

Religion, secularism and politics in post-revolutionary Tunisia

Religión, secularismo y política en la Túnez posrevolucionaria.

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RESUMEN: En comparación con otros países de la Primavera Árabe, Túnez tiene menos población, un joven educado y una posición geográfica en la que no existe un interés directo de los diversos actores regionales y globales. Sin embargo, esto no significa que Túnez es diferentes o tiene menos problemas en comparación con otros países como Egipto o Libia. En todos estos países, la economía, la seguridad y la re-estructuración del estado son los temas claves. Sin embargo, Túnez está en el camino para la democratización y la normalización en toda regla. Se debe a que en Túnez los temas quedaron en el plano político, la crisis no podía convertir una polarización total en la sociedad. Las políticas de de An-Nahda y su papel como cooperativo y conciliador en el poder es otra razón muy importante para reducir las tensiones en el país.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Túnez – Secularización – An-Nahda – Primavera árabe, Oriente Medio.

ABSTRACT: Compared to other Arab Spring countries, Tunisia has less population, an educated youth and a geographical position where there is no direct interest of various regional and global actors. However, this does not mean that Tunisia has different or less problems compared to other countries like Egypt or Libya. In all these countries, economy, security and re-structuring the state are the key issues. However, Tunisia is on the way for a full-fledged democratization and normalization. It is because in Tunisia the issues stayed at political level, the crisis could not turn a total polarization in the society. An-Nahda's more cooperative and conciliatory approach is another very important reason to lower the tensions in the country.

KEY WORDS: Tunisia – Secularism – An-Nahda – Arab Spring – the Middle East.

Introduction

After the revolution in Tunisia, the expectation was that Tunisia had the potential to become a success story of Arab revolutions. This approach has led to the idea that the post-revolution transition period in Tunisia is proceeding relatively smoothly. However, these expectations scattered to a degree when one of the fierce critics of An-Nahda-led coalition Chokri Belaid was shot dead on 6 February 2013 and later on Mohammad Brahimi on 25 July 2013. Is Tunisia on the brink of turmoil? Is that an indication of the revival of dangerous period

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in Tunisia? After months of this killing, Tunisia has neither entered in a big turmoil nor passed a breakthrough to show that there is no such possibility again. Making of a new constitution and physical and institutional reconstruction of the country is underway; meanwhile new challenges are emerging such as the increasing influence and threat of Salafis to this process.

The recent unfortunate developments beside, the problems of Tunisia have become much visible and sharpened after the revolution. Unemployment and overall economic condition were already bad; however, it has become a subject of politics after the revolution, forcing the new ruling troika to take decisive steps about it. Similarly, secular-Islamist divide has been sharpened and sometimes led to political turmoil in domestic politics. The rise of Salafis, coupled with the foreign influence, has certainly complicated the transition process. This article aims to sketch out the main issues and actors in Tunisia and provide an overall policy-oriented perspective on the developments. There are still many challenges and difficulties in front of Tunisia, but unless the key issues debated in this brief are addressed, the post-revolution Tunisia will not be immune from problems and instability.

Tunisia After revolution

From the end of the revolution until the elections of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) on 23 October 2011, Tunisia had three governments. The first two governments lasted for six weeks under the leadership of Muhammad al-Ghannoushi; and the third, led by Beji Caid Essebsi, carried out its duty until the beginning of Hamadi Jebali's government. Throughout this transitional period, the president and provisional government issued legislations and decrees, while the High Commission for Achieving the Goals of the Revolution, led by law professor Ayyadh Ben Ashour, served as the main organization for parties, associations, and prominent civil society actors.²

The NCA elections were held on 23 October 2011 in a democratic and peaceful environment with a relatively high level of participation around 52%. Tunisia's first democratically elected government was finally put in place in December 2011 after weeks of negotiations between the three coalition partners, all representing different political ideologies. An-Nahda came first in the 23 October election; winning 89 seats in the 217-seat NCA, the CPR came second with 29 seats and Ettakatol fourth with 20 seats.³ Overall, what emerged from the outcome was a consensus and desire for a democratic transition.⁴ As part of this desire, on 12 December, the leader of the center-left CPR Moncef Marzouki, a

2 See Duncan PICKARD, "Challenges to legitimate governance in postrevolution Tunisia", *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol 16, No 4, 2011, pp.637-652.

3 The major parties emerged from the elections were following: An-Nahda received %37,4, Congress for the Republic %8,71; Popular Petition %6,74; Ettakatol %7,03. Although Ettakatol received more votes from Popular Petition, it came fourth in terms of number of seats allocated. For a detailed account of elections in Tunisia, see Ufuk Ulutaş and Furkan Torlak, *Devrimden Demokrasiye Tunus'un Seçimi*, SETA Analiz No: 46, Kasım 2011.

4 See Emma C. MURPHY, "The Tunisian elections of October 2011: A Democratic Consensus", *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol 18, No 2, 2013, pp. 231-247.

former political prisoner and exile, was elected as president. He appointed Hamadi Jebali, the Secretary General of An-Nahda, as the head of government. Ettakatol's leader, Mustapha Ben Jaafar, a leading opponent of the former regime, has been elected as the speaker of the NCA.

Since the elections, the troika government has been working in a consensus on persisting issues like constitution, security and economy. There has not been too much friction among them about the direction of the country and the policies that should be followed. However, in spite of the existence of this consensus, the political situation in Tunisia is still in a transitional phase and highly fragile. Indeed, the assassination of Belaid and Brahimi did not only shake the ongoing transition in Tunisia but also showed this fragile transition. This development led to the re-examination of both the transitional process itself and to what extent solutions are found to the main problems of Tunisia. It has also indicated the several persisting issues in post-revolution Tunisia.

First of all, after this political assassination, many pointed the remnants of the old regime and the rise of Salafis. According to them, the death of Belaid and Brahimi indicates that the supporters of the old regime still have a deep influence within the Tunisian society.⁵ Indeed as discussed later, the old regime gathering around the new political party *Nida Tounès* reemerges in a way and wants its presence felt. The atmosphere of mistrust that settled in the country after the assassination and increasing strikes of trade unions aim to narrow down An-Nahda's options and make the transitional process difficult.

Second, aspect that has been debated especially after the Belaid's assassination is that not much change has been made in the social-economic dynamics in the post-revolution period in order to satisfy people's needs. Therefore, in any political crisis, one can still see that a man burns himself to death for hunger and unemployment. Similarly, international credit rating agencies lowered the country's rating due to political instability after the assassination.⁶ Indeed, the biggest problem in Tunisia still continues to be unemployment and earning a living. The lack of breakthrough moves by the new political actors, such as An-Nahda, in economic terms does not only make difficult to expand their social base but also create a fertile ground for the supporters of the old regime to come back.

Third aspect that comes into light is security, the Achilles' heel for many countries in the Arab world. Both the police and the armies; therefore, the old regimes, were the strongest in regards to the issue of security. However, different Salafi groups' negative contributions to the process delays reforms in this area, if not make them totally impossible. Clearly, in the upcoming term, the issue of security reform will remain on the agenda in Tunisian politics. Political and practical dimensions of the issue make the security reform very difficult, yet it should be dealt with without delay.

⁵ See Taha ÖZHAN, "Tunus'un Burgibaizmlle İmtihani", *Sabah*, 11 February 2013.

⁶ http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2013/02/20/Tunisian-economy-sinking-amid-turmoil/UPI-91541361382644/

Besides, in countries such as Tunisia, it will not be easy to change the perception that the Ministry of Interior is seen as a terrorist ministry.⁷

Although more than two years have passed over the revolutions, no country has yet completed the constitution-making process. The only country to do so was Egypt, however, after the coup d'état on 3 July 2013, the political transition is back to square one, if not worsened. When one considers this, one should ask why social dynamics, such as economic transformation, have not been prioritized so far. Perhaps economic transformation would be much more useful in settling the revolution in the long run in post-revolution countries. An approach prioritizing social dynamics without distraction from overall process seems to be the one that Tunisia should adopt.

In the post 6-February process, the new coalition government was established and independent names were appointed to the key ministries, such as internal affairs, foreign affairs, defense and justice ministries. Therefore, the government had overcome the political crisis and received a second wind. However, the assassination of Brahimi and developments in Egypt has created a new and deeper turmoil, and the country now is in the process of finding a way out.⁸ Irrespective of what comes out of this crisis, in the middle and long runs the effectiveness and durability of all political actors, including An-Nahda, will be measured by the transformation they achieve in social dynamics. Only then, bigger crises will be prevented.

Actors

Islamic Actors

It is possible to talk about three major actors in post-revolution Tunisia: Islamic actors, ancient regime and secular-liberal camp. Among them, An-Nahda is the only Tunisian party that commands a stable support base.⁹ After the elections, it was able to forge an alliance with two liberal partners, the Congress for the Republic and the Democratic Alliance for Work and Freedoms. This alliance enjoys a majority in the parliament (138 of 217 seats) and it became known as the Troika. However, An-Nahda Party is not in an easy position. First, its political future is likely to depend on the success or failure in dealing with the current economic and social issues. Second, configuration of internal dynamics within the party and the rise of Salafis will play an important role.

In order to better contextualize Islamic actors, a distinction must be made between different Islamic representations in post-revolution Tunisia. There is, on the one hand, a large and better known Islamic sphere represented by a conservative middle class, which

7 Mehmet Özkan, "Tunus'ta Devrim Mirasını Tartışmak", *Sabah*, 16 March 2013.

8 See Ömer Erçin, "Tunus'ta Siyasi Kriz", 23 August 2013, <http://odak.setav.org/page/tunusta-siyasi-kriz/7027>

9 See Alaya Allani, "The Islamists in Tunisia between confrontation and participation: 1980–2008", *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol 14, No 2, pp.257–272.

finds its political reference mainly in the An-Nahda party. On the other hand, there is a newly emerging radical Salafis composed mostly of a younger generation, belonging to the main disenfranchised social class and integrating into the public scene in the name of Jihad.

The emergence of Salafis in Tunisia represents a challenge to An-Nahda in so far as it is no longer the only religiously oriented actor in the system and its Salafi rivals present a different Islamic vision.¹⁰ Indeed, many argue that behind the main denomination of Tunisian Salafi organization Ansar al-Sharia, there is an effective social movement,¹¹ although they are not a united group. Perhaps because of that, one of the leaders of this organization is not hesitating to argue that Tunisian Salafis is a model for the rest of the world: “As we were the first of the “Arab Spring” to build a jihadi movement, it is obvious that others have watched and considered us a model to imitate. (...) Of course, the success or the failure of our experience will have an impact on the experiences of other countries. This is true as well for the general post-revolution process in our country. Today, Tunisia has become a political laboratory”¹² and “we insist that Tunisia is a model that can be exported.”¹³ The Salafis’ future course of action will certainly be very important for the future of the country. If they choose to be the part of the political process as opposed to using violence, their contribution will likely be positive.¹⁴

While Salafis are becoming more visible in the political scene, An-Nahda has its own problems internally and policy-wise too. Despite considerable agreement on many issues, one can talk about two rather distinct groups within the leadership of An-Nahda. On the hand, the leadership in exile operated as an intellectual hub and a lobbying group. On the intellectual front, Rachid Ghannouchi remained a central figure. On the lobbying front, a number of members attempted to influence the US, European, and Arab countries with regard to the appeasing role that moderate Islamist movements like An-Nahda could have. On the other hand, the leadership of the interior experienced a different praxis of politics and lifestyle. Crucially, those who remained in Tunisia spent significant amounts of time in prison. As they were being progressively released from the 1999 and onwards, they established networks of support for the liberated prisoners and their families.

The two groups were not entirely separated and the local leadership remained connected with the leadership in exile that kept the ideological and theoretical journey of the party was a shared one, but the practice of the two groups’ politics was different because

10 More on Salafis see, Monica Marks, “Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism: Understanding the Jihadi Current”, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol 18, No 1, 2013, pp.104-111.

11 Fabio Merone, “Salafism in Tunisia: An Interview with a Member of Ansar al-Sharia”, 11 April 2013, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11166/salafism-in-tunisia_an-interview-with-a-member-of-

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 There are some signs that some section of Salafis are contemplating on joining politics. Author’s personal Interview, Ankara, 25 June 2013. See also Sherelle Jacobs, “A Chance for Moderation”, 27 June 2013, <http://carne-gieendowment.org/sada/2013/06/27/chance-for-moderation/gc79>

they operated in radically diverse environments. This would prove to have consequences after the revolution, following the party's return to the Tunisian political scene.

After the revolution, the party had two main preoccupations. First, there was the necessity to revive the organisational structure of the party by merging the different experiences that militants had over the last three decades. Second, there was the imperative of re-elaborating the ideological tenets of the party within the framework of Islamism to compete in the newly established plural system. These two necessities have created a number of problems for the party. At the organizational level, differences have appeared between the pragmatic and sometimes "hesitant"¹⁵ wing, which is mostly identified with the leadership of the interior, and the more militant one identified with the leadership of the exterior. It is, however, at the ideological level that confusion seems to reign supreme because there are different constraints on the party. At the pragmatic level, the party still needs to be perceived as the representative of the Islamic project in order to attract the more conservative elements in Tunisian society. However, this Islamic project is, at the same time, in need of profound modernization in order to win over the suspicions of the secular sectors of society. The lack of clarity as to what the Islamic project actually is then becomes unsatisfactory to both actors within and outside the party because ambiguity leads to radically different interpretations.¹⁶ For many within the party, the Islamic project still coincides with the creation of an Islamic state at some stage and their political actions reflect this vision. For others, the Islamic project has mutated into the creation of a civil state that is Islamic only in so far as there are no barriers to public displays of religiosity.

The absence of meaningful theoretical and ideological discussions as to what the Islamic project exactly is a testament to the ambiguity and the inability to come to a consensus due to the fear that deep divisions would emerge within the party. It is too early to come to a conclusion, however, as to what will shape Tunisia's future is the future inclination of An-Nahda both ideological and political terms. Whether internal divisions will become more visible and show itself on policy choices is not clear at this stage, but these are likely to be the key elements in the future of Tunisia.

Remnants of the Old Regime

In early 2011, for a brief moment, the social distance and indifference seemed to evaporate, only to reappear forcefully immediately after Ben Ali's flight.¹⁷ Thereafter, the election campaign and the victory of An-Nahda produced other transfers, noticeably in the constitution of the party led by former Interim Prime Minister, Beji Caid Essebsi, *Nida*

15 Author's personal Interview with an An-Nahda activist, Ankara, 27 June 2013.

16 Malika Zeghal, "Competing ways of life: Islamism, Secularism, and Public Order in the Tunisian Transition", *Constellations*, Vol 20, No 2, 2013, p.269.

17 Malika Zeghal, "Competing ways of life: Islamism, Secularism, and Public Order in the Tunisian Transition", *Constellations*, Vol 20, No 2, 2013, p.254.

Tounès. Such an agglomeration of political forces would have been unimaginable a few years earlier. Indeed, this party brings together many of the former partisans of Ben Ali's regime - and Bourguiba's - and, like Essebsi himself, a fraction of the post-communist left under the banner of the struggle against the Islamists and for Tunisia's modern identity.

In general, *Nida Tounès* consists of leftists, liberal progressives, Destourians¹⁸, and former ruling party *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (RCD) partisans. The main underlying uniting element among them is to oppose An-Nahda's rule. Groups with nominally conflicting agendas— such as many members of the country's principal labor union UGTT and the national employers' union UTICA—tend to support *Nida Tounès*. There are also those who have been adversaries for a long time, but now creating a platform to remain on the side of national identity to avoid social and ideological disputes. It aims to stand as a key force to oppose An-Nahda's rule. The emergence of such a force, unknown in terms of electoral score and what this might represent, shows the effect of a new context of electoral democracy. *Nida Tounès* Leader Beji Caid Essebsi's announcement on 28 April 2013 that he will run for president has sparked mixed reactions from politicians and regular Tunisians alike. According to the final draft of constitution, potential candidates for president must be between 40 and 75 years of age. Essebsi is 85¹⁹.

Secular-Liberal Camp

There is also a secular-liberal camp with a strong presence in the Assembly. Both Ettakatol and Congress for the Republic can be considered as the representatives of the center-left secular camp. Since the elections, they have been in the troika government along with An-Nahda and contributed to the transition process positively.

Ettakatol is a political party that belongs to the social democrat movement and has a modernist discourse. On the political stage, Ettakatol belongs to the left wing and its electorate is mostly located in Tunis and the northern part of Tunisia²⁰. However, Ettakatol is criticized for being close to the French socialist party (Parti Socialiste) to such an extent that its nickname is "the French people's party" (*Hizb França*)²¹. The CPR led by Moncef Marzouki is also a left-leaning political party. Marzouki, who is popular because of his permanent opposition to the Ben Ali's regime, signed together with An-Nahda the

18 Destour (meaning "constitution" in Arabic) was the name of the nationalist party founded by the reformist Abdelaziz Thaalbi in 1920. More importantly, it refers to the Neo-Destour party and the Socialist Destourian party, founded by Habib Bourguiba in 1934 and 1964, respectively. On 12 April 2013, a coalition calling itself the Destourian Front was formed by six Tunisian political parties to become a political force and to perpetuate the heritage left by Bourguiba. See more on this Habib Sayah, "What the New Destourian Front Means for Tunisia", 30 April 2013, <http://fikraforum.org/?p=3254>.

19 "Caid Essebsi to run for Tunisia president", 1 May 2013, http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/05/01/feature-01

20 Olivier Morin, "Tunisie : le vertige démocratique", *Études* 4/2012 (Tome 416), p. 449-459, www.cairn.info/revue-etudes-2012-4-page-449.htm.

21 Ibid.

“Declaration of Tunis” in 2003, which is a political program promoting Arab-Muslim identity. Furthermore, he criticizes the French style of promoting secularism, which basically suggests a strict separation of religion and politics²².

The CPR and Ettakatol are seen as progressive political parties and they promote the establishment of a secular state with a strong focus on Arab-Muslim identity. For them, a stronger integration in Maghreb is necessary for a better Tunisia. However, neither the CPR nor Ettakatol could form a strong alternative to An-Nahda. They mostly suffer from problems within the party politics and unity. For example, 11 of 21 members of Ettakatol party in parliament left in order to join other political groups. Similarly, the secretary general of the CPR resigned²³.

One can also talk about other important actors in current Tunisia such as trade unions. Due to the fact that the opposition is diverse but not united the trade unions seem to assume political roles. That is why the UGTT has been one of the prevailing forces in organizing strikes for political motives, mostly acting on an anti-An-Nahda line. Except the UGTT, other actors like the press are relatively weak and most often simply amplifies the voices of political actors without deepening the issues. Although, - associations are quite present, very few of them have been powerful enough.

Issues and Challenges

Security

Indeed, post- 6 February process proved to be a particularly tumultuous in Tunisian politics. After the assassination of two prominent politicians, international media tended to frame these events as the latest in a binary narrative that pits Islamist “hardliners” against members of a secular opposition.²⁴ Although such ideologically oriented and sometimes alarmist coverage attracted readers, it failed to shine light on more substantive challenges namely those of security reform and the rule of law that made the assassinations the latest in a string of destabilizing security breaches.

In one level, the continued security breaches that have plagued Tunisia, including reported increases in theft, sexual harassment, attacks on political figures and Sufi shrines, and the September 14 attack on the US Embassy are functions of decentralized state power. The revolution shattered the myth of the all-powerful state. For Tunisia to achieve the revolution’s core demands like socio-economic dignity and real, lasting freedom, it must redouble its efforts to reform the security sector.

Broadly speaking, the obstacles to security sector reform in Tunisia fall into three

²² Ibid.

²³ See Denis Bauchard, “Tunisie An III de la révolution”, April 2013, <http://www.ifri.org/downloads/bauchard.pdf>. For an interesting overview of the dynamics in the National Constituent Assembly see <http://www.chkoun-filmajles.tn/>

²⁴ See Issandr El Amrani, “Tunisia’s troika of parties must learn to compromise”, *The National*, 20 February 2013.

categories: institutional, political, and practical. The Ministry of the Interior, which oversees the country's internal security forces, inherited a dysfunctional legacy from the Bourguiba and Ben Ali eras. Tunisia's post-colonial rulers sidelined the army—relying instead on the police and national guard to bolster their power. Under Ben Ali, exchanges between and within ministries were limited to maintain control. This was particularly true of the Interior Ministry, which Ben Ali manipulated as a kind of personal praetorian guard. As a result, mechanisms for efficiency, transparency, and internal communication within the Ministry of Interior had destroyed long before the revolution.

Realistically speaking, the ongoing instances of impunity and security-related unrest in Tunisia have more to do with weak institutions as well. Complex bureaucratic logistics and institutional inertias obstruct security reform and rule of law in Tunisia. These challenges are fundamental to Tunisia's transition, and deserve far more public attention than they are receiving.

As mentioned above, another biggest challenge in front of political stability and security in post-revolution Tunisia is Salafis. Their activities complicate and put An-Nahda and ruling troika in a difficult situation. Before the revolution, there were few Salafis in Tunisia, and they operated in strict secrecy for reasons of security. The Tunisian Salafis had their first direct confrontation with the Tunisian authorities in late 2006/early 2007²⁵.

The An-Nahda believes that radical groups like the Salafis Jihadists constitute one of the major obstacle to the democratization of Tunisian society,²⁶ however, the secular elite argues that the government is too soft on the Salafis, while the Salafis accuse the government of selling out the purest form of Islam. Secularists accuse the An-Nahda-led government of not doing enough to stop the violence because of its sympathies with the Salafis. However, An-Nahda started to show its seriousness on the issue of Salafis. Supporters of Salafi group Ansar al-Sharia clashed with Tunisian police on 19 May after the government banned the group's annual rally, saying it posed a threat to society.²⁷ The clashes were not the first bout of fighting between Salafis and police. This time, however, the government showed its determination to crack down on the radicals as it deployed mass force to prevent the public meeting. After the assassination of Brahimi, the troika took it further and blamed Ansar al-Sharia for killings and announced it as a terrorist organization²⁸.

The rise of Salafis is also threatening the border security of Tunisia with Algeria and Libya. North African states have been battling to contain the Salafis' threat since secular regimes were ousted. Borders are easily crossed because they are porous and un-controllable. Therefore, border clashes and deaths are very common. For example, two Tunisian soldiers

25 Alaya Allani, "The Islamists in Tunisia between confrontation and participation: 1980–2008", *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol 14, No 2, pp.257-258.

26 See "Tunisia's Democratic Figure: An Address By Rached Ghannouchi", 31 May 2013, The Brookings Institution, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/events/2013/5/31%20tunisia%20ghannouchi/20130531_tunisia_democracy_ghannouchi_transcript.pdf

27 "Tunisie: une quinzaine de blessés lors de heurts entre salafistes et policiers à Tunis", 19 May 2013, http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2013/05/19/tunisie-les-salafistes-appellent-a-un-rassemblement-pres-de-tunis_904025

28 "Ansar al-Sharia blamed for Tunisia killings", 27 August 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/08/2013827131811488516.html>

were killed and at least another two wounded in a roadside explosion near the border with Algeria on 6 June 2013²⁹.

Nevertheless, despite the appearance of Salafis, the security vacuum, economic problems, strikes and various protest movements as well as the release and return from exile of numerous Jihadis, Tunisia has experienced neither armed conflict, nor widespread violence nor major terrorist attack except with the latest developments that put the political situation in a very much fragile situation after the Brahimi's death.

Economy

Uncertainty has deeply affected economic activity in post-revolution Tunisia. The country has lost more than half of its tourism revenues compared to pre-revolution period. Foreign investment has simply halted. As one of the key issue in the revolution were economic needs, the economic development of Tunisia remains highly important for the success of the transition period.

Indeed, Tunisian economy is not going well. The budget deficit rose to at least six percent of GDP in 2012, from an estimated 4.5 percent in 2011. The official unemployment rate rose from 14 percent to 18 percent in 2012. In addition, as the crisis in the Euro zone deepens, its impact on the Tunisian economy become more evident as Tunisia relies heavily on the EU for trade, tourism, and remittances.

On 28 May 2013, Tunisian Central Bank announced that the country's economic growth has decreased significantly over the past year.³⁰ The bank's estimates of the economic growth during the first quarter of 2013 stood at 2.7 percent, down from 4.6 percent over the same period in 2012. Similarly, the exchange rate of the Tunisian dinar has also dropped, depreciating 4.1 percent in relation to the euro and 6.1 percent against the U.S. dollar since the beginning of May 2013.

There are of course many reasons for this both political and economic terms. In a situation where there is still no clear prospective due to transition period, Tunisia's troika goverment has no option but to ask international help. For example, in November 2012, Tunisia signed a loan with the World Bank for a total value of 500 million dollars. This was on top of other loans received in November 2012 from various lenders that totaled 700 million dollars. In an interview in November 2012, Riadh Bettaieb, the Tunisian Minister of Investment, declared that the government would seek another precautionary loan worth nearly two billion dollars from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), over concerns of the 2014 budget.³¹

²⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-22795938>

³⁰ "New Data Shows Slowdown in Economic Growth", 28 May 2013, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/05/28/new-data-shows-slowdown-in-economic-growth/>

³¹ "Tunisia could seek \$2.5 billion IMF credit line for 2014", *Reuters*, 28 Kasım 2012, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/11/28/uk-tunisia-imf-loan-idUKBRE8AR15R20121128>

In order to secure the loan payment, the IMF suggests some structural reforms, like the gradual reduction of subsidies that constitute five percent of the GDP. This will result in an increase of fuel prices and consequently, transportation costs. This is likely to lead a general increase of market prices. Additionally, creating taxes for export companies and decreasing taxes for non-export companies may drive foreign capital out of the country. Some companies are already planning to leave due to political instability and the exhaustive red tape since the revolution. Banking reforms have also the potential of strangling the middle class. One of the IMF's recommendations to the Tunisian Central Bank is to increase the interest rate as well as overdraft fees on personal banking accounts, which will further strain the middle class. At a macroeconomic level, this may lower consumption and investment, factors that are considered the pillars of economic growth in the country.

It is important to note that since 2012 until the present day, the country has accumulated about 10 million dollars in debt. Regarding the level of the debt, there is no exact figure. It is believed to be between 45 and 50 percent of GDP – which only includes long-term external debt. The real debt level is about 136 percent of GDP.

Constitution

A provisional mini-constitution was adopted by the NCA on 10 December 2011 after debates between the coalition partners and the opposition parties. It gives political power mostly to the prime minister, for example, the power to appoint ministers and other senior officials and to direct government policy. The president is responsible to oversee the government and calls it to account when necessary while managing foreign policy in agreement with the prime minister. In addition, as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, he also appoints or dismisses senior officers in consultation with the prime minister.³²

Initially, Tunisian lawmakers voted to have the constitution completed by April 27, 2013 with July 8 signaled as the fall-back deadline. However, on June 5, 2013, the Assembly announced that the drafting of the Tunisian constitution had been completed, but the sixteen-month-long process of creating the framework for a new government may yet be far from over due to its approval process.³³ The constitution will be adopted if it receives a two-thirds majority vote in the Assembly. In the case that it fails to receive enough votes, the draft will be revised by the coordinating committee before being brought before the NCA for a second vote. If it does not receive enough votes this time, it will be brought before the public for a popular referendum.

Debate has been ongoing concerning whether Tunisia should adopt a parliamentary, presidential or mixed political system. An-Nahda initially favored a parliamentary system.

32 "Tunisian assembly adopts provisional constitution", 11 December 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/afri-ca/2011/12/201112115101550490.html>

33 "Officials: Tunisia's draft constitution completed", 1 June 2013, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/mid-dle-east/2013/06/01/Officials-Tunisia-draft-constitution-completed-.html>

However, the Shura Council of the An-Nahda approved the creation of a mixed parliamentary/presidential system for Tunisia's future government during an emergency meeting held on April 28, 2013.³⁴ The new system of government would balance power between the president and prime minister. It was proposed by a key parliamentary committee in the NCA. This system would also allow neither the president nor the prime minister to monopolize power. The two leaders will share responsibility over the formation of the government, foreign policy, appointment to senior positions, the dissolution of the parliament and government, and vetoing legislation. In the post-election period, the system of governance in Tunisia has been neither presidential nor parliamentary, but rather council- and assembly- based. The NCA is the body that will decide the nature of the system of governance in Tunisia.

Conclusion

Compared to other Arab Spring countries, Tunisia has less population, an educated youth and a geographical position where there is no direct interest of various regional and global actors. However, this does not mean that Tunisia has different or less problems compared to other countries like Egypt or Libya. In all these countries, economy, security and re-structuring the state are the key issues. Until the death of Brahim and developments in Egypt, Tunisia was about to finish its transitional period. After the approval of constitution, there would be an election and the country would be geared to normalization. However, currently Tunisia is politically in turmoil as the opposition demand the abolition of the Troika government. Replicating the developments in Egypt, opposition is united as Temarrud movement and asks for ending the almost -completed political process. Around 60 members of the NCA resigned and the Assembly is no longer working. That makes the comparison between Egypt and Tunisia difficult and led to decrease the Egyptian momentum in Tunisia for several reasons. First, the issues stayed at political level, the crisis could not turn a total polarization in the society as in Egypt. Second, the international support for an Egyptian scenario is not very strong. An-Nahda's more cooperative and conciliatory approach is also another very important reason to lower the tensions in the country.

There is a possible likelihood that Tunisia will overcome this challenge. But the content, way and format is not yet clear. The real politics is likely to start after reaching a certain point of way out. Dealing with economy, security and social issues will come to surface more often. Although ideological lines will continue to shape politics, the ultimate outcome will be based on the governance performance of An-Nahda and other actors.

³⁴ "Tunisian government has no hidden agendas, says new prime minister", *Guardian*, 2 April 2013.