

At the Crossroads: the Rise of “Moderate Islamists” and the Challenges of Democratic Transition in post-January 14th Tunisia

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introduction

- In December 2010, Tunisians took to the streets following the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi
 - ◆ Ensuing protests over rampant corruption, lack of economic opportunity, and police violence spread across the country: demanding political liberties, basic freedoms, employment, and dignity.
 - The uprising's slogans: absence of Islamic ideology (post-ideological, civic, and universal) + Dramatis personae (omnipresence of uncovered women)
 - Shook received wisdoms about the region: centrality of Islam/ immunity to waves of democratization.
 - ◆ The desacralization Process was short-lived.
 - Ghannouchi's return from exile (the new Khomeini): the harbinger of "moderate Islam. theoretical decline of one Islamist model : Iranian/ rise of another: Turkish.
 - The Islamist party won 37.%. Votes, formed a coalition government to put Tunisia on the path of genuine democratization: the "Moderate Islam" experiment began for Tunisians and for the US administration and Think Tanks

Introduction

- This will study Tunisia's experiment with “moderate Islam (ists)” in light of the challenges incurred as Tunisians aspire for a transition towards democracy
 - ◆ First, sketch out the broad features of “moderate Islam (ists)” as a Western/American ideological construct (the works of American and American Muslim scholars and American think tanks)
 - ◆ Second, Taking a snapshot more than 18 months after two predominantly Islamist governments have ruled Tunisia:
 - Gauge the extent to which they have managed to adjust their ideological message to meet the aspirations of the Tunisian people and the expectations of the American think tanks/administration: examine concrete political, economic, and civil rights changes during this period.
 - ◆ It concludes with future perspectives

“Moderate Islam”: an American Think Tank Perspective

- **9/11 feverish search for “moderate Muslims”**: A minority of “good Guys” vs “bad guys” / Bush’s two options for Muslims “either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists”
 - ◆ **New Standardized double-dimensional lens for westerners**: :“Neo-Orientalism” distinguishes minority of moderates & non-moderate Islam
- **A corps of geopolitical strategists to define US new role in the (Muslim)world/ improve US image**
 - ◆ **reinventing US relationship with Islam /the Muslim world, bridging the twin missions: helping promote democracy+fighting terrorism.**
 - ◆ **new categories and new interlocutors bridge the hiatus between what Thomas Barnett calls the “core” and the “gap”.**
 - **They came to realize that they should redefine the terms of US post-9/11 relation with Islamic movements in the Muslim world**
 - **The “moderate Muslim category” as an alternative to overcome “the Islamist dilemma”—how America can promote democracy in the region without risking bringing Islamists to power.**

- ◆ **Cairo (June 2005), M Rice .“For 60 years, my country, the United States, pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region, here in the Middle East, and we achieved neither. Throughout the Middle East the fear of free choices can no longer justify the denial of liberty. It is time to abandon the excuses that are made to avoid the hard work of democracy.”**

- ◆ **Obama “Seeking a New Beginning” with the Muslim world**
 - **His first trips overseas as a president were to Turkey and Cairo.**
 - : **Message: the US must atone for its past policies in the Muslim world, and a dramatic shift in US relation with US-backed secular dictatorships**
 - » “we will respect the right of all peaceful and law-abiding voices to be heard around the world, even if we disagree with them” (implying the Islamists)
 - » “we will welcome all elected, peaceful governments – provided they govern with respect for all their people.” (Cairo, June 2009)

- ◆ In singling out Turkey as a “moderate Islamic” country he anabaptized “moderate Islam” in its exemplary Turkish version as a panacea for America’s protracted “Islamist dilemma”
- Controversies aside, the decade that preceded the “Arab spring” witnessed the flow of streams of articles and volumes about “moderate Islam” in the United States.
 - ◆ written mainly by American/Muslim scholars of Islam associated with mainstream AM organizations, or research institutes, striving to make themselves heard to foreign policy makers.
 - Most of them had affiliations, leanings or sympathy with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or one of its offshoots across the Muslim world
 - Even though they recognize the limits of the category- “moderate Muslims”, they have contributed with varying degrees to define it.
 - “Reflection on the ‘Moderate Muslims’ Debate” by al-Alwani, Taha Jabir , “Moderate Muslims: A Mainstream of Modernists, Islamists, Conservatives, and traditionalists” by Esposito, John L., “Islamic Democracy and Moderate Muslims: The Straight path Runs Through the Middle East” ” by Khan, M. A. Muqtedar, etc...

◆ In “Who Are Moderate Muslims?” *Muqtedar Khan*

Muslims in general do not like using the term, understanding it to indicate an individual who has politically sold out to the “other” side. ...I believe that moderate Muslims are different from militant Muslims. For moderate Muslims *Ijtihad* is the preferred method of choice for social and political change and military *Jihad* the last option. For militant Muslims, military *Jihad* is the first option and *Ijtihad* is not an option at all. Today, the relationship between Islam and the rest is getting increasingly worse. Muslim militants are sowing seeds of poison and hatred between Muslims and the rest of humanity by committing egregious acts of violence in the name of Islam. In this precarious environment, it is important that everyone finds and nurtures the many wonderful examples of moderate Muslims one can still find.

(American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences; Summer2005)

Muqtedar Khan's message did not fall on deaf ears

- ◆ **An avalanche of articles written by a battery of defense strategists and foreign policy analysts**
 - **associated with a wide range of think tanks (the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institute, and the RAND Center for Middle East Public Policy...**
 - **theories about “moderate Islamists” as alternative credible interlocutors for the US are reflected in such volumes**
 - ***Rethinking the Battle of Ideas: How the United States Can Help Muslim Moderates* by Ronald R. Krebs (2008); *Uncharted Journey: Democracy Promotion in the Middle East* (co-edited with Thomas Carothers, 2005). *Building Moderate Muslim Networks* by Angel Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Lowell H. Schwartz, Peter Sickle, “The Muslim Middle East: Is there a Democratic Option?” by McCabe, Thomas R, “The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood” by Leiken, Robert S., Brooke Steven, and “Americans Don’t Really Believe There Is Such a Thing as a Moderate Muslim” by Wellen, Russ**
 - » **Most of them draw clear lines between the “moderate Islamist groups” embodied in the universal Muslim Brotherhood and the extremist Jihadi groups, embodied in al Qaeda**

- ◆ **Provided a roadmap: Building Moderate Muslim Networks, published by the RAND Center for Middle East Public Policy in (2007), offers US policy makers a practical road map for moderate network building in the Muslim world.**
 - **Defining “moderate Muslims” as “those who share the key dimensions of democratic culture...support for democracy and internationally recognized human rights , respect for diversity, acceptance of non-sectarian sources of law, and opposition to terrorism, and other illegitimate forms of violence.”**
 - **This work includes an unwavering call for the US government to engage “moderate Muslims.” It bolsters its argument on three pillars:**
 - **“First that Islamists represent the only real mass-based alternative to authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world (and especially in the Arab world;**
 - **second, that Islamist groups such as the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood “have evolved to support pluralistic democracy, women’s rights, etc.”, and,**
 - **third, that Islamists are “more likely to be successful in dissuading potential terrorists from committing violence than are mainstream clerics.”**

- ❑ **As outside support of Muslim moderates is a sensitive matter in Islamic countries, the study recommends that “assistance must rely on NGOs (CSID) that have existing relationships in these countries” to engage America’s new partners in the Middle East.**
- ❑ **Observations:**
 - **None of the works mentioned above referred to quoted the writings of Islamists as reflecting a radical theological revolution in the Muslim world after centuries of stagnation in the tradition of ijtiḥad.**
 - **They got assurances from “moderate Islamist” leaders, most of whom, as far as the Tunisian case is concerned are not Faqihs, but lawyers, engineers, or at best thinkers.**
 - **Rached Ghannouchi, the spiritual leader of the movement who in was named by *Foreign Policy* as one of its “Top 100 Global Thinkers” in Dec. 2011.**
 - » **Most of his books were written in Arabic and were not translated into English, do not reflect progressive interpretations of the Quran and the Sunna in light of the changing social and economic realities of Tunisian society, providing a faqih’s vision of Islam that meets the needs of the new generation of Tunisian youth.**

- Thus, these policy thinkers recommended that United States should enter into strategic dialogue with the region's Islamist groups and parties by playing to the Islamist “instincts” (not thought): their strong pragmatic tendencies that betray a willingness to compromise their ideology and make difficult choices in the pursuit of power
 - **Speculating a qualitative shift: Islamists reinventing themselves**

- **The Great experiment begun in Tunisia**
- ◆ **to gauge the extent to which Tunisia's “moderate Islamists” have managed to**
 - **adjust their Islamist ideology to their democratic commitments**
 - **to meet the aspirations of the Tunisian people which were articulated during the uprising**
 - **and the expectations of the American think tanks and administration to put the country on the path towards genuine democratization**



The Dilemma of Tunisia's Moderate Islamists: The Democratization Process, Achievements and Obstacles

The political Climate

- ◆ **A stark departure from the authoritarian conditions under Ben Ali. Yet two broad trends reflect the current state of the transition**
 - ❑ **willingness to lay the elementary rules for a potential democratic transition**
 - ❑ **Developments breeding pessimism about the transition in Tunisia and abroad**
- **The elections**
 - ◆ **Relatively “free and fair” elections under the auspices of the Independent High Authority for Elections (founded in April 2011), monitored by international and domestic observers./**
 - ❑ **A 217-member transitional legislature was elected (NCA) charged with drafting the new constitution during one year as stipulated by a moral commitment signed by most of the parties (except CPR)**
 - ❑ **The country’s ability to integrate key political actors: women candidates claimed 27% seats(gender parity law passed/ April 2011). Ennahda won 37 % the vote, winning 89 seats, followed by the CPR with 29 seats, and a surprise victory by Popular Petition Party which won 27 seats. The secular opposition, including the Tunisian Communist Worker’s Party (POCT), divided the remaining seats.**

- ◆ **Critics of the elections focused on Ennahda' s campaign financing and claimed it came from Persian Gulf billionaires.**
 - ❑ **Lack of experience/ weakness of the state apparatus made it difficult to develop the appropriate legal tools to track these transgressions**
 - ❑ **Tunisian Court of Audit report (Aug.,2012) confirms suspicions (p168: secret funding of the party)/ August 2012 as French journalist Allain Jules alleged that Belgacem Ferchichi, adviser to Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali was accused of illegally smuggling money into France in his luggage/ Walid AlMuallem, the Syrian Foreign Minister, accused Ennahda of receiving financial support from Qatar (Oct.2012),**

- ◆ **Other critics have also focused on the role of US NGOs and their financial support, and on other types of transgressions documented by observers on the election day.**

- ◆ **Representativity weakness:**
 - ❑ **The overall turnout was 52%, the youth being a minority**
 - ❑ **1.4 million votes (eq) were cast aside due to electoral rules**
 - ❑ **The electoral results do not reflect the wishes of more than 50% of the population**

● The Troika

- ◆ **A coalition government Islamists (lacking overwhelming majority)+ CPR (a secular party, with Arab nationalist leanings) +Attakatol (a leftist party), a strange ideological match.**
 - ❑ **welcomed sign of “the moderate Islamist party’s embrace of the values of pluralism and willingness to integrate other political actors in the transition process.**
 - ❑ **a safeguard against the rule of the single party**

- ◆ **Despite its survival after temporary self-dissolution, upon observation, conflict of party interests, and the attempt of one party to impose its will on its partners, rather than a unified vision of governance that has joined these three ideologically distinct parties together**
 - ❑ **The extradition of Bagdadi Mahmoudi without the consent of the president**
 - ❑ **The appointment of a new governor for the central bank**

◆ **Ennahda's thirst for dominance finds its best expression in**

- ❑ **full control over key ministries of the state**
- ❑ **Appointing its disciples at all levels of the Tunisian administration**

➤ **Changed all governors, members of municipal councils and regional councils : nahdaouis**

According to *Alshouq* newspaper (march 2nd 2013), between December 2011 and February 2013, Ennahda nominated more than 150 new local governors, moved around 50 and fired around 110 local governors (Mo3tamad) , 16 new governors (wali) were appointed, and the members of 63 municipalities were replaced by new ones loyal to the Nahad,

➤ **March 2013, the president of the Association Tunisienne pour la Transparence Financiere (ATTF) published a leaked memo sent by the Nahdawi prime minister to civil service departments: appointments of civil servants according to party loyalty under the guise of making reparations for the January 14th Martyrs and their families.**

◆ Short term implications

- **May 22nd, 2013 , Noman fehri, a depute to the NCA, reported on radio Shems FM, that the temporary mayor of Nabeul, refused to sign a document requesting a loan from la Caisse des Prêts et de Soutien des Collectivités Locales (CPSCL) on the grounds that such a loan contradicts the precepts of Islam and Sharia which forbid interest rates. This decision has blocked the implementation much needed projects. The same body has been accused of gender bias in recruiting workers: priority to males**
- **Complaints on the part of the government about the degrading performance of the administration (Wataniya TV debate 28/5/13) as reflected in governmental reports**

● Anti-corruption and transparent governance:

◆ **Commitment to anticorruption and more transparency**

- ❑ **revival of the Committee Against Corruption and Misappropriation of Funds founded in 2011 to investigate and retrieve public assets stolen by members of the former regime.**

- ❑ **the NCA appointed Abderrahman Ladgham to the newly created post of deputy prime minister for anticorruption: On April 16, 2012, Abderrahman Ladgham signed a convention with UNDP to support the anticorruption campaign with international expertise and standards set by the UN.**

- ❑ **A four-pronged “roadmap for anti-corruption fight” was presented to the NCA on July 2, 2012, with a national strategy to be released in December 2012**

- ❑ **At a press conference on July 26, 2012, held at the Tunisian stock market, the interim government announced that hundreds of Ben Ali’s confiscated assets would be sold publicly**
 - **Some of these measures have remained cosmetic commitments.**

◆ Corruption and lack of transparency

- ❑ **on August 25th, 2012, the Tunisian Association for Financial Transparency: government arguments for granting the refinery Skhira and deposit Sraouertane to the Qataris as a tender, which is, according to it, in total contradiction with Article 9 of the UN convention ratified by Tunisia on Sept 23rd, 2008.**

- ❑ **In addition to cases of lack transparency related to the expenditures of the presidency, the NCA, and certain ministries**
 - **NCA members and ministers getting double salaries**
 - **Sahbi omri : suspicions of financial corruption at the Ministry of religious affairs**
 - **Minister of Foreign affairs, the Sheraton Gate**

- ❑ **The Islamist party ministers' resistance to declare their assets, which is an outright transgression the requirement imposed by the Law 87-17 of 10 April 1987, may confirm suspicions about their hidden wealth.**

- ◆ **Lack of proficiency in dealing with corruption under the former regime and recovering the stolen assets of the ousted president and his relatives:**
 - ❑ **Refusal to negotiate with KSA the extradition of ben Ali**
 - ❑ **Suspicious about secret deals between Ennahda and corrupt businessmen (confirmed by Mohamed Abou) and its unwillingness to settle this issue**
 - ❑ **On May 30th , The Court of the European Union canceled the sanctions against ben Ali's relatives (Materi, Chiboub and B.Trabelsi), accused by the Tunisian authorities of embezzling billions from state funds and placing the money in foreign banks before the uprising.**
 - **For months, the Tunisians have been expecting the recovery of their stolen assets. The money amounts to huge sums which Tunisia needs to get over its economic problems.**
 - **Diplomatic experts Tawfik Wanness renders the court's decision to the failure of successive governments to provide evidence to the court to support their claim and the incompetence of the lawyer who was appointed by the current government to defend Tunisia's case (he never attended any trial)**

◆ **lack of transparency might have a deleterious effect on the economy of the country**

□ **The drop in Tunisia's score on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index from 4.3 on a 10-point scale in 2010 to 3.8 in 2011, ranking it at 73 (and 75 in Dec.2012) out of 183 countries was alarming for investor.**

➤ **The ILO and the African Development Bank recently called on the Tunisian government to fight corruption more assertively in order to reinforce Tunisia's investment potential**

» **Getting the country on a path of sound economic growth will greatly enhance the chances that transition to democracy succeed. Economic situation of the country is one further area to watch because it is linked to long-term prospects of democracy and was one of the key factors that contributed to the 2010 uprising**

The Economic challenges

- ◆ A country with few natural resources, Tunisia is dependent on foreign investment and tourism. With the exception of a slight improvement in the sector of tourism in 2012 compared to 2011, there has been a marked deterioration in the economy of the country.
- ◆ Foreign investors and Tourists are still scared away for some of the following reasons
 - ❑ The precarious security situation after the attacks on the American Embassy in September 2012, the assassination of Chokri Belaid, the discovery of arms storage caves and terrorist sleeper cells (in rouhia, bir Ali ben khelifa , Shebika, Chaambi...), the confrontations between the security forces with the salafists and Jihadists in May 2013
 - ❑ The opacity of the political roadmap (the constitution is not completed on time, no major steps have been taken to arrange for the post-transition period including setting a final date for the election and a forming a new election committee).

● Numbers tell the story

- ◆ Unemployment is approximately 18 % nationwide and significantly higher in the south, reaching 30% in some regions/ 800.000 unemployed (university degrees)/ slight decrease of 2% (employment created in the public sector)
 - **Regional inequality in terms of economic and social development persisted: persistence of demonstrations**
- ◆ The inflation rate reached 6.5 percent late in January, 2013 according to the government (9 to 10 experts)
- ◆ April 17, 2013, Mourad Hattab: effect of the economic crisis on the Tunisian middle class, the largest section of Tunisian society: 47 % of Tunisian civil servants are poor (they end up broke 12/13 days after the get their salaries), 17% of Tunisians never consume red meat because they can't afford it/ they consume 2kg/month white meat. 30% of Tunisians can only survive if their wives work.

- The “economic program” of the Islamist governments

- ◆ Focus on moral issues and failure of governments to formulate an emergency economic plan that would tap the domestic resources of the country to help rebound the economy.

- might incur a slight shift from the neoliberal policies of the old regime (reviewing the fiscal system, the investment code...)

- ◆ Holding to the tenets that economic liberalization is a *sine qua non* of democracy (assuring for the West), the Islamist government embarked on economic policies that relied on foreign debts, spent on consumption rather than production.

- ◆ As the international rating agencies further downgraded Tunisia’s credit rating (security crisis/ no clear roadmap), it has become harder for Tunisia to borrow on international markets whose confidence in Tunisia’s economy is shattered.

- The country found itself driven towards the IMF to avoid a pending economic disaster: A 2.7 billion TD loan, refundable over 5 years on condition that it introduce structural reforms

● Remedies

◆ **Tunisian economists argue that this loan could have been avoided**

- **had the government tried seriously to engage in constructive dialogue with the Tunisian miners to help address their grievances and help the mining sector resume its normal weight as an invaluable pillar of the country's economy.**
 - **According to economic expert Moez Judi, the phosphate and fertilizers sector has recorded a 2 billion TD loss so far, which is almost the equivalent of the IMF loan.**

● The response of the Tunisian people

- ◆ **Having realized that the government's economic policies have fallen short of the comprehensive, coordinated strategy to fulfill their electoral promises to create over 400.000 jobs/year, Tunisians grew increasingly suspicious of the so-called troika.**
 - **A survey released in May 2012 (the economic situation was better) by the Sigma Conseil and the *Al-Maghreb* newspaper found that 85.8% of Tunisians believe that the government has done a poor job alleviating unemployment, 90.1% believe the government has been unsuccessful in addressing inflation, and 41% preferred the stability and security they associate with the Ben Ali era.**

- ◆ **To add insult to injury, in early May 2013: the government will pay compensations for the ex-political prisoners almost all of whom are Islamists in cash through direct recruitment in the public sector .**
 - **Such decision triggered a public outcry**
 - » **TAFT and economic experts: its deleterious effects on the economy.**
 - » **An attempt to misuse public money to serve the ideological interests of Ennahda and those of its disciples at the expense of the hundreds of thousands of unemployed who freed the Islamists and the country from the dictatorship.**
 - » **An encroachment on the role of the judiciary,**

- ◆ **Only in late May 2013, the NCA started discussing a bill about transitional justice.**
 - **These moves raise pressing questions about the independence of the judiciary, which is a pillar for democratic transition**

The Independence of the Judiciary and the Rule of law

- **The 1959 constitution guaranteed judicial independence, but Ben Ali appointed himself chair of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary,**
 - ◆ **Politically motivated verdicts were commonly dictated to judges.**
 - ◆ **The judicial system was one of the main instruments of repression (political dissidents received long prison sentences in trials that lacked due process.)**
- **In February 2011, the transitional government amnestied all political prisoners, the activities of the Supreme Council of Magistrates (SCM) were frozen, yet reform did not occur**
- **After the elections Tunisian judges expected significant reform and called for greater independence .**
 - ◆ **However, after the elections the activities of the Supreme Council of Magistrates (SCM) were reanimated by the Justice Ministry , perpetuating the encroachment of the judiciary upon the executive, which continues to select and dismiss judges.**
 - ◆ **significant reform still has not occurred.**

- In an outright denial of the principle separation of powers,
 - ◆ The newly elected government established the Ministry of Human Rights and Transitional Justice (2011).
 - Instead of focusing on deep judicial reform which is a prerequisite for protecting human rights and guaranteeing transitional justice,
 - the ministry has concentrated on the human rights violations committed under Ben Ali affecting mainly the Islamists, and on the public grievances, especially of the families of those killed during the revolution, who are still yearning for an independent judiciary that would quench their anger and penalize those who killed their siblings
- Having delayed and blocked the establishment of an independent provisional Judiciary committee to replace the CSM for months, Ennahda opened the door for its Justice Minister to promote certain judges to positions in the judicial system, as well as to remove others.

- ◆ **In May 2012, the Islamist Justice Minister Nouredine Bhiri arbitrarily dismissed 75 judges whom he accused of corruption and other wrongdoing while denying them an adequate opportunity to defend themselves.**

- ◆ **In September 2012, while most media attention centered on the Salafist attacks on the US Embassy, the J. M. placed himself at the head of the CSM, a position formerly occupied by Ben Ali. He administered the so-called “Magistrates Movement,” which began in secret.**
 - **To the outrage of the advocates of judicial reform, the J. M. restored to power a number of figures of Tunisia’s defunct regime as members of the Supreme Council of Magistrates (CSM). Among them the AMT mentioned Mahmoud Ajroud, the judge who, in 2008, presided over a series of iniquitous trials in the Gafsa mining basin.**

- ❑ **The Tunisian Association of Magistrates (AMT) denounced the actions of the Justice Ministry as hurdling the development of an independent judiciary**

- **Domestic and international civil society organizations brought the question of judicial reform into public debate, spurring a number of new developments, bringing the bill again before the NCA.**

- **On April 24th, 2013 the NCA adopted a law creating an “independent” Temporary Judicial Council tasked with overseeing the judiciary**

- ◆ **It proposes that the temporary council should have institutional and financial independence, and that judges directly elected by other judges should comprise half of its 20 mbs**

- ◆ **However, when sitting as a disciplinary body, the temporary council will be made up of 7 mbs, with only 3 being judges elected by other judges, the other 4 being appointed by the executive. This contradicts international standards on discipline of judges**

- ◆ **During the plenary session, the Islamist Ennahda NCA members refused to adopt a provision that would transfer powers of nomination, promotion, and disciplinary procedures from the justice minister to the council**

- **As such the law fails to institute the separation of powers which is a universal guarantee for the establishment of a democracy**

- ◆ **However, we should concede that the situation could have been worse had the Ennahda deputies managed to get their proposal for the establishment of the Supreme Islamic Council passed. Ennahda introduced the project to be included in the constitution in September 2012 and kept fighting for it until it was defeated by the opposition on April 2nd, 2013 and thus was not introduced in the 3rd draft of the constitution.**

- **As part of the constitution drafting process and judicial reform, one would expect the majority party**
 - ◆ **Would incite the NCA to revisit the Bourguiba- and Ben Ali–era penal and press codes that continue to restrict freedom of expression and to revise and clarify Laws defining threats to public morality .**

 - ◆ **However, the 2012-2013 trials against TV station owners, editors, and bloggers are based on obsolete laws under former autocratic regimes and remain inconsistent with the aspirations of the Tunisian people who revolted against a dictator.**

The status of civil liberties in Tunisia since the rise of “moderate Islamits” to power

- **The fall of ben Ali seemed to have ushered in a new era in advancing the course of human rights in Tunisia.**
 - ◆ **Before October 23rd elections, adopted a pluralist electoral law, ratified the Rome Statute (becoming a member of the International Criminal Court); lifted most of Tunisia’s reservations on CEDAW; and adopted a new press code and decree laws on political parties and associations.**
 - ◆ **Tunisians were allowed to demonstrate, express themselves, and form parties and associations to an extent unmatched since independence in 1956.**
- **However, these major advances have been hampered not only by**
 - ❑ **(parallel) police excessive resort to violence to quell popular protests,**
 - ❑ **but also, alarmingly, by delays in adopting decisive reforms toward a more independent judiciary,**
 - ❑ **and the mounting attempts by exclusivist salafist groups to curtail the essential freedoms of their fellow Tunisian citizens (in the name of preserving the “purity of Islam”**
 - ❑ **and a concomitant rising tide towards the Islamization of the state**
 - **These phenomena have not been properly addressed by the successive interim governments led by the “moderate Islamist” .**

● Freedom of Assembly.

- ◆ **Protests and demonstrations demanding regional economic compensation, martyr reparations for the nationwide 2010–2011 protests have become the hallmark of Tunisia’s political environment.**
- ◆ **The High Commission for the Protection of the Objectives of the Revolution Political Reform and Democratic Transition approved new laws promoting FA**
 - ❑ **The decree-law on associations, promulgated on September 24, 2011 eliminates the crime of “membership in” or “providing services to” an unrecognized organization**
 - ❑ **. The decree-law on political parties eliminated an article stating that a party may not base its principles, activities, and programs on a religion, language, race, sex, or region, a provision used in the past to restrict the basis upon which Tunisians could found parties.**
 - **Before the elections of October 2011 more than 106 parties were legalized (170 May)**
 - **Many associations considered illegal under Ben Ali, such as the International Association in Support of Political Prisoners and the Tunisian Association to Combat Torture, received their official authorization .**

- ◆ **The aftermath of January 14th also witnessed the outburst of an avalanche of Islamist organizations. As of March 2013,**
 - ❑ **Estimates: 260 Islamist associations have been established since the uprisings**
 - **24 of which are “scientific salafist” associations (lectures, Coranic schools, charity . The majority of them operate under the umbrella of «Front tunisien des associations islamistes»/ , others promoting Islamic banking**
 - ❑ **Among these associations, whose adherents cut right across the widening Islamist spectrum in Tunisia, some are directly connected to Saudi figures or organizations, others are financed by Qatari and international Islamist organizations.**
 - ❑ **The twin of foreign financial support and moral and logistic support by the ruling party made it possible for salafist organizations to spread mushroom-like across the country, to impose a new way of life on Tunisians**

- ◆ **Brandishing their black flag they put down the Tunisian flag at the faculty of Manouba after they staged a protracted sit-in , attacked teachers and university staff to impose the Niqab / full face (allowed outside the classroom) inside the classroom/ exams.**
- ◆ **were allowed to enter Tunisia's prison to indoctrinate prisoners, most of them joined**
 - ❑ **a wave of Salafi Jihadist fighters who have been conscribed by salafi and according to Nawat director, Nahdaoui Islamist organizations to fight in Syria.**
 - ❑ **Others joined what came to be known as “Leagues for the protection of the revolution” (Iranian model) which are an amalgam of salafists, Nahdaouis and former regime disciples and criminals baptized salafists after the fall of the regime.**
 - **These organizations have been bent on crippling the freedom of gathering of Tunisian opposition parties, the UGTT (the report on the 04 Dec., 2011 attacks), of mass popular demonstrations (April 9, 2012).**
 - **Their unbridled reliance on violence reached one of its peaks: The lynching of Lotfy Nagd in Tataween, (hailed as revolutionary by Islamist NCA member)**

- **Calls to dissolve these violent organizations fell on the deaf ears of a government that has opposed ongoing union strikes and sit-ins viewing them as major disruptions to economic development.**

- ◆ **Thus, while Tunisians enjoy the right to demonstrate to a far greater degree , the security apparatus continues to rely on its violent methods of the past and has yet to implement crowd control techniques aimed at minimizing the use of force.**

- **Protests have been harshly repressed or stymied by security forces and in some cases resulted in renewed curfews and serious injuries, including loss of eyesight (Seliana, Dec. 2012) / beginning of May, when the police assaulted several demonstrators and bystanders, arbitrarily arrested them, and subjected them to harsh treatment**

- ◆ **The current law on public gatherings allows authorities to ban public gatherings that disturb security and order. Using this law, on March 28, 2012, Former nahdaoui Interior Minister Ali Laaryadh banned demonstrations on Avenue Habib Bourguiba, the principal site of the protests that led to Ben Ali's ouster.**

- **The march was met with brutal police violence. Public reaction to the violence was vociferous, and Laaryadh reversed the ban on April 11, 2012 .**

◆ **However, different standards have been adopted in dealing with salafist gatherings**

□ **in response to a film perceived as blasphemous (Sept.14, 2012) following Friday prayers, thousands of Salafists marched onto the U.S. embassy in Tunis escorted by the police, jumped embassy walls and set the parking lot and other embassy grounds on fire and replaced the U.S. flag with a Salafist flag. Shortly thereafter, the American School of Tunis located close to the embassy was attacked and looted.**

➤ **The inability of the Tunisian government and security services to block the protesters and protect foreign properties indicates an ambiguous relationship between Salafists and the ruling Ennahda party, control over general security, and limits of freedom of expression and assembly. (acquitted in June 2013)**

● Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression: the battle continues

- ◆ The internet remained uncensored. Yet, free speech advocates voiced concerns over the use of religion as a pretext to curb free speech, and legal void to protect freedom of speech.
- ◆ In Spring 2012, Al-Nahdha deputies to the NCA submitted a draft bill that would amend the penal code by imposing prison terms and fines for broadly worded offenses such as insulting or mocking the “sanctity of religion.”
- ◆ called for the adoption of an international anti-blasphemy law in order to ban attacks on the sacred, in support of the long-held position of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation
 - stoked fears among civil society groups of a creeping Islamization that would seriously curtail free speech and artistic expression. Human Rights Watch considered the proposed law “a new form of censorship in a country that suffered from so much censorship under the ousted president.”
- ◆ Retreated under pressure from civil society and following Ghannouchi scandal (Oct., 2012)

- **In the absence of a blasphemy law, courts made wide use of repressive provisions of the ben Ali penal code: article 121 (3): makes it an offense to distribute material “liable to cause harm to the public order or public morals.”**
 - ❑ **In September 2012, a public prosecutor brought charges against two sculptors for artworks deemed harmful to public order and good morals.**
 - ❑ **On March 28, in the first instance of a tribunal run by the city of Mahdia, two bloggers, Ghazi Beji and Jabeur Mejri were sentenced to prison terms of seven-and-a-half years, confirmed on appeal, for publishing writings perceived as offensive to Islam.**
 - ❑ **Oussama Bouagila and Chahine Berriche, graffiti artists and members of the street art community, Zwewla , [faced legal action](#) for drawing graffiti in support of the poor. They were charged with “writing, without permission, on public property”, “breaching the state of emergency” and “publishing fake news that could disturb public order” in December 2012.**

- The implementation old regime law on public morals and the introduction blasphemy law, though withdrawn, added fuel to the already spreading violence by empowering extremist “salafists” whose mission is to make Tunisians “true Muslims”
 - ◆ Ennahda’s vows to criminalize blasphemy followed the controversial Spring of Arts, a modern contemporary art fair (June 1 – 10). On June 10, ultra conservative protesters attacked *Palais Abdelia*, where the fair’s closing ceremony was held, and vandalized artworks exhibited there. The protesters accused the fair of exhibiting blasphemous artworks (facebook rumors: fair exhibited a portrait of the Prophet)
 - ◆ In September 2012, almost one month before Ennahda withdrew the bill 2/4 people were killed and 29 others wounded outside the U.S. Embassy during a protest against the video, *The Innocence of Muslims*.
 - ◆ The shocking assassination of the opposition leader Chokri Belaid, one of the most articulate voices in pre-and post- January 14th Tunisia was preceded by a campaign of allegations of blasphemy within the wider spectrum of Islamist/salafist circles, including the mosques, legitimizing his death
 - However, these allegations were not only directed at politicians and artists (the freedom of speech and creative expression), but also at journalists and the media (freedom of press).

● Freedom of press: threats persist

- ◆ **The tone of the media has changed since January 14th. Marked increase in the number of independent media outlets in 2011, representing a diversity of viewpoints: more than 5 TV , 12 radio st. / 50 newspaper registration applications**
 - **However these obvious and immediate gains of the uprising have created conflicts about how to deal with this freedom.**
 - **calls To create relevant boards to regulate it: unknown sources of funding, the legal void as the government continues to ignore post-January 14th new press laws that protect journalists and limit government interference .**
- ◆ **Few days before the October 2011 elections, two legislative decrees on media freedom were passed after strong civil society pressure.**
 - **Decree-law 115-2011 on the print media: forbids restrictions on the flow of information and protects journalists' sources**
 - **Decree-law 116-2011 on the broadcast media: provides for the creation of an independent high authority to regulate broadcast media.**

- The troika refused to implement the decree-law and continued to unilaterally appoint the heads of public media. It was only on May 3rd, 2013, after almost 18 months of tension between government and the National Authority for Information and Communication Reform (INRIC/2011) that the Tunisian presidency designated the members of a new regulatory body for audiovisual media.

◆ Pressure: :

- The Civil Coalition to Defend Freedom of Expression (Tunisia League of Human Rights, the Association of Tunisian Judges, and the SNJT)
- International reports: expressing worries about the uncertain future of the freedom of press in Tunisia
 - American NGO Freedom House ranked Tunisia in the bottom half of the world's countries in terms of press freedom.(2013)
 - Reporters Without Borders' report (2013) expressed "wonder about the reasons for this foot-dragging and clear lack of interest in reforming the media sector for the past two years" Evidence

- **Government attempts to control the sector**

- ◆ **Before May 3rd, 2013, deputies from CPR, made a second attempt to submit a legislative project containing 13 articles restricting the freedoms protected by decree 115. One of them would heavily restrict the right to criticise the government and increase the risk of journalists facing imprisonment. (withdrawn).**
- ◆ **legal action taken against several Tunisian journalists based on old laws (criminal defamation)**
 - **Olfa Riahi case: Accused former foreign minister Rafik Abdessalem of misuse of public funds.**
- ◆ **Cases of prosecution summons against journalists: summoned by courts at any time, in response to complaints from politicians and members of the NCA.**
 - **Feb 8th, Zied El Heni had told a private TV that he had “serious information” involving a security official in the assassination of Chokri Belaid. During the show, the spokesman for the Ministry of Interior threatened El Heni with legal action. Security forces were already expecting him in front of the TV premises, at such a late hour, presenting him with a summons to appear before the investigative judge on 9 February.**
 - **The justice system is still unable to distinguish between media offences and criminal offences, a hangover from the dictatorship**

- ◆ **The last two years have been marked by the continued evolution of abuses against Tunisian media by security forces, mainly during the police management of demonstrations**
 - ❑ **Plainclothes police physically assaulted local and international journalists On April 9, 2012 during a peaceful demonstration on National Martyrs' Day.**
 - ❑ **The Monitoring Unit of the Tunis Center for Press Freedom recorded 31 attacks against journalists just in Feb 2013**
 - ❑ **On May 21, 2012 an army general confiscated two cameras for Ramzi Bettibi a journalist for the collective blog Nawaat. Bettibi went on hunger strike to call for the lift of restrictions on the coverage of court hearings in what is known as "Martyrs' case".**

- ◆ **In addition a number of journalists have also spoken out publicly about hidden, 'soft' censorship:**
 - ❑ **April 2013, journalists at radio station Shems FM complained that an article about President trips to Germany and Doha removed by the station's Director General.**
 - ❑ **February 4, 2013, the judge of the Third Chamber of the Court of First Instance in Tunis issued an order prohibiting radio station "Mozaïque FM" from broadcasting an interview with the leader of "Ansar Charia" Abu Yadh.**

- ❑ **On 26 February, 2013, the services of the Ministry of Interior prevented about 15 journalists and photographers from covering a press conference held by the Ministry to shed light on the assassination of Chokri Belaid: media close to the government were not excluded.**

- ◆ **“Salafist” groups have been using various intimidation methods against journalists.**
 - ❑ **On 27 February, 2012, a group of “salafists” harassed journalist and blogger Ali Abidi, reporter for “Jadal” website” while trying to cover a conference at a mosque in Sidi Bouzid.**
 - ❑ **March-April 24, 2012. sit-in staged in front of the headquarters of Alwatania state TV. It was a scene made up of (a few) national flags and (a great many) black ones: purify public broadcasting.**
 - ❑ **Most disturbingly, the past few months witnessed a swift shift from provocative statements to outright death threats against men/women of media.**
 - **The International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) called on the Tunisian authorities to urgently provide a safe environment for journalists and to fully investigate those responsible for issuing such threats so as to deter a climate of impunity in the country**

- ◆ **As the political, economic and security crises continue to deepen, attacks against journalists and writers will more likely continue to intensify**
 - ❑ **Journalists sounded the alarm and formed coalitions: new coalition: the National Union of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT) and the Tunisian League for Human Rights**

- ◆ **There's no doubt that two years after the fall of the dictatorship, the hopes of journalists in Tunisia remain frustratingly unrealised, but**
 - ❑ **we're also even more aware today of how crucial the role of the press is in not allowing the country to slip back into any form of dictatorship.**
 - ❑ **With continued support from the international community, Tunisian journalists will continue to fight to remain free.**

● Women rights

- ◆ After Jan. 2011, many Western news sources published articles discussing the unprecedented role that Tunisian women played in the protests. Many of these articles highlighted Tunisia's post-independence policy hailed as the most progressive in the region, vindicating Tunisia's uniqueness in the Muslim world.
- Facts about women public participation and presence in all areas of business appear to put women in Tunisia on a par with Western women. Yet only 30% of women are employed. Unemployment affects women more than men since 16.7% (12.9% men) of women work in private employment and represent 59.5% of higher education students.
 - Sharing the same social and economic grievances of the waves of Tunisians who revolted against the dictatorship, ordinary Tunisian women, women activists and feminists were on the front lines in the demonstrations that cut right across the country and ousted a dictator.

- **After the uprising Tunisian women became wary of the political transition**
 - ◆ **The elimination of key reservations on CEDAW in August 2011 did not abate their fears: news stories of “Salafists” bullying unveiled women on the streets and attacking women gatherings/ the power vacuum filled out with religiously zealous ex-pats returning to the country and later dominating NCA.**

 - ◆ **Before the elections**
 - ❑ **Ghannouchi made public statements in Tunisian/Western media that the personal status code will not be altered, that polygamy has been determined to be illegal,” Hijab will become legal in all areas of life in Tunisia, and will be a personal choice**
 - ❑ **the party voted in favor of full gender equality in the October Elections, most effective in mobilizing women in the rural areas**

 - **The party’s double speech talents, its foundation on Islamic thought, its internal discipline that makes it compulsory for its members (women) to follow the dictates of the party leadership, and its leadership’s unfailing support for the salafists stirred women’s fears that Ennahda would push its own agenda in the Constituent Assembly, particularly on the role of religion in governance and women’s rights.**

● **Women's fears came true**

- ◆ **As the NCA started writing the first line of the constitution, Ennahda deputies championed the cause of making Sharia the main source of legislations (debate Dec-March).**

- ◆ **Aug.2012,Ennahdha sought to assert the "complementarity" of women in relation to men: "Let's agree, first, that a woman is a human being" / a blatant assault on human rights and on women's aspirations for gender equality.(August 13 protests)**
 - **Women organizations formed coalitions with civil society organizations: "Hrayer Tunis" Feb 2013 to put pressure on the NCA to enshrine in the new constitution the principles of total equality between men and women, the consecration of the effective citizenship of women, and the criminalisation of all forms of violence against her.**
 - » **The final draft of the constitution, shows that significant headway has been made in approximating the spirations of women activists and that Ennahda has succumbed to the pressure of civil society and a progressive minority within its circles who also share the same aspiration.**

- ◆ **However, the “salafists” within the movement encouraged paraconstitutional mechanisms threatening women rights**
 - **Supported their fellow “salafists”, Ghannouchi’s “sons” in their unfailing endeavors to spread “the new culture” by helping them welcome waves of Wahhabi preacher at the airport and escorting them in majestic processions throughout the country to teach Tunisians the tenets of “true Islam.”**
 - **They have a package to chastise Tunisian women: a wide range of habits that are alien to our culture, history, and religion (Sunni Maliki):**
 - » **female genital mutilation (circumcision), generalizing the full body cover (niqab) even for nursery school girls, and restoring polygamy, at best, under the cloak of urfi contracts (temporary marriages), and, at worse, introducing a new type of marriages known as “Jihad Nikah”/ a form of halal prostitution through which a woman who offers her body to the Mujahideen in Syria is promised an afterlife in paradise.**

- **With the flow of petro-dollars and the complacency of the ruling Islamist party some of these practices started taking root in the poor neighborhoods and educational institutions. I will briefly enumerate a few facts to describe this phenomenon.**
 - ◆ **In August 2012, Lawyer Radia al-Nasrawi alleged that a prominent member of the Islamic al-Nahda Party was already married to two women. The first wife filed a lawsuit against him with the court of Nabeul , but no measures have been taken against him so far/ Manar Eskandrani's case.**
 - ◆ **Moving from the microcosm of the Islamist leadership to the macrocosm of their disciples, there's much to inspire fear for the future of women rights. Temporary unions, or "urfi" officially illegal have been on the rise since January 14th**
 - ❑ **They have negative effects on women: single mothers, illegitimate children**
 - ❑ **Although it is difficult to compile a register of such cases because so much discretion surrounds the matter, the phenomenon has spread mainly among "salafi" university students.**
 - ◆ **In late may 2013 Tunisians woke up to the nightmare of a university student's declaration on TV channel Tounesna that a Niqab-wearing woman managed to enter her university and to indoctrinate girls, including herself, to fulfill the duty of Jihad nikah in Syria. (AIDS)**

- ◆ **These phenomena that have inflicted our female university students are some of the ramifications of the vagueness/complacency of Ennahda about the growing Salafist movement inside the universities after several incidents**
 - ❑ **rhetorical and physical Salafist attacks on university professors, attacks on the Tunisian flag, demands from women wearing the *niqab* (allowed on campus) to remain fully Covered during university exams.**

- ◆ **Tunisian women, whose experience with state-promoted feminism has taught them not to expect any change from the government to protect their rights, had also to develop their own strategies to approach the issue of Salafism/wahabism.**
 - ❑ **their responses range from peaceful confrontations during demonstrations sponsored by civil society organization**
 - ❑ **heroic acts of defiance (Khawla khwildi putting up the Tunisian flag/ lawyer and activist Leila ben Debba prevented the salafi-Nahdawi member of the NCA from welcoming a Wahhabi preacher in the honorary hall of the airport**

- **These acts emanate from a powerful patriotic survival instinct, only scratch at the surface of a far more complex global phenomenon that neither military power (US wars on terrorism), nor “the moderate Muslim politicians” as an ideological construct have been so far able to address.**

- ◆ **Since the Chaambi events and the attacks on the military and security forces, one can perceive the burgeoning of a new multifaceted strategy to approach this phenomenon.**
 - **First, an unprecedented cooperation and reconciliation between Tunisians and a wider section of the law enforcement agents, striving to disentangle their institutions from the grip of ideological conflicts in dealing with national security issues, and to reassert their civic aspect.**

 - **Second, civil society organizations have been playing an important role in helping promote reconciliation between Tunisians and their cultural roots and traditions**
 - **by organizing nationwide campaigns, such as “be Tunisian,”**
 - **Citizenship cafes**

- **promoting bridges of dialogue especially with Islamist women: Psychiatrist Sondess Garboug of “women’s voice” (aswat nissa), holding workshops for Islamist female preachers: (in the region of Bab Souika, one of the strongholds of salafism in Tunis)**
 - » **This initiative represents a crack in the shell that has divided Tunisians into Muslims/Islamist and secularists/atheists that was promoted by the rise of the Islamists to power after January 14th**
- ❑ **Third, recently the Zaytouni Sheikhs have broken their long silence to denounce the unprecedented flow of Wahhabi ideology to quench the thirst of a section of Tunisians:**
 - **revived Zaytouni education, formed coalitions aiming to spread the indigenous centuries’ long Islamic teachings**
 - **expressed willingness to build bridges of dialogue with the leaders of the “salafist” movements, promote consensus between the various actors in Tunisian society, including the “salafists,” over a national pact that provides a yoke uniting Tunisians against violence in its diverse forms.**

- ❑ **Fourth, Tunisian intellectuals/Scholars (victims of “salafist” attacks, have been bent on digging into the various causes helping “salafism” in its diverse forms take root in the society/among university students.**
 - **ground-breaking study recently conducted by professor Neji Jalloul, of the University of Mannouba: provided some answers to the growing influence of Salafist ideology at Tunisian schools of engineering.**

- ❑ **If spread to the disciplines of sociology, anthropology , psychology, and pedagogy,**
 - **these studies would break the wall that has for long obstructed direct contact between Tunisia’s intellectual elite and the masses (poor)**

 - **They would also incur a revolution in our curricula and would provide a comprehensive vision of educational reform that would nurture a balanced personality : overcome identity crisis**

 - **They would act as a stronghold against threats to our cultural security, promoted at the educational level by the gradual attempts to wahabize our institutions of Islamic studies, such as Azzaytouna university.**

- **Fifth, a new approach to the issue of national security in Tunisia advocated by some Tunisian scholars of strategic studies: Dr Nasr ben Sultana's theory of a "comprehensive security" system (L'Association Tunisienne des Etudes Stratégiques et des Politiques de Sécurité Globale): broadens the concept of national security beyond the political and military levels to stress cultural and socio-economic dimensions of national security.**

- ◆ **This trend has also found its best expression in engaged artistic (cinema, poetry....) initiatives. If well channeled these burgeoning initiatives will produce a Tunisian Renaissance, that will, in the words of Tunisian Poet Khaled Ouerghly, "teach Ennahda (the Islamist renaissance party) what ennahda (The Renaissance) is."**
 - **History has taught us that The Renaissance leads up to enlightenment and Democracy**

Conclusions

- **This paper attempted to study Tunisia's experiment with "moderate Islam (ists)" in light of the challenges incurred by the uprising and the expectations of Western/American think tank that predicted the rise of Islamists in the event of open elections in the Muslim world.**
 - ◆ **The first part of this work sketches out the broad features of "moderate Islam (ists)" as a Western/ American ideological construct**
 - ◆ **Moving beyond the mere speculations that Tunisians (Westerners) originally had over the impact an Islamist party could make upon their country, particularly in drafting its constitution**
 - **the second part of this work, examines concrete political, economic, and civil rights changes that have occurred during this period.**
 - **It trace advances and setbacks that have been made on the path towards genuine democratization and away from authoritarianism as the Islamist party is forced for the first time to choose between their Islamist ideology and democratic commitments.**

- **The following conclusions have been reached**

- ◆ **Tunisia has handled the transition better than its neighboring countries (Libya, Egypt):**

- **The military stayed out of politics**

- **various political factions managed to agree relatively swiftly to a transition plan (to which they have not always adhered).**

- **Tunisians elected the NCA, which chose a president from one of the secular parties, and which at long last passed a law establishing “independent” bodies overseeing the judiciary, and broadcast media and submitted a draft of the constitution**

- **sending reassuring messages to Tunisians and the West that Ennahda can cooperate with others**

◆ **Yet, this somewhat rosy view of an orderly and well-managed process has gradually given way to a grimmer picture, challenging the credibility of Westerners' view of Ennahda as a moderate, nonthreatening Islamist party that accepts pluralism , dialogue, and political succession.**

- ❑ **Conflicts over ministerial portfolios inside the troika, serious crises with the presidency, and suspicious nominations show Ennahda's unbridled desire to dominate the government and the administration**
- ❑ **No effective steps were taken to put an end to corruption, promote transparency (no exemplary role) and make security reign to encourage foreign and domestic investors to help a degrading economy**
- ❑ **The resignation of Jebali and his failure to convince his Islamist party to form a government of technocrats shows that ennahda is not willing to sacrifice their political interests no matter how the economic situation gets worse.**
- ❑ **When it comes to civil rights, Ennahda's record is far from being bright. Incidents abound to reflect the Islamist-led government attempts to curtail the freedom of gathering, of speech and artistic expression, of the media and to allow transgressions of the code of personal status.**

- ❑ **The chasm that divided secular and Islamist parties during the electoral campaign has kept surfacing in each debate in the NCA about enshrining the universal human rights in the constitution, the role of sharia /state and religion relationship, the independence of the judiciary.**
- ❑ **Concessions have so far been made by the Islamist party under pressures emanating from civil society. Yet major concessions were made under pressure coming from the US.**
- ❑ **The party's reluctance to crack down on extremist Salafis, its ambiguous response on controversial issues such as the niqab on university campuses, its salafist leadership's support for the spread of wahabizm in the country, its reluctance in addressing such issues as the conscription of Jihadists and its indifference to the spread of "orfi marriages" and "Jihad niqah"**
 - **have not only sowed doubt among some foreign investors and observers about the future of democratic transition in Tunisia, but also confirmed the doubts of an increasing section of Tunisian modernists who see Ennahda as dangerous and untrustworthy, and its moderation as barely hiding radical positions**

- **Yet, even though the euphoria of the early post-uprising period has given way to despair as Tunisians and the international community have started facing the facts of failure,**
 - ◆ **burgeoning attempts to find balance again through introspection and self-criticism, experienced at the grassroots level (intellectuals, civil society, artists) may restore hope as Tunisia still has some of the prerequisites that can guarantee democratic transition.**
 - **The country still has longstanding, effective state structures and institutions**
 - **Political opposition parties (170 parties in May 2013) which used to be dispersed and weak have now gained more strength and started making coalitions (alternation of power)**
 - **Tunisia's resilient political class, civil society organizations and its historically vibrant institutions have resurfaced in the past two years. The UGTT, human rights activists, journalists and professional associations, as well as pre-existing and new political organizations, secular and Islamist, are the source of real alternatives.**

- ◆ **The tension between continuity and change in Tunisia is palpable. The history of Tunisia did not begin on October 23rd 2011, with the rise of Islamists to power.**
 - **The Tunisian character, way of life, and civil religion in its Rousseauistic sense have been the product of 3000 years of civilisational richness.**
 - **The degree to which Tunisians manage to reconcile themselves with each other and with their past, and know who they are and where they come from will help them define their objectives for the future and *enhance* the prospects for democratic change.**
 - **In the process guidance must not come from politicians (as they tend to mold history according to their own agendas) but from Tunisia's civil society, free intellectuals and historians.**



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION