy and defense) seems to go in that direction. The current Algerian governance is very aware of the economic and financial challenges ahead; therefore, I do not believe in predictions of bankruptcy and in the melting down of the system, which showed, on the contrary, a high level of resilience even in the dramatic situation of the pandemic.

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[2] See Luis Martinez and Rasmus Alenius Boserup (eds.), *Algeria Modern: From Opacity to Complexity* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2016).

In conclusion, was the 22 February movement a missed opportunity? History will tell us, but for sure in the near future the popular movement should take some risks and engage in the political process, especially in the case of parliamentary elections in 2021. At some point, peoplehood should rejoin statehood.

The Arab Spring a Decade Later: A Balance Sheet

Lisa Anderson

Ten years ago – on December 17, 2010 – a small-town Tunisian street vendor set himself ablaze in frustration at official neglect and indifference, sparking the biggest and most consequential uprisings in the Arab world in 75 years. Rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya were turned out of office; Bahrain and Syria's regimes barely clung to power while other governments throughout the region anxiously responded to popular unrest with generous packages of economic, social, health and educational benefits and stepped-up domestic repression.[1]

In the subsequent years, turmoil has continued to roil the region. Civil wars have wracked Libya, Yemen and Syria and millions of people have been forced from their homes: the conflict in Syria alone displaced over half of the country's population. Soon, Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan – even war-wracked Yemen and Libya – were to house the world's largest populations of displaced persons and forced migrants. Turkey was the largest host country in the world, with 3.7 million refugees, mainly Syrians. Two other countries with Syrian borders – Jordan and Lebanon – also featured among the top 10, together with Pakistan and Iran, as the principal hosts of migrants from

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[1] "The Saudi response to the 'Arab spring': containment and co-option", Open Democracy, 10 January 2010. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/saudi-response-to-arab-spring-containment-and-co-option/

Afghanistan, thesecond largest origin country of refugees.[2]

If the consequences of the Arab uprisings seem to have been calamitous within the region, they were hardly less appalling elsewhere. By the middle of the decade, Europe's concern that such refugees would spill into the heart of the continent fed nativist populist movements from the UK to Hungary. Among the less savory outcomes of the uprisings has been the exposure of Europe's deep ambivalence toward its ostensibly liberal values. Responses to the refugee crisis of 2015, when thousands of Syrians and others fleeing devastation across the Muslim world tried to make their way to Europe, revealed deep-seated and widespread mistrust of Muslims across Europe. In a Bertelsmann Stiftung survey in 2017, half the respondents in Germany and Switzerland and 40% of the British said they viewed Islam as a threat; in France 60% of the population said they thought Islam incompatible with the West.[3]

The hypocrisy revealed in European responses to the Middle East's humanitarian crises was entirely consistent with the bankruptcy of American claims to high-minded attachment to liberty and freedom, that was dramatically exposed during the uprisings. For decades, the countries that counted themselves among the victors in the Cold War pursued 'democracy promotion'. The George W. Bush Administration's rationales for its invasion of Iraq in 2003 were varied but always included a commitment to a vision in which, as Bush himself put it, "governments respond to the will of the people, and not the will of an elite. [In which] societies protect freedom with the consistent and impartial rule of law... allow for healthy civic institutions – for political parties and labor unions and independent newspapers and broadcast media... [and] secure the rights of property... prohibit and punish official corruption, and invest in the health and education of their people... Liberty" he assured us, "is the design of nature, liberty is the direction of history".[4]

Bush's successor, Barack Obama, echoed these sentiments. Speaking in Cairo[5] in 2009, he proclaimed his "unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. These are not just American ideas; they are human rights. And that is why we will support them everywhere".

Confronted with the opportunity to actually put those sentiments into action during the uprisings, however, the US – and its European allies – were immobilized by interests – interests in stability, in security, in economic access – and perhaps bigotry as well. Virtually everywhere they failed to honor the values they had so strenuously advocated.

Small wonder that the election of Donald Trump was welcomed across the region. A transactional deal-maker with no patience for moralizing, he seemed, perhaps oddly to his detractors in the US and Europe, to be straightforward and clear-eyed. The peoples of the Middle East and North Africa who had protested government corruption and incompetence could expect no succor from the United States or its allies. They were on their own, as they actually had been all along; now it was simply undisguised by empty pieties.

Amazingly, people across the Middle East nonetheless took courageous and often dangerous stances against governments that still harbored delusions that they could get away with corrupt and negligent rule. Sudan and Algeria, which had been calm in the early years of the decade, saw popular protests that brought down rulers in 2020, and the Moroccan government also confronted serious political unrest, while Iraq and Lebanon witnessed cross-sectarian protests against corrupt and incompetent governing classes. And the story is yet to be written in Libya, Syria, Yemen and even Egypt.

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[2] "World Migration Report 2020", Iom On Migration. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/wmr_2020.pdf

[3] "A Source of Stability? German and European Public Opinion in Times of Political Polarisation". Bertelsmann Stiftung, https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/user_upload/EZ_eupinions_03_2017_ENG.pdf

[4] White House, 2003, November 6. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html

[5] White House, 2009, July 4. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09

From a distance, it often looks as if the hopes of the Arab Spring have congealed in a cold and dark winter, but that does not tell the full story. The Trump administration has reshaped the American posture in the region in ways that will present new challenges – and perhaps opportunities – for the administration of President-elect Joe Biden, as much by acknowledging truths as by changing policies. Despite Trump's promises, US troops are still entangled in quagmire-like conflicts, from Afghanistan and Iraq to Syria and Somalia.[6] But his recent recognition of Moroccan sovereignty in the western Sahara ends the coy pretense of US even-handedness in this dispute. So too, his move of the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem also made public what previous administrations had pretended to deny – that the US was Israel's advocate, not an "even-handed" broker.

Trump's orchestration of the normalization of Israel's relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain represented little more than confirmation of what was widely understood: the two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict was dead. This demise was made possible by the weakness of what used to be called the "steadfastness front" anchored in now-shattered Syria,

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[6] "Outgoing Syria Envoy Admits Hiding US Troop Numbers; Praises Trump's Mideast Record", Katie Bo William, 2020, November 12, https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2020/11/outgoing-syria-envoy-admits-hiding-us-troop-numbers-praises-trumps-mideast-record/170012/ ; "Trump Orders All American Troops Out of Somalia", Helene Cooper, 2020, December 4, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/04/world/africa/trump-somalia-troop-withdrawal.html

and the new-found confidence of Gulf rulers who had managed to escape substantial domestic upheaval. But the strength of an arrangement based on tactical agreement over Iran as a common enemy and shared authoritarian disdain for popular sentiment is unlikely to satisfy populations still aspiring to the demands of the 2011 uprisings: "Bread, freedom, and social justice".

The balance sheet of the uprisings in the Arab world a decade on is difficult to calculate. Obviously, the debit side is long: the loss of lives and of livelihoods across the region is painful to behold. In Lebanon alone, the economic tailspin threatens several of the best universities in the region; in Libya, a war economy has become so deeply rooted that it is hard to imagine its replacement with genuinely peaceful prosperity.

In Egypt, Trump's "favorite dictator" borrows from a playbook written in the Gulf, pursuing reform that obscures deep domestic repression and cronyism – features of politics that threaten to cripple the reforms themselves. And I have not even mentioned the humanitarian toll of conflict in Iraq, Syria or Yemen.

Yet perhaps there is something still to be calculated on the credit side of the ledger. The struggle to remake the Middle East is not over, and more and more it is clearly a struggle waged not by outside powers but within the region itself. [7] This is not always good, productive or pretty. The mischievous role of regional powers in prolonging and exacerbating conflicts in Yemen, Libya and Syria is obvious: these so-called proxy wars are damaging to patrons and clients alike. But there are increasingly battles *within* the region; the inability of the world's Great Powers to exercise the authority once associated with that designation is apparent for all to see.

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[7] "The Arab Uprisings Never Ended", Marc Lynch, January/February 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2020-12-08/arab-uprisings-never-ended

The incompetent and bumbling responses of the erstwhile industrial powers to the Covid-19 pandemic merely confirm what the Arab Spring laid bare: both the regimes that depend on the Great Powers and the people who are cowed by them are sorely mistaken. In the Middle East, the pandemic, as the recent United Nations Secretary-General report on the impact of Covid-19 in the Arab world puts it, has "magnified many decades-long challenges [including] violence and conflict; inequalities; unemployment; poverty; inadequate social safety nets; human rights concerns; insufficiently responsive institutions and governance systems; and an economic model that has not yet met the aspirations of all".[8] But these problems were not made by the pandemic and they will not be solved when the pandemic subsides. What will be left is governments whose failures are manifest and peoples who are learning how to take things into their own hands.

The UN report is subtitled "An Opportunity to Build Back Better". In some ways, this sounds like delusional wishful thinking: the pandemic will be responsible for "an estimated 5% contraction in the economy; one quarter of the population falling into poverty; 17 million jobs lost when 14.3 million adults of working age were already unemployed; and heightened risks for the 55 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including the 26 million refugees and internally displaced persons".

But why not credit the efforts of the young revolutionaries of a decade ago, those who rose up to call attention to negligent, corrupt, incompetent government? If there is a chance of "building back better" it will not be thanks to good will on the part of Western powers now revealed to be both disingenuous and inept, as Europe's frantic inaction in Libya suggests, or even enlightened local governments, which seem to be in short supply. Instead, the legacy of the Arab uprisings will be realized in the growing appreciation of the value of self-reliance, of perseverance, of engagement and vision. Libya, Syria, Yemen must construct governments that are accountable not to foreign patrons but to local constituents. Existing governments, like those in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which are trying to juggle reform and repression, must be held to account. When and where this happens, it will be thanks to citizens who seize opportunities, work long hours, and demand what is rightfully theirs – and this is the legacy of the movements of 2011. "Bread, freedom and social justice" are still powerful aspirations – and without the expectation that international patrons will help serve them up, the peoples of the region might just produce them themselves.

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[8] "Policy Brief: the Impact of Covid-19 on the Arab Region", July 2020, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_arab_states_english_version_july_2020.pdf

Arab Turmoil between Change and Resistance

Stefano M. Torelli

Introduction

Ten years after the so-called Arab Springs, it is possible to draw an initial, albeit partial, account of what has really changed in the Middle East and North Africa region as a result of these movements. Definitely, changes – even epochal changes – have taken place. And, no doubt, the very first months of 2011 presaged the arrival of a new season for the region. Hopes for democratic change in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and other countries in the region were initially partly satisfied with the processes of political and institutional change that were beginning to produce their first effects. However, in the medium to long term, it became clear that even this brief but intense season of change would be partly betrayed by reactionary pressures and partly exploited by the regional powers, which saw in this moment of crisis and power vacuum an opportunity to gain ground on their adversaries and change the regional balance in their favour. The historic clash between the Arab monarchies of the Gulf and Iran has thus taken on the tones of a real regional conflict, with obvious negative repercussions in two theatres such as Syria and Yemen. At the same time, actors such as Turkey, which until the first decade of the 2000s presented itself as a model to follow, has been put in difficulty and has found itself having to retreat to the internal front, accelerating a process of authoritarianism that has set the country back two decades in terms of freedom and respect for human rights. The same can be said for Egypt, which after two years of democratic transition has once again seen the army rise to the forefront, through the repression of dissent and the instrumental use of the category of 'Islamic terrorism' as a pretext for the elimination of political opponents. That same political Islam represented by the Muslim Brotherhood, which finally saw the possibility of testing itself in government, was harshly repressed and exploited by Cairo and other regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, thus creating an unprecedented internal split in the Sunni world, with Turkey and Qatar acting as counterparts to Egypt, the EAU and Saudi Arabia. The combination of the four years of the Trump presidency in the United States has helped to turn back the clock on negotiations with Iran by a decade, while on the other hand Russia's massive entry into the Syrian conflict has allowed the Assad regime and its Iranian allies to maintain their position of power in the heart of the Middle East. While at least three countries (Syria, Libya and Yemen) are still stuck in armed conflicts that have become an expression of regional divisions, other realities continue to suffer from structural problems, such as Lebanon (still too politically fragile and on the verge of economic bankruptcy), Algeria (where an effective transition is struggling to take hold despite popular protest movements), Iraq and Tunisia itself. Tunisia, although at first sight it seems to represent the last faint hope for change and resilience in the whole area, shows all its fragility in its chronic political instability and in the critical socio-economic conditions that, ten years later, are again pushing thousands of Tunisians to emigrate to Europe.

Everything needs to change, so everything can stay the same?

If we look at the political composition of the Middle East and North Africa region today, we might at first glance be tempted to conclude that, in fact, everything has changed so that nothing would really change. The persistence, with small but significant exceptions such as Tunisia, of authoritarian regimes in almost the entire area would be the clearest proof of this. In the same way, the competition between regional powers and the recurring dynamics of conflict and violence seem to delineate a Middle East not so different from that of 10 years ago. However, a more detailed and in-depth analysis would be needed to realise that many things have changed over the last decade, partly as a result of the so-called Arab Springs. Some dynamics, perhaps, have remained similar, but the role of the various actors involved in the great Middle Eastern game, as well as the evolution of certain situations, are in fact elements of absolute novelty within the region. First of all, the nature of the actors who have become protagonists in this new season that followed the Arab Spring. Some countries that were previously, in one way or another, key players in regional politics have been weakened to the point of becoming a sort of booty to be shared out among the regional powers. This is clearly the case with Assad's Syria and Gaddafi's Libya. In their own way, and at different times, both these countries had acted as promoters of regional initiatives and catalysts of alliances, thanks on the one hand to the charisma of their leadership (especially in the case of Gaddafi) and the strategic importance of their country and the system of relations that had been woven over time (this is clearly the case of Syria, at the centre of regional dynamics for almost the entire second half of the last century). It would have been very difficult, in December 2010, to imagine two countries so devastated geographically and politically. The fall of Gaddafi's regime in Libya opened a real chasm that, after a decade, has still not been filled by any actor. On the other hand, Libya has become a theatre of battle between the divergent interests of large and medium-sized regional and international powers, which are determined to play a leading role in the region thanks to the influence they can exert on this part of North Africa. Similarly, Syria, far from still representing the balancing act between the different interests that it represented until the beginning of the 2000s, is now the favourite battleground (along with Yemen) in the war between two opposing geopolitical visions of the region, that of Iran and that of the Sunni monarchies of the Gulf. Moreover, it has also become the country on which international actors are betting in order to assert their influence in the region, as clearly demonstrated by Russia's war effort on the side of the Assad regime, in an evidently anti-Western and particularly anti-US key.

'Old' and 'new' actors

On the other hand, to disprove the thesis of change aimed at maintaining the status quo, we have the evolution of certain actors who are in markedly different positions from ten years ago. This is the case, on opposite sides, with Egypt and Turkey, for example. Egypt in 2010 was a tired country, weakened economically and in terms of political authority (if not legitimacy), despite the previous decades in which Cairo was truly the political, cultural and ideological capital of the entire Arab world. Egypt's regional activism during Mubarak's last years in power had lost its momentum and the country was no longer able to express the regional leadership it had exercised for many years. Today's Egypt, on the contrary, is characterised by a marked propensity for regional activism, thanks also to the new network of alliances built up above all with Saudi Arabia and the support of some Western partners, including France, with which it shares commercial and tactical interests

in the Libyan theatre and the Eastern Mediterranean. It must be said, however, that in the face of this newfound external dynamism, from an internal point of view the country seems to have plunged back into a season of authoritarianism and fierce repression of dissent that has cancelled the attempts at democratisation that began after the fall of Mubarak and continued with the election of Muhammad Morsi as President in 2012. The same fate, for different reasons, has befallen Turkey. After a decade of political and institutional reforms and economic growth under the internal impetus of its new leader Erdogan and the external pressure of the European Union, the country was found unprepared for the upheavals that have affected the Middle East since 2011. In particular, the Syrian conflict has helped reopen old wounds such as the long-standing Kurdish question. These changes have occurred at a time of greatest socio-economic difficulty for the country, which in the second decade of the 2000s found itself having to deal with the effects of growth that was disproportionate to its real capacities, with the effect of a crisis that exacerbated internal inequalities. Faced with such a scenario, Erdogan has seen his legitimacy in question and has had to face a series of internal challenges which, culminating in the coup attempt in the summer of 2016, have led him to crack down hard on freedom of expression and human rights. As a confirmation of these dynamics, Turkey and Egypt share, second only to China, the international record in 2020 for the number of journalists arrested, respectively 37 and 27, while in Egypt there has been, since 2013 (the year in which al-Sisi came to power through a coup against Morsi) an unprecedented surge in executions of death sentences, which have gone from almost no longer being carried out, to more than 120 in 2020 alone.

Regional vs. internal dynamics

In the background, at the regional level, the decade that has just ended is full of novelties and changes. The rift created between the countries of the so-called Sunni bloc, with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt pitted against Qatar and Turkey in the name of different positions on the Muslim Brotherhood and on the new regional geopolitical assets as far as North Africa, raises a topic that has been almost unexplored until now. This issue has to do with power relations within so-called political Islam, in which the more moderate component, which tends to accept democratic mechanisms, has had to come to terms with the Saudi version of a dogmatic official political Islam, such as the Salafist-Wahhabist one, which saw the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood as a threat to its legitimacy. This opposition has become so strong that even the age-old clash against Iran and the so-called Shia axis has been overshadowed. On the other hand, even on this front, it cannot be said that there have been no changes. Taking the opportunity of the Trump presidency in the United States and the permanence in power of a historic 'hawk' like Netanyahu in Israel, the Sunni bloc led by Saudi Arabia has pushed to cancel the historic agreement signed under the Obama presidency between Tehran and the international community, once again taking Iran to the margins of the political scene and forcing it to turn in on itself, in the midst of a new severe economic and social crisis. An economic crisis that, at various latitudes, has affected and continues to affect several countries in the area, causing continuous crises and upheavals, harbingers of possible further instability. One thinks of Lebanon on the broken bank, in which the political and security knots concerning the position of Hezbollah on the one hand and the equally cumbersome Saudi interference on the other have not yet been resolved. And again, think of Algeria in North Africa. While this

country, perhaps the most impenetrable and indecipherable in the whole of North Africa, initially seemed to have survived the 2010-2011 season of uprisings, a number of factors, such as the vertiginous drop in oil prices and the precarious health of its former President Bouteflika, contributed to creating a new political-institutional crisis that was resolved with a change of guard at the top of the institutions and the return of the military to the political scene.

Conclusions

This brings us back to the initial question: has everything changed so that nothing changes? The example of Algeria is emblematic of the thesis that we want to support here: from the point of view of the regional balance of power and geopolitical order, the Middle East of today is very different from that of ten years ago. One need only think of the normalisation of relations between Israel on the one hand and the United Arab Emirates and Morocco on the other; or of the weight of Egypt on the North African chessboard; or of the partial disintegration of the so-called Shiite crescent and the internal tensions within the Sunni world. On the other hand, from the point of view of the political and social dynamics within individual national contexts, the situation still seems very similar to that of recent decades: authoritarianism, inequalities and social conflicts exacerbated by an unprecedented economic crisis. It is precisely in the relations between the governors and the governed that the immobility that characterises the Middle East region is most evident, and the resistance to change can be felt. In this sense, Tunisia is certainly an exception. However, the very experience of the Tunisian democratisation process, precisely because of its exceptional nature and the relatively small weight that Tunisia has on regional dynamics, risks remaining an isolated exception. Not to mention the reactionary impulses that, after the first years of revolutionary euphoria, are beginning to manifest themselves more and more in Tunisia too, with the risk of taking this country too back to the abyss of authoritarianism. In order to avert such a scenario, the external support of European players could also play an important role. But here too, the policies of the countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean seem to be driven more by particular interests than by a long-term vision.

Part II

The Tunisian Exception in Context

Consociational Democratization: The Tunisian Experience from 2011 to 2019

Aymen Boughanmi

Introduction

In 2011, Tunisia triggered a revolutionary wave that swept through several Arab countries, bringing in the same time hope and despair, constitutional making and state destruction. Though the Arab Spring has since turned into a bloody winter, Tunisia is still struggling to remain faithful to the democratic claims of its revolution. In its new constitution, values such as freedom, equality and transparency are legally guaranteed. For most foreign observers, the succession of free and fair elections that this country witnessed in 2011, 2014 and 2017 promises a bright future for Tunisian nascent democracy. This is arguably the case. The problem, however, is that, on the ground, revolutionary optimism has clearly given way to deep and creeping pessimism as most people feel that, far from improving, the situations have clearly worsened. It seems that both evaluations need nuanced restatement. On the one hand, the pessimist judgement is based upon the illusion that revolution is, by nature, a great political, social and human opportunity. With this assumption, the Tunisian experience can hardly be considered as a success. For many, the occasion has been missed, being stolen by opportunistic elites. The result is an unstable political situation coupled with deep economic difficulties. In other words, Tunisia has lost its assets, such as political stability and a reasonable level of economic growth, in exchange of a democratic facsimile that only benefits old and new elites. However, the idea that revolution is an opportunity is very strange. Its potency is entrenched behind a wall of romantic narratives that seem to completely ignore the reality of revolutions. Worse still is the revolutionary dogma, mainly inherited from Marxism, that celebrates revolutions as a necessary stage towards an end of history, with eventually a reign of true freedom, absolute justice, complete equality and so forth. On the other hand, the optimistic evaluation of the Tunisian experience argues that, contrary to other Arab countries, Tunisia was politically and economically ready for democratization. So, after the revolution, the process only gathered momentum. Carried by this impetus, Tunisia inevitably witnessed some instability and suffered some losses. But all in all, there was never a significant change of course.This narrative understates two momentous questions. The first concerns the nature of the losses Tunisia suffered after 2011. The second is related to the solutions adopted to minimize their effect. Indeed, deeply-rooted conflicts could very possibly have deviated Tunisia from its democratic exception. This danger being still present, it was the action of the elites that coalesced in a momentary consociational settlement that has preserved the so-called Tunisian experience. Understanding this particular elite cooperation might prove useful, especially in a moment of growing frustrations that seem to call for more radical solutions.

Tunisian two subcultures

1) Compromise: between social necessity and political conspiracy

Despite many acrimonious conflicts, Tunisian post-revolutionary politics managed to limit divisions and to preserve a relative stability. The balance of power between competing forces did not allow any hegemonic solution. In the same time, the comparative density of social networks and the relative stability of

the Tunisian state prevented any complete breakdown of official institutions. As a consequence, public discourse moved very quickly from an open hostility to a cooperative consensus. The most central aspect of this evolution is the role of the parties whose elites epitomized both separation and accommodation. The disproportionate weight of political parties obviously corresponds to the country's political culture. Under Ben Ali, politics and ideologies penetrated, in one way or another, aspects of society with a level of intensity that would have been unacceptable in most democracies[1]. The regime's systematic exclusion of any serious political rivalry paradoxically politicized large spheres of civil society, either through official framing or through hidden political resistance. Education, culture, trade unions and different kinds of institutions were undeniably permeated by political motivations that only waited the end of restriction to burst out[2]. The most affected area was, of course, religion, since the all-embracing Islamic discourse provided the public sphere with a serious opponent to the official political culture. Since the politicization of religion came as a reaction to what was considered to be a project of active secularization, the result was a clear separation between two segmented camps with different practices and institutions. The official denial of this reality showed its limits after the Revolution when the dynamics of politics and civil society proved to be division-generating engines. For example, the liberation of the associative sector after the Revolution has led to a chaotic picture. Usually organized along ideological lines, division has been manifest through the almost systematic dualism with Islamic versus secular associations that, while defending the same cause, adopt different approaches and even use dis-

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[1] Steffen Erdle, *Ben Ali's «New Tunisia», 1987-2009: A Case Study of Authoritarian Modernization in the Arab World*, (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2010), 176-185.

[2] For a broader picture, see Volker Perthes (ed.), *Arab Elites: Negotiating the Politics of Change*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004).

tinguishable vocabulary[3]. Therefore, in addition to traditional structural divisions between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries, Tunisian post-revolutionary politics revealed the real scope of the religious-secular cleavage that divides different components of society. Its destabilizing served, at the same time, as an incentive for militant mobilization and sectional separatism. The result was that the political competition between elites and counter-elites was fueled by the emergence of two hostile subcultures that dominated public debates[4]. The danger of such a division paradoxically helped limiting post-revolutionary untidy competition by forcing rival elites into co-operation. This co-operation offers many features of what Lijphart named political 'pillarization', which is the heart of consociational democracy[5]. It may be defined as the use of politically segmented subcultures as pillars to build a metaphorical bridge in order to bring society together. McRae summarized consociationalism as an elite solution to intense and durable divisions. In order to avoid fragmentation, elites agree upon protecting the system by mutual

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[3] Tunisian political elites have become aware that civil society is a decisive source of power. But this is not exclusive to revolutionary situations. See, for example, Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1953).

[4] Taking into account the high level of relations between the two camps, it is important not to understand the separation between these two subcultures in terms of a rigid dichotomy. It is their assumed determination to distinguish themselves from each other that gives the basis of the subcultural analysis. This tendency is institutionalized, for example, in the media and civil society through the articulation of a dual public discourse in almost all matters, ranging from foreign relations to local affairs.

[5] It is necessary to say that, in the absence of formal power-sharing arrangements, the Tunisian case cannot represent a perfect example of classical consociationalism. However, the popularity among elites of the idea of consensus as a panacea to Tunisia political disagreements does exhibit serious similarities with the different consociational interpretations. For space constraints, this article limits its analysis to Lijphart's model since he was aware of the difference between consensus democracy and consociational democracy. See Arend Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-one Countries*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

compromise and accommodation[6]. It goes without saying that these values are hardly compatible with any revolutionary ambitions. Therefore, it is necessary to account for the conditions and motivations that made Tunisia ready for consociationalism. According to classical interpretations, this outcome can only be the translation of societal structures that impose co-operative strategies for any effective political decision-making. In other words, it is the societal fragmentation that imposes elite co-operation. However, the revolutionary context, with its anti-elitist spirit, may easily reverse the causal relationship. According to this interpretation, political elites act together in order to quickly regain control over the mass. Far from being unavoidable, social diversity being consciously used to create pillars to protect elites' political power[7]. It is the ghost of the mass rather than the risk of division that explains accommodation. In Tunisia, both interpretations can be justified. As already mentioned, the end of authoritarianism revealed a deep societal fragmentation that shocked many intellectuals whose comfortable beliefs were severely questioned when the religious-secular cleavage prevailed over most debates after the Revolution. This result may seem surprising to outsiders not only because this question was not raised during the Revolution itself, but also because most elites pretended to be not interested in this question. By so doing, they could, however, accuse other elites to use identity questions to deepen already existing divisions within society.

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[6] Kenneth D. McRae (ed.), *Consociational Democracy: Political Accommodation in Segmented Societies*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 5-13.

[7] For example, according to some Marxist authors, consociationalism is a means used by elites to mobilize the masses along identity-related cleavages, thus reducing the class struggle to a secondary issue. For the Dutch example, see Ronald A. Kieve, «Pillars of Sand: A Marxist Critique of Consociational Democracy in the Netherlands», *Comparative Politics*, 13, 3, (1981): 313-337.

2) The secular-religious cleavage

The most visible political subculture is the Islamic movement. Indeed, one way of resisting dictatorship under Ben Ali's regime was to reject its secular schemes, hence the success of forging a relatively coherent Islamic subculture. Its electoral success, especially in 2011 when Ennahda Party gained a predominant position in the Constituent Assembly, forced the other forces to follow in its steps. In addition to its religious background, Ennahda built its discourse on the basis of revolutionary priorities and the need to fight against counter-revolutionary forces. This natural strategy in a revolutionary context helped it securing some secular support, epitomized by the participation of two secular parties in the so-called Troika Government. Nevertheless, the evolution of the vote shows a structuring tendency towards subcultural status that benefited Ennahda at the expense of its allies. Despite a relative drop in its popular support, Ennahda retained a strong second position with almost 30% of the vote in the 2014 general elections. Its two allies, however, suffered much heavier electoral losses since their revolutionary arguments lost their power in favor of an anti-Islamist discourse that structured the second subculture. In other words, their secular stance excluded them from the first subculture, while their alliance with Ennahda prevented them from joining the second. The threat that Ennahda's political success seemed to pose against both the welfare and the societal model of Tunisia offered a rallying cry for other secular forces. They defended Islam and said that religion is supposed to be a subject of consensus providing inspiration and shared values for the whole society. Their active opposition to what they call political Islam, presented as the real source of disagreement, segregation and conflict, benefited from pre-revolutionary positive and negative legacy. Not surprisingly, Ennahda Party reminded Tunisian old elites of their past. After independence, the Destour Party took over much of the activities handled by the colonial authorities, which meant that its prominent members and networks became the political leaders and social institutions of the newly independent state. This was the basis of dictatorship whose official means and exclusive practices prevented its values from falling into a subcultural status. However, the Tunisian identity is not necessarily secular. Although a minority would define themselves as active Islamists, only a smaller proportion of the population would describe themselves as secular. The majority defends the presence of religion in public life, and even some relations between religion and the state. A classical separation of religion and the state in Tunisia is therefore not only unlikely, but also quite impossible in a democratic framework. This reality put secular elites in a very difficult situation after the Revolution. Their ambiguous secularism came under heavy attacks. The multiplicity of their competing ambitions weakened the political cohesion of their subculture, and pleaded against the preservation of sufficient hierarchical control to evolve towards a single and decisive political force. But the dominant, almost hegemonic, status that the old regime's interests enjoyed during the pre-revolution period did not disappear[8]. It only moved from an officially imposed culture to a politically ambitious subculture involved in an untidy political competition to preserve or gain privileges[9]. This loss of predominance was coupled by the threat of a future loss of autonomy. The violent reaction of the secular subculture to Ennahda's 2011 electoral success was due to fears that the religious camp may be tempted to use state power to impose its way of life, hence a strong mobilization to defend the so-called Tunisian societal model.

[8] The loss of power does not necessarily mean the loss of its resources, positions and networks. For the distinction between power and these elements in the United States, for example, see William Domhoff, *Who Rules America?*, (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002).

[9] Erdle, *Ben Ali's «New Tunisia»*, 449.

Political parties and the dynamic of consociationalism

1) 2011: Elitist behavior and the depoliticization of the mass

Despite these societal elements, consociationalism could have hardly been possible without the role of competing elites and their consciousness of their own interests and responsibilities. The process of social segmentation threatened both Tunisian social capital and the achievements of the Revolution. Coupled with revolutionary conditions, societal fragmentation meant that effective government was virtually impossible. But the accommodationist practices of the elites of the two main subcultures imposed a pattern of behavior that emphasized the dangers of separation and, through compromise, showed a commitment to the survival of the state[10]. The dynamic of consociationalism was launched after the repeal of the 1959 Constitution. The need to institute a new constitutional framework gave political competition a structural dimension. It was feared that post-revolutionary Ennahda domination may determine the institutional arrangements in favor of the Islamist subculture. Therefore, though the adequate terminology was not used, consociationalist relations became a constant claim of the secular parties before and after the elections of 2011[11]. On their part, leaders of Ennahda tended to favorably answer such demands. The position achieved by this party after the revolution certainly made it the major player, but put huge pressure on its leaders who felt that any failure would be considered to be their entire responsibility. They made the first step towards consociationalism when they accepted an extremely proportional electoral system for the elections of the Constituent Assembly in 2011. In the absence of any threshold, this system, which was confirmed by the Constituent Assembly for future general elections, can only lead to lasting and expanding proportionality. Its scope has already affected the distribution of official positions under all governments. But this outcome has been heavily criticized by politicians, intellectuals and journalists whose lack of understanding of consociational requirements has generated deep disillusionment. This feeling was expressed through populist assertions about the failure of the Revolution, and sometimes the urgent need of a second uprising. In reality, contrary to prevailing opinions, proportionality has not yet achieved its full potential. If consociationalism is to be stabilized in Tunisia, it is likely that proportional distribution of public goods and benefits will go far beyond governmental portfolios. For example, it is possible that public funds may become openly allocated according to the relative strength of political parties and the subcultures they represent in official spheres[12]. In the meanwhile, proportionality was certainly the only plausible solution to build governmental alliances. After the 2011 elections, Ennahda's need of coalition partners led it to seek support within the still-highly-fragmented secular camp. This may be considered as the second contribution of Ennahda Party to consociationalism in Tunisia. A third step came after the 2011 elections when Ennahda Party and its allies agreed to give the opposition minority a veto power over the constitution-making process. In order to have a long-run legitimacy, the Constitution needed to be accept-

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[10] Compromise, whether it takes this form or not, is always necessary for a successful transition. For another style of compromise between state control and free market in Central European countries, see Pasquale Tridico, *Institutions, Human Development, and Economic Growth in Transition Economies*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 255-257.

[11] For the results of these elections and the reactions they generated, see, for example, Erika Atzori, «Tunisia Leads the Way», *The Middle East*, 428 (December 2011): 18.

[12] Political transitions do not typically follow a linear path from dictatorship to democracy. For a conceptualization of the gray zone between them, see Thomas Carothers, «The End of the Transition Paradigm», *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 1 (2002): 5-21.

ed by both subcultures[13]. The effort such a consensus required shows that both sides were aware that political stability is more important than any circumstantial benefit based upon a short-term balance of power. Therefore, it was agreed that a majority of 66% was necessary to adopt the new Constitution. Granting both sides veto power over vital subcultural issues, this concession by the political majority of the time can only be explained by an implicit recognition of the necessity to find historical agreements for the most divisive controversies[14]. With these elements, consociationalism, as defined by Lijphart's model, came full circle[15]. Trying to account for some stable democracies in countries with deeply fragmented political scenery, he defines consociationalism as an elite cartel based upon several facilitating factors[16]: elites' large accommodating capacities within their own subcultures, their willingness to transcend structural cleavages, their commitment to the political system, and their consciousness of the perils of fragmentation[17]. In other words, elites' behavior

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[13] These steps represent an interesting case of transitional constitutionalism, which is based upon legal restrictions against democratic majoritarianism in order to build a viable democratic rule. Ruti Teitel, «Transitional Jurisprudence: The Role of Law in Political Transformation», *Yale Law Journal*, no 106 (1997).

[14] Since the new Tunisian constitution contains several non-amendable provisions, the effect of this veto power will be long lasting. Added to the proportional electoral system, these provisions serve as a limitation on what democratically elected majorities may do. For the role of constitutionalization in fragmented societies, see Samuel Issacharoff, «Constitutionalizing Democracy in Fractured Societies», *Journal of International Affairs*, 58, 1 (2004): 73-89.

[15] For a summary of these conditions, see Arend Lijphart, «The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation», *American Political Science Review*, 90, 2 (1996), 258.

[16] For the notion of cartel democracy, see Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1975), 203-201.

[17] One of the main manifestations of consociationalism is the distribution of power across competing forces in a manner that is more or less disconnected from the electoral process. Arend Lijphart, «Consociational Democracy», *World Politics*, 21, 2 (1969), 216.

serves as a remedy for unfavorable political sociology. In a later work, Lijphart expressed the same idea with a more appropriate terminology for the Tunisian case. Four mechanisms ensure a relatively efficient consensus building process: the existence and acceptance of identifiable autonomous subcultures, the resort to grand coalitions, a high level of political proportionality, and the provision of mechanisms ensuring minority veto[18]. It is obvious that, since 2011, Tunisian elites have proven a large propensity for all these factors. The result has been a very quick mutation of the transitional process from a street-dominated revolutionary context to elite-led political arrangements. In other words, elites' co-operation has depoliticized the masses and reduced pressure for radical claims. The constitution-making process was dominated by fears of a return to unilateralism. For example, deliberations concerning the political regime led to the rejection of both parliamentary and presidential systems. It was feared that the adoption of any one of them would lead to a majoritarian system where the opposition is left without any effective influence on the policy-formation process. Bicameralism, the classical solution to create a system of checks and balances, was never seriously suggested. Due to Tunisian recent history, the focus of the debate was the executive power, rather than the legislature. A compromise was found when it was agreed that executive prerogatives are to be divided between the presidency and the government in a mixed political system[19].

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[18] Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977, 24-44.

[19] For some specialists, this choice, despite its shortcomings, is necessary to limit the probability of a return to dictatorship. See, for example, Henry Hale, «Formal Constitutions in Informal Politics: Institutions and Democratization in Post-Soviet Eurasia», *World Politics*, 63, 4 (2011): 581-617.

2) 2014: consensus versus the risks of fragmentation

In 2014, both general and presidential elections further strengthened the tendency towards consociationalism. Electoral campaigns proved the continuation, and even the deepening, of segmentation. Political discourse was structured around two lines of division: The defense of democracy and the need to defeat counter-revolution versus the promotion of secular values and the crucial fight against Islamism. This divisive campaign translates the pressure of the masses who claim less compromising policies from both sides[20]. It shows also the highly emotional relations between two hostile and mutually exclusive camps. However, the post-electoral political environment revealed the truth about the nature of party competition. It seems that emotionally charged discourses were essentially aimed at mobilizing subcultural masses. With the end of the vote, leaderships were released from this pressure. Their discourse shifted back towards reconciliation. Again, the proportional electoral system acted as a catalyst for more cooperation. The political plurality it led to, with the presence of a relatively high number of parties represented in Parliament, meant that no party was able to reach an absolute majority of seats. But it is necessary to add that consociationalism crucially needs a limited number of relatively big parties that play the major role in negotiations. In this sense, the 2011 and 2014 elections were different only in appearance. In the first case, accommodating practices were based upon one pivotal party, which gave the impression of unbalanced concessions for all sides. In the second, the presence of two big parties led to a grand coalition with a historical partnership between

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[20] Though truly competitive, such a campaign cannot seriously address the most important economic and social issues. For a theoretical framework, see Andreas Schedler, «The Nested Game of Democratization by Elections», International Political Science Review, 23, 1 (2002): 109-111.

Ennahda Party and Nida Tounis Party[21]. But the importance of this distinction becomes less significant when the nature of this latter is taken into account. Nida Tounis is a coalition of mainly secular forces that included interests related to the pre-revolution regime. The only significant evolution concerns the scope of consociationalism that seems to have expanded dramatically between 2011 and 2014. With this unexpected alliance, consociationalism now covers, not only the secular-religious cleavage, but also the traditional line of division between revolution and counter-revolution. This move has been a serious test to evaluate the strength of internal solidarity within both subcultures and to measure the influence of their leaders on grass roots. Indeed, whereas these conditions are essential features of Lijphart's model, supporters of both parties in post-revolutionary Tunisia could hardly understand such a rapprochement. As the idea of consociationalism is not yet familiar, conspiracy theory provided what seemed to be a satisfactory narrative that generated more hostility against elites. The status quo and the defense of particular interests were said to be the main principle for cooperation. This narrative was naturally strengthened by parties that remained outside the grand coalition, as their leaders were trying to gain the support of the most disgruntled voters of both sides. In the test of internal solidarity Ennahda Party, and beyond it the Islamist subculture, showed a much bigger predisposition to maintain internal coherence. Despite many signs of internal conflicts, its organizational penetration in its natural environment benefited from relatively strong ideological ties. In addition to the internal structures of the party itself, Ennahda disposes of an extensive network of associations that provide a large zone of political integration of forces and individuals beyond the Party's boundaries. With the structural disintegration of Nida Tounis Party after 2014[22], Ennahda quickly retrieved its first position in Parliament. Nevertheless, it was very difficult for all elites to keep under control the post-revolutionary dynamic of disintegration. It was very difficult to predict the future of any political force especially when economic challenges served as a catalyst to more hostility towards the allied parties[23]. Therefore, no party was completely safe from the post-revolutionary dynamic of disintegration. The example of Nida Tounis showed that consociational solutions could bring the overheated competition within the subculture itself. Its negative electoral strategy in 2014, pointing almost exclusively to the threat posed by Islamists, affected the legitimacy of its leaders when negotiations became necessary. Its quick fragmentation translated the lack of ideological cohesion within the secular subculture. Ennahda's more positive appeal to defend shared values gave this party and its subculture a structural superiority. However, in the long-run, this advantage might be easily lost if consociationalism strengthens the popular view that all politicians are the same. Since ideology has been very efficient for oriented mass mobilization at the phase of conflict and negotiation, the likely decrease of its temperature will certainly reduce Ennahda's internal unity and reveal the limits of ideological solidarity. However serious these

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[21] Taking into account the fragmented nature of the secular subculture in Tunisia, Nida Tounis itself can be considered to be a consocional party. For a theoretical analysis of intra-party accommodation, as opposed to inter-party accommodation, see Matthijs Bogaards, *Democracy and Social Peace in Divided Societies: Exploring Consociational Parties* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1-19.

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[22] This outcome corresponds to Bogaards' pessimistic approach concerning consociational parties. Despite their apparent strength, they usually prove structurally weak because they are typically over-burdened by their dual functions of representation and accommodation. Bogaards, *Democracy and Social Peace in Divided Societies*, 123-139.

[23] Without a sustained economic growth, the new political regime itself may be threatened. See Michael O'Sullivan, Markus Siterli, Antonios Koutsoukis, *From Spring to Revival: Regime Change and Economic Transformation*, (Zurich: Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2011), 5-6.

risks may be, there remain at least two incentives for Tunisian elites in establishing this historical partnership. The first is the necessity to overcome the divisive issue of the relation between state and religion by negotiation and compromise in order to live up to the challenges of the domestic and international context, especially with growing concerns about terrorism. The second is the prevailing awareness that democratization does not allow any efficient exclusion; hence a mutual recognition of the need to grant both subcultures a balanced share of influence. The 2014 government coalition maintained many features of the political alliance established after the 2011 elections. In addition to the inclusion of two relatively small parties, it has confirmed big parties' unwillingness to assume exclusive responsibility over reforms and other challenges. In order to reduce popular pressure and to ensure political legitimacy, both coalitions enjoyed a parliamentary majority far beyond the minimum winning requirement. This tendency shows elites' consciousness of the limits of majoritarian democratic legitimacy in a revolutionary context. The inclusion of Afak Tounis and the Free Patriotic Party in the grand coalition of 2014 was not necessary in terms of arithmetic considerations. It simply reflects the strength of consociational values within different elites in the management of post-revolutionary conflicts. According to Lijphart's interpretation, consociational systems typically show a strong need to oversized governments with more parties than traditionally necessary to secure a parliamentary majority[24]. Among other things, this situation ensures the government's immunity against the pressure of rebellious parliamentarians who may be tempted to question elites' accommodating practices.

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[24] This is one of several variables that help distinguishing between consociational democracy and consensus democracy. See Paul Pennings, «The utility of party and institutional indicators of change in consociational democracies», in Kurt Richard Luther and Kris Deschouwer, eds., *Party Elites in Divided Societies: Political Parties in Consociational Democracy*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 23.

Conclusion

Consociational democracy may be a rational solution for the destabilizing competition that usually characterizes post-revolutionary politics. This article has shown that elites' accommodationist behavior in post-revolutionary Tunisia has prevented many dangerous deviations. But this behavior and its consequences deserve further attention and analysis. It may be argued that political instability shows the limits of consociationalism in Tunisia. However, since accommodating solutions are not always efficient, consociationalism intrinsically implies some level of instability. Its aim is simply to avoid that this instability gets out of control. Moreover, the 2019 elections have clearly shown that agreements between competing elites have bred further resentment among the public. The masses believe that consensus has led to the containment of their aspirations and to the abortion of their dreams. The potential populist deviation raises the crucial question of the capacity of consociational practices to help achieve what the people consider to be the true goals of the Revolution, namely economic development and social justice. If the outcome is negative, consociational practices may continue, but their utility will probably decrease with time. With the presidential and parliamentary success of several populist tendencies after 2019, Tunisian consociational political arrangements cannot survive if the economic and social causes of the revolution are not seriously tackled.

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Tunisian Democracy, Ten Years In

Sharan Grewal

Ten years after the Arab Spring, Tunisia has emerged as the only success story. While its neighbors collapsed into civil war or renewed dictatorship, Tunisia has broken the mold, transitioning to democracy in 2011 and maintaining it since.[1] Today, Tunisia's President Kais Saied is the only head of state in the region who can claim to have won a free and fair election.

Why has Tunisia's transition to democracy succeeded? Some of the most common explanations argue that Tunisia is a small, homogenous country with a high level of development, a well-educated citizenry, and a culture of tolerance. But we have to look no further than 2013 to see the shortcomings in these theories. In 2013, Tunisia's transition was on the verge of collapse, facing two political assassinations, severe political polarization, and the suspension of the country's sole elected institution. Despite their culture and high level of development, the Tunisian opposition, inspired by Egypt's coup, took to the streets in masse calling for the fall of Tunisia's democratically-elected government.

That crisis put Tunisia's true advantages on full display: its military and security forces stayed out of the fray, its political parties came together to find consensus, and its robust civil society helped to mediate the dialogue. Thanks to these features, Tunisia's transition was put back on track. Tunisia has since approved one of the world's most progressive constitutions, held two additional rounds of free and fair elections in 2014 and 2019, and rightfully earned its title as the most democratic country in the Middle East.

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[1] This essay is an adaptation of: Sharan Grewal, "Ten years in, Tunisian democracy remains a work in progress," *Washington Post*, January 14, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/14/ten-years-tunisian-democracy-remains-work-progress/.

But Tunisian democracy is by no means consolidated. By almost every metric, the economy is even worse than that which led to the uprising, contributing to substantial disillusionment with democracy for failing to create jobs and deliver social justice.[2] In fall 2020, 87% of Tunisians said that the country is going in the wrong direction, with only 41% agreeing that democracy was the best form of government.[3] Police brutality has reemerged, fueling frustration with the political system, while political polarization is growing, nearly approaching 2012-13 levels. Meanwhile, important but divisive reforms such as the creation of a constitutional court, security sector reform, transitional justice, and structural economic reforms, have been all but abandoned.

In this essay, I argue that the failure to consolidate Tunisia's democracy stems from the very same factors that had helped the transition survive its early years. Ironically, each of the factors that proved pivotal in 2013 – a willingness to compromise, a weak security sector, and a powerful civil society – have in their own ways inhibited the consolidation of Tunisia's democracy.

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[2] See, e.g., Sharan Grewal, "Tunisian Democracy at a Crossroads," Brookings Institution, February 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/research/tunisian-democracy-at-a-crossroads/, p. 2.

[3] International Republican Institute, "A Decade After the Revolution, Tunisians Worried About the Future," January 7, 2021, https://www.iri.org/resource/decade-after-revolution-tunisians-worried-about-future.

The dark side of consensus

During the transition, Tunisian politicians won high praise for their willingness to compromise and reach consensus. Béji Caid Essebsi, the late president from 2015-2019, and Rached Ghannouchi, the current speaker of the parliament, played a major role in bringing the country together during the crisis of 2013. Despite representing opposite ends of the spectrum, they subsequently formed a grand coalition government that brought together Essebsi's secular party Nidaa Tounes and Ghannouchi's Islamist party Ennahda between 2015-2018.

But consensus also had its dark sides.[4] The emphasis on consensus in the grand coalition government meant that controversial but essential demands, such as transitional justice, security sector reform, and structural economic reforms, were largely abandoned. Too much consensus left supporters of both sides disenchanted with compromise and moderation, and supportive of new, more extreme parties in the 2019 elections. Frustration with Essebsi's alliance with Ennahda fueled the rise of Abir Moussi's Free Destourian Party, which calls openly for a reversal to authoritarianism – and currently 'leads' in the polls.[5]

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[4] For more, see Nadia Marzouki, "Tunisia's Rotten Compromise," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, July 10, 2015, https://merip.org/2015/07/tunisias-rotten-compromise/; Sarah Yerkes and Zeineb Ben Yahmed, "Tunisia's Political System: From Stagnation to Competition," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 28, 2019, https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/03/28/tunisia-s-political-system-from-stagnation-to-competition-pub-78717; and Sharan Grewal and Shadi Hamid, "The dark side of consensus in Tunisia: Lessons from 2015-2019," Brookings Institution, January 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-dark-side-of-consensus-in-tunisia-lessons-from-2015-2019/.

[5] Anne Wolf, "Snapshot – The Counterrevolution Gains Momentum in Tunisia: The Rise of Abir Moussi," Project on Middle East Democracy, November 18, 2020, https://pomed.org/snapshot-the-counterrevolution-gains-momentum-in-tunisia-the-rise-of-abir-moussi/; and *Mosaique* FM, "Législatives : Le PDL en tête des intentions de vote," December 15, 2020, https://www.mosaiquefm.net/fr/actualite-national-tunisie/835231/legislatives-le-pdl-en-tete-des-intentions-de-vote.

Meanwhile, on the other end, Ennahda has lost ground to the Karama Coalition, a pro-revolution, hardline Islamist party most recently involved in scuffles in the parliament. The fractured, polarized, and almost theatrical nature of the parliament today poses a major threat to the democratic transition, with renewed calls for the president to dissolve the assembly and revert back to a presidential system. Ironically, consensus politics produced precisely the polarization and political instability it was designed to avoid.

Security over economy

A second element that aided but then constrained Tunisia's transition is its divided security sector. Former autocrats Habib Bourguiba and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali had fragmented the security sector, marginalizing the military and privileging the police, national guard, and presidential guard.[6] This counterbalancing was a major advantage during the revolution and transition, as the marginalized military stepped aside from Ben Ali and subsequently allowed the transition to proceed without any vested interests. Moreover, counterbalancing meant that without the military, the internal security forces could not on their own preserve Ben Ali nor stage a coup and thwart the transition in 2013.

But Tunisia's unique security sector has also constrained the transition. The small military and lack of coordination with the security forces created an initial security vacuum, permitting an attack on the US embassy in 2012, two political assassinations in 2013, and three major ISIS attacks in 2015. These terrorist attacks in turn dampened political will to pursue security sector reform, permitting Tunisia's police forces to continue to commit abuses that fuel grievances toward the political system today. Moreover, these attacks also incurred major economic costs, cratering the tourism sector. Even most importantly, they redirected the priorities of the state budget. Figure 1 shows that the share of the budget going toward the ministries of interior and defense has grown rapidly over the past ten years, while the shares for the ministries of education, health, social affairs, and employment have all either remained stagnant or even decreased. Accordingly, the economic demands for bread and social justice that fueled the 2011 revolution have gone largely unfilled, while politicians instead try to strengthen the fragmented security sector.

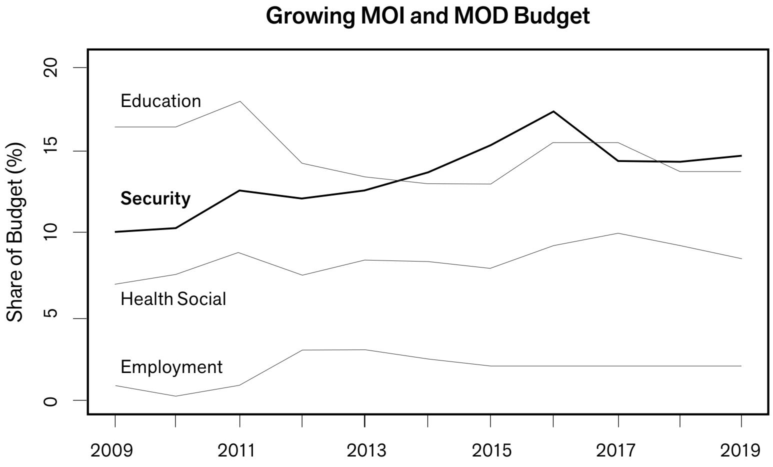

Figure 1: Tunisian budgetary priorities, 2009-2019

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[6] See also Risa Brooks, "Abandoned at the Palace: Why the Tunisian Military Defected from the Ben Ali Regime in January 2011," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36:2 (2013), 205-220; Hicham Bou Nassif, "A Military Besieged: The Armed Forces, the Police, and the Party in Bin 'Ali's Tunisia, 1987-2011," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47:1 (2015), 65-87; and Sharan Grewal, "A Quiet Revolution: The Tunisian Military After Ben Ali," Carnegie Middle East Center, February 24, 2016, https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/02/24/quiet-revolution-tunisian-military-after-ben-ali/iucz.

The dual faces of civil society

Finally, Tunisia has earned praise – and even a Nobel Peace Prize – for its strong civil society. It features both a powerful Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT), and a united business sector in the Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade, and Handicrafts (UTICA). These institutions, along with the Order of Lawyers and the Tunisian Human Rights League, came together in the Quartet and mediated the National Dialogue in 2013, putting the transition back on track during its most critical moments. But the power of the UGTT and UTICA has also constrained the transition. In the spirit of consensus, Tunisia's elected governments have sought to please both sides – the labor union and the business sector – when trying to craft economic policy. The result, however, has been an inability to take bold economic action in either direction. As one senior parliamentarian observed during the 2015-2018 unity government: "The UGTT does not agree with UTICA on privatization or taxation reform. [Without agreement] the reforms were blocked."[7] Other than the occasional anti-corruption drive, Tunisia's economic policy has been largely on auto-pilot, with no government brave enough to pursue a bold economic agenda. Tunisians accordingly continue to view their government as doing little or nothing to solve the economic crisis, while their grievances remain ready any day to bubble over once more into mass protests against the system. In sum, Tunisia may be the one democracy to emerge from the Arab Spring, but major challenges remain, among them a sluggish economy, police brutality, political polarization, and disillusionment with the system. Paradoxically, each of these challenges have been exacerbated by the very factors that helped Tunisia's democracy survive in the early years of its transition. Its drive for consensus, weak security sector, and powerful civil society help to explain both why Tunisia has succeeded and why it has not yet consolidated.

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[7] Interview with author, Tunis, January 17, 2019.

Post-revolutionary Tunisia at 10: Pitfalls of the 'Twin Tolerations'

Ruth Hanau Santini

The post-revolutionary trajectory in Tunisia in the past decade has defied simple dichotomies and binary oppositions (revolution/counter-revolution; democracy/authoritarian resilience; success/failure) and has featured both chaos and freedom.

The country has advanced through arguing and shouting, replicating in some ways and forms elements of deliberative and participatory democracy within a prolonged cycle of instability. Partially limiting the post-revolutionary structural instability, post-2013 politics of consensus has had its pitfalls, mostly related to the maintenance of a status quo attitude vis-à-vis structural reforms which risked polarizing both the political spectrum and civil society at large. Examples of contentious issues included progress of transitional justice, the implementation of the constitutional court, the fulfillment of socio-economic promises, embedded in the 2014 new constitution. In addition to failing to address the above-mentioned dossiers, the consensus politics, epitomized by the Ennahda-Nida Tounes' cohabitation and the personal relationship established between its two leaders, Rachid Ghannouci and now defunct former President of the Republic Béji Essebsi, has engendered frustration and paved the way for an increasingly polarized political spectrum. This peaceful coexistence, which political scientist Alfred Stepan famously envisaged and advocated for under the label of 'twin tolerations' – mutual respect between political authorities and religious leaders – has contributed to the political, social and economic stalemate that has suspended the country's political trajectory, especially, but not only when it comes to social and economic rights.

The convergence between electorally opposed parties, as was the case between Ennahda and Nida Tounes, which entered into a coalition government, has stabilized the country's trajectory both domestically and in terms of international projection. It has also, however, generated increasingly widespread criticism and it has opened up a space for divergent views, ideologies, positioning and personalities. In the last few years, new prominent political parties have emerged, including Qalb Tounes, led by former tycoon Nabil Karoui, the hardliner islamist al-Karama and the old regime nostalgic Free Destour party. Al-Karama rejects the idea of any compromise with old regime figures and is voted by those who stand for sovereignty over natural resources -in stark contrast and polemic with the former colonizing power, i.e. France- and endorses the slogans of the 2010-2011 revolution. On the other hand, the Free Destour Party, led by a former ancient regime figurehead, Abir Moussi, advocates the eradication of islamists and re-legitimizes the legacy of former president Ben Ali and key features of his dictatorship, including state security forces' human rights' abuses.

While on paper, the newcomers could not be more different – a corrupt crony personal political party, a revolutionary and pro-sharia islamist party and an openly Ben Ali era nostalgic and anti-islamist party- they have partially reduced the distance between them and have replicated similar dynamics as to those previously criticized between Ennahda and Nida Tounes. This rapprochement has taken place after the elections between Ennhada and Qalb Tounes and subsequently also between Qalb Tounes and al-Karama, who are now in a coalition government. Some think the same will sooner or later also take place between al-Karama and the Free Destour, after the next elections and if the need will arise to enter into a new coalition.

Political polarization, in other words, has increasingly been part of a tactical posturing, and it has been used instrumentally by political parties before the elections in order to increase mobilization and electoral turnout. After the elections, softer tones have been adopted, compromises have been struck, normalization of political relations has taken place. This has enabled a peaceful political trajectory to continue, but has alienated voters and increasing sectors of the Tunisian civil society as the tactical hypocrisy displayed by most political parties has become apparent to all.

In parallel to the rapidly diminishing trust in political institutions and in politicians, two additional phenomena have manifested themselves: social and political polarization and a diminished religiosity.

The disillusion with the politics of transition has manifested itself with decreasing levels of electoral turnout, which has passed from 67% at the 2014 legislative elections and 60% at the 2014 presidential elections, to 41% at the 2019 legislative elections and 50% at the 2019 presidential elections. This has corresponded to a particularly accentuated weakening of establishment parties, including islamist parties in government, and a growing fragmentation in party politics with the proliferation of dozens political parties. The decline of mainstream islamist parties is part of a larger trend across the Arab world: where they can compete in elections, they have shifted from an average of 35% of votes in 2013 to 20% in 2019. In the case of Tunisia, Ennahda declined from 37% of the votes in the aftermath of the revolution in 2011, to 27% at the legislative elections in 2014 and 18% at the 2018 legislative elections. This can be best explained by the failure of political Islam to offer a consistent project inspired by Islam, which has left a vacuum that either Salafi or more hardline islamist parties have filled or expanding Islamic charities on the ground, which increasingly interpret their function not as much in philanthropic terms but as a form of political activism.

When it comes to the decline in religiosity, according to the 2019 Arab Barometer, half of the Tunisian youth does not identify with any religion. While there is no deterministic arrow indicating a march towards the secularization of Tunisian society, and the trend could stay as it is or it could pinpoint to trends of increasing pockets of religious radical views, the staggering percentage of respondent not identifying as religious partially ties with the loss of legitimacy of the main islamist party, Ennahda, and its post-2011 transformation, at least in terms of public perceptions, of an establishment party.

The fragmentation of the religious camp within the public and political sphere is also motivated by the unaddressed socio-economic grievances which keep boiling up and shake the countries in cyclical waves of country-wide protests. In the latter part of 2020, also as a consequence of Covid-19 related restrictions, with a direct impact on key economic sectors, for instance tourism, the country has registered over 1600 episodes of socio-economic protests. The unchanged political economy of the postrevolutionary setting regularly leads to simmering frustration which erupts as unfulfilled promises keep being repeated and relaunched without much substantiation, thereby aggravating feelings of disrespect and cultural marginalization. If left unaddressed, it will be these grievances, which we are observing in full display across the country in the early weeks of 2021, rather than political polarization or the politics of consensus, that will trigger new revolutionary movements.

How has Tunisia created a *real* democracy?

Radwan Masmoudi

"Those who would give up essential Liberty to purchase a little temporary Safety deserve neither Liberty nor Safety", wrote Benjamin Franklin in the 18th Century. Translated into modern terminology, this would become: "Those who give up basic freedoms to purchase a little stability deserve neither freedom, nor stability". So, the main point with which I would like to begin is that for the last 50 years the main problem in the Arab world has been the nature of regimes that are extremely oppressive, dictatorial, and out of touch with their population. The people, and especially the younger generations are fed up. They have been fed up for the last 10 or 20 years and I think they are still fed up now and I think they will continue to be fed up over the next 10 or 20 years.

They are starting, and they will continue to demand their rights; to be treated as citizens rather than as guests in their own country: their right to dignity, their right to freedom, their right to equality, their right to justice. The regimes are not able to address these demands and these needs, so they resort ever increasing oppressive measures to silence the people. Of course, they do this in the name of providing stability, but the simple fact is that they are buying time until the next explosion. It is a fake stability. I have been saying this for 20 years in Washington, D.C., and in Tunisia, it is a fake stability because these regimes are inherently unstable, because they lack legitimacy and popular support, and because in the global village in which we live today, the masses want their rights, want dignity and freedom, and they are increasingly unwilling to be treated as second class citizens or guests in their own country.

Since 2000, and especially since 9/11, regimes increasingly use terrorism as a justification for these oppressive measures. They claim that the main challenge or threat is Islamist in nature and that these Islamists – and they use the word "Islamist" very vaguely – which are sometimes referred to as political Islam, are somehow tied to the threat of extremism and terrorism. They try to tie political Islamic movements or political parties that are based on religious values to terrorism and extremism. They therefore argue that these parties must be excluded from political life and that this exclusion is justified by the need for stability and the fight against extremism and terrorism. This is grossly misleading and dangerous for three reasons. First of all, the rising oppression and lack of freedoms and human rights is often the biggest reason for the rise in extremism and terrorism, because when people lose hope in peaceful change, they turn to violence and despair. So, these regimes and their repressive nature, are in fact the main reason for why we have violent and extremist movements. Because people have lost hope in peaceful change and their ability to peacefully express their opinions or change the political system. Secondly, Islamist movements, sometimes referred to as political Islam, have become very vague and dangerous labels used by politicians and ruling elites to justify exclusion and therefore dictatorship because it is impossible to establish a real democracy while excluding the largest or one of the largest political movements in the country. Lastly, Islamist movements run the gamut. They are very different in their natures, in their views and their objectives, in the means used to achieve their objectives. While some of them are indeed radical, extremist, and sometimes even violent, many have increasingly adopted the values and

principles of democracy, human rights, and also reject violence as a means to resolve political conflicts.

Tunisia remains a big success on the political front and the only success so far among the five countries of the Arab Spring, or the Arab Revolutions, of 2011, even though Tunisia is still facing major challenges on the economic and social fronts, now compounded by the worst pandemic in almost 100 years. The relative political success in Tunisia, in my opinion, can be explained by two factors. The first is that the military in Tunisia has always been nonpolitical and does not want to get involved in politics. Even during Bourguiba and Ben Ali, the military has always stayed away from politics, and this has given space and time for politicians to resolve their differences through political means. The second, is that the dialogue between the moderate Islamist party, Ennahda and the secular democratic forces in Tunisia started more than 20 years before the revolution and continued after the revolution, and this dialogue allowed them to work together rather than against each other, through consensus and compromise towards achieving the objectives of the revolution. I think these are the two main reasons why Tunisia has succeeded so far. Initially, in the 1970s, Ennahda party was close to the Muslim Brotherhood but was one of the first Islamic parties and movements to adopt the values and principles of democracy and human rights and declared this position in their first press conference in June 1981. This was 40 years ago, and 30 years before the revolution. In those 30 years Ennahda was the main victim of oppression in the dictatorship of Ben Ali and even under Bourguiba before him, and this led most of their leaders and thinkers to become even more attached to the ideals and principles of freedom and democracy, becoming, for most of them, synonymous with life itself. Hundreds and thousands of leaders of Ennahda had to flee the country and lived for two or three decades in the West, mainly in Europe, Canada, and the United States, and therefore had firsthand knowledge and experience with democracy and how it works. I believe this made them more attached to democracy, despite the fact that democracy is never perfect and that there are also shortcomings and criticisms to some of the excesses of democracy that they saw in the West. On the question of the role of religion in politics, our societies, including in Tunisia, are divided mainly in two camps, one secular camp that believes that religion should have no role at all in the public sphere and that it is only a matter of a relationship between the person and God. And that has nothing to do with politics or with the public life or social life. And the conservative Islamic camp that believes that religion, of course, here we are talking about Islam, should provide guiding principles and values for our society in general, including in politics, economics, and social behavior. Of course, they also differ on what that means, but in general, they do not want laws to contradict Islamic values and principles. Some Islamist parties go even further and say that all laws should be based on Islamic values and Islamic texts. Islamist parties and political Islamic parties have different ideas and opinions on what that means and what a so-called Islamic State should look like. For the past 20 years, and especially since the revolution, Ennahda has been moving from an Islamic--Islamist party to a modern Muslim Democratic Party that is trying to reconcile the values of Islam and democracy. So instead of being only an Islamic or Islamist party based only on religious values and religious texts, a Muslim Democratic Party tries to be based on both Islamic values on one hand and democratic values on the other, this means that Islamic laws, values, and texts need to be restudied and reinterpreted to be more in line with democratic values and with popular belief in general. But also, that democratic values and institutions must be respectful of Islamic values and principles. This is not an easy process, but I believe it is an essential process in order for democracy

to become viable in an Arab Muslim society. The people must not feel that they have to choose between their faith, religious values, and the democratic values on which the State and the government is built. Democracy is not just a set of laws and institutions or even elections, it is also a culture and a set of values that must be adopted and accepted by the majority of the people. To do so, they cannot, and they should not feel that they have to choose between these values, rather they should feel that they are compatible with their own culture and with their own religious values. This process was started with the revolution and especially during the first two or three years after the revolution. When Tunisians had to write a new constitution for *all* Tunisians. And the key word here is for *all Tunisians*. Ennahda and other secular democratic parties had to negotiate a new constitution sentence by sentence and quite often word by word. This was a difficult and long process, but ultimately led to a constitution with almost unanimous support: 200 out of 217 members of the constituent assembly voted for it. This process of negotiation, compromise, and consensus building continues to this day and the fact that Ennahda was able to join and govern in a coalition with Nidaa Tounes between 2014 until 2019 and later with Qalb Tounes since 2019 until now, was, I believe, a key reason why the democratic process and transition remained on course, despite all the challenges and difficulties.

I would say that democracy would be impossible if we try to exclude the Islamists or Islamist parties, especially those that do not advocate or condone violence. That is my main point; excluding Islamic parties or Islamist parties is simply a dead end and a death sentence to democracy, because there is no way any country in the Arab world can really become a democracy if they exclude the Islamic parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood, for example. Such an exclusion would automatically end the democratic process and lead to a return to dictatorship, similar to what we are seeing today in Egypt. Similarly, the Islamists must also understand the values of democracy, compromise, dialogue, and consensus. While they cannot be and should not be excluded from the political process, they also must be inclusive and try to govern in a coalition with other secular democratic parties so that a majority of Tunisians feel at ease about their rights, and about the direction that the country and the government is taking. I call this building a United National Front for Democracy because neither the Islamic party alone nor the secular parties alone can really defend and establish democracy during a difficult transition period, so we need to build this consensus, and this united front for democracy in Tunisia or in other Arab countries. These are, I think, the main lessons from the Tunisian exception, and this is our gift to the Arab world and indeed to all of humanity and especially our neighbors to the north. Through our patience and perseverance, which has been tested many times in the past and is being tested today as we speak, Tunisians have so far proved that democracy is indeed possible in the Arab world.

What Role for Islamist Parties in Tunisia's Democratic Future?

Jonathan Laurence

To what extent can we consider Tunisia as a model for the region? In many ways, it is quite different than its neighbors: it is smaller, it has fewer people, it does not have a hegemonic military, and unlike the Egyptian Freedom and Justice Party or the Turkish or Moroccan Justice and Development Parties, the Tunisian Ennahda Party has nowhere near a majority of votes. The birthplace of the Arab Spring appears to offer a tantalizing third way for Islamist participation in the democratic process. It is potentially a Goldilocks outcome, between electoral majoritarianism on the one hand, and anti-democratic militarism on the other.

There are some positive indicators in Tunisia's experience with parliamentary democracy to date. The country is more than a year into its second parliamentary session since the Constituent Assembly. Some degree of political alternating unmistakably took place during the recent elections, avoiding the creation of a new political caste that would simply replace the "ancien régime." This includes the new president, Kaïs Saïed, who rose as a virtual unknown to the highest office in the land. Around 70 percent of parliamentarians sitting in this session were elected for the first time. After five decades of somewhat autocratic secularism and a decade of transition, the coalition governments have made strides towards achieving the co-existence of democracy and Islam. That is incarnated by the landmark 2014 constitution that passed in the Constituent Assembly by a vote of 200 to 16 and marked an impressive compromise protecting religion, freedom, religious freedoms, and the neutrality of mosques.

Tunisia became the first Arab country in more than three decades to receive a ranking of three or better for political rights on the seven-point Freedom House scale.[1] Yet in poll after poll, Tunisians say that they are unhappy. Gallup recently revealed that Tunisians are among the tensest and saddest populations polled in the entire world.[2] Nearly half of Tunisians responded in the survey that in the previous day they had experienced emotional pain, tension, anxiety, or anger. (Tunisia ranks eighth out of 145 countries in the Gallup Global Emotions poll.) So, even if Tunisia has escaped the extremes of, say, Egyptian political outcomes, they are psycho-socially speaking, in the same company, within this group, as war-torn Iraq and Afghanistan, mentally speaking. So, what are the roots of this? Unemployment and poverty have clearly been exacerbated by Covid-19. Corruption and poverty have not disappeared, the rage from the revolution is still there, but it is lined increasingly with despair. Now, the silver lining is that they have more channels through which to express this discontent, but there is, above all, I think, a sense of stalemate. Tunisian political elites, much as in my own United States and in many other countries around the world, remain deeply divided and polarized. There have been more than 10 governments in eight years. In an interview with al-Jazeera, the former president, Moncef Marzouki, said that what killed the revolution "was the long political transition. We lost time and political questions and neglected economic and social ones, making it easier for counterrevolutionaries".

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[1] https://freedomhouse.org/country/tunisia/freedom-world/2020

[2] https://www.gallup.com/analytics/324191/gallup-global-emotions-report-2020.aspx

The revolution exposed a deep-seated State-Islam cleavage that remains wide open because for all the proud secular milestones that were achieved under President Bourguiba in the 20th Century, it was the country's political Islam party, Ennahda, that emerged as the largest single party in post-revolutionary Tunisia. In the Constituent Assembly elected shortly after the revolution, they received three times the size of the vote of their closest competitor. Some of the challenges associated with integrating Ennahda, and other Brotherhood parties in the region, may find useful analogies in the experience of the Italian republic during the Cold War. Historically, Italy has known high degrees of polarization between nationalists and papal loyalists, monarchists and republicans, fascists and communists and so on. In the postwar period, Italy was also coping with the reality of having the West's largest Communist Party, as well as a violent leftist fringe that appealed to an international audience. Like the Muslim Brotherhood today, the Communist Party at the time was banned outright in several countries, including in West Germany, for example. What the Italian Communist Party witnessed in the early 1970s is similar to what the Ennahda Party is witnessing in the early 2010s. The Communist Party saw, after the electoral victory of Salvador Allende in the Chilean elections of 1973, that the Western democracies stood by, or worse, encouraged the coup by General Agosto Pinochet in September of that year. Shortly thereafter, Italian communist leaders sought out a Historic Compromise to bring the Italian Communist Party inside the governmental majority. The intentions were laudable, but we know what fate befell that attempt. Violent extremists, or indeed some cynical combination of skeptics of compromise, committed acts of terror that would take away any appetite for a coalition. This culminated with the assassination of the leader of the Italian Christian Democrats, Aldo Moro. Now, there are echoes here of the dynamic between Ennahda and perhaps Ansar al-Sharia. There were moments in the post-revolutionary period of extreme tension; assassinations, terrorist attacks in 2013, 2015, and 2017. The Chilean scenario was raised by the reality of what transpired after the August 2013 military coup in Egypt.

The counterexample of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is in some ways useful to Tunisia. Ennahda participates in government but senses it will never come into a majority – even if it is one of the largest single political forces. Ennahda's participation marks the symbolically important inclusion of an undeniable segment of the regional political spectrum: a Muslim Brotherhood affiliate. But it knows it cannot stray too far in certain directions – so as to avoid the fate of Mohammed Morsi, or indeed that of its own Tunisian predecessors who were imprisoned or exiled under the old regime. Capitals from Washington to Paris have all shown that they do not necessarily disapprove of military coups in certain circumstances. That is nothing new, and it was recently affirmed by the official visit of President al-Sisi to Paris. In another sense, Ennahda has had a stabilizing effect, at least in the very short term, because the party's support was decisive for the government's own votes of confidence and ability to survive this year and to avoid early elections. That also means that the government is "tainted" by the active toleration it receives from this party. But it is a living testament to an active historic compromise among a set of parties.

The question of Ennahda's influence in the government, and in the country more broadly, is a stand-in for the wider question of what the proper relationship between religion and politics is, and what should be role of Islam in the society and the State. This culminated in December 2020 with fistfights in parliament, which took place during a routine parliamentary commission meeting in the Women's Affairs Commission, where single mothers were being denigrated and belittled as rape victims. In the ensuing melee between members of al-Karama on the one hand and the Democrats of at-Tayyar on the other, one of the deputies was struck in the head with a bottle. On the one hand, it's better to have them throwing punches in parliament than launching mortar outside. But if everyone is better off in parliament, what, in fact, are they doing there? Or what are they *not* doing? By some accounts, they are underperforming legislatively, only 42 or so laws were approved from November to July 2020, the first half of their first year in session. That's up from 27 the previous year, but many of these legislative acts were minor. But of course, if we consider the broader question of the culture wars, they are *not* pursuing a reform agenda that was initiated by President Béji Caïd Essebsi, for example, to revolutionize the practice of female inheritance in this Muslim majority country where women still receive just a fraction of what males do. So, one issue here is of the tone being set by the president Saïed, who announced his opposition to the reform on International Women's Day. That was prelude to the discussion that led to the violence in the halls of parliament in December of 2020. Another question is what will become of the tradition of independent Tunisia's first president Habib Bourguiba? What can be preserved from that tradition, assuming it is not all destined to be thrown away? In his contribution, Sharan Grewal mentions the tension between pluralism and secularism. Now there are those who fear that the radical minority is already being tolerated or even indulged and there are inherent dangers in this strategy. Tunisians know it well, because the troika tried it back in 2011 to 2013, and the government hesitated for nearly two years before it banned Ansar al-Sharia. Back then, nearly half of the country's mosques fell into a state of lawlessness, similar to the lack of control over Algerian mosques in the early 1990s.

Tunisians discovered after the revolution that their land contained strong wellsprings of support for Salafi movements, an alarming reality buried underneath the surface. But in the first year, the government granted approval to Salafi groups, including Hizb ut-Tahrir and legal political parties. It registered hundreds of new Salafi charities and schools because the government was loath to use a heavy hand. And here lies the dilemma: on the one hand, it wanted to win back mosques from those who had escaped official oversight, yet dozens mosques continued to elude state oversight for years after the revolution. And there are some who say that the chaos that spread in those mosques led to Tunisia's share of responsibility even for the birth of ISIS, because Tunisia was the largest per capita exporter of foreign fighters to Syria and to Iraq. Now, Tunisian authorities have remained alert for would-be combatants, they have confiscated the passports of tens of thousands of those accused of seeking violent jihad abroad. They have missed, of course, thousands of others. Now, since those days, the government has done its best to prevent mosques from being used for the wrong kind of political activities and has reasserted control. It has added a couple of thousand mosques to the countryside, increasing the country's prayer spaces by about half. The terrorist threat will not disappear overnight. One such young man recently made his way through Italy to Nice this fall and murdered four churchgoers in the Cathedral of Nice in France. Nonetheless, today, the government apparently feels the need to impress certain constituencies with its toughness on certain issues. Recently, a blogger was sentenced to two years imprisonment for criticizing the State, which had declined to act against a radical imam who was inflaming passions following the murder of Samuel Paty in France. Additionally, after the series of so-called Abraham Accords was recently extended to include Morocco, the question has not been "will Tunisia recognize Israel?" but "will Tunisia condemn Morocco?"

Recent polling by the political scientist Mansour Moaddel from the University of Maryland, College Park, investigated the changing relationship between religion and society, religion and politics.[3]

His preliminary results demonstrate a shift towards national identity. There is an overall decline of respondents who say that a good government should only implement Sharia. He finds greater support for secular politics, as well as those who say they are primarily Muslim versus primarily Tunisian fell significantly since the revolution from 59 percent to 52 percent. Moaddel also found that the religious tolerance index has increased marginally, but his polling has also encompassed something else that others have found regionally, which includes Tunisia: that the Muslim Brotherhood has reestablished some ideas related to patriarchy and male supremacy. He found a widening gap in the gender equality index; women have a greater sense of gender inequalities than men.

These divergent attitudes about traditionalism and the role of religion reveal deeper discord about political fundamentals. Sometimes it seems that the only things that secularists and Islamists agree upon is that the State should evangelize *their* set of values and keep the *other side's* extremists in check. But the milestones of secularism for one side are the experience of bans, denials, and humiliation for the other.

In conclusion, governing in these conditions presents dilemmas for any administration determined not to repeat the behaviors of the old regime. After all, with the repression of Ennahda under President Ben Ali, the Salafi phenomenon grew and gained ground – part of what led to its proliferation after January 2011. The current state of affairs has many scared on both sides of this divide, because of this possibility of the State's hammer coming down upon them next. There is still the risk of falling back into a situation of anarchy in search of the local meaning of political and religious freedom. Tunisia is still finding the path which will require further refinement of that definition of freedom within its specific context.

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[3] Mansoor Moaddel, "Trends in Values in the Middle East and North Africa: Decline of Political Islam and the Rise of Liberal Values, Findings from Comparative Longitudinal and Panel Surveys in the Middle East and North Africa." *Middle Eastern Values Survey: Documenting Changing Values in the Middle East*, https://mevs.org/research/findings

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Ten years after the beginning of the Arab Spring – a season that was soon downgraded to being more like Winter – nowadays, we observe change that would have been unimaginable at the time, both at a domestic level and in terms of the balance of power in the region. This yearning for democracy – at the origin of revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen and protest movements in Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq – has not been extinguished, but has only to the smallest extent been fully achieved over the past decade. The common thread moving through Arab society in this third millennium is precisely the overall feeling of incompletion, making any prospect of economic revival more dismal due to the arrival of a lethal health crisis. Reset DOC proposed therefore to provide ideas for debates and reflection on the most important hotbeds of regional crises, involving famous scholars and analysts who held a first day of discussions dedicated to the Arab Winter amidst disregarded expectations and glimmers of hope, and a second day reserved to the Tunisian Exception, as fragile as it is precious in an increasingly arid context as far as democracy is concerned. The results of that conference, held on December 14 and 15, 2020, have been collected in this increasingly relevant publication.

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