Multiple but Complementary, Not Conflictual, Leaderships: The Tunisian Democratic Transition in Comparative Perspective

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Abstract: Many classic studies of leadership focus on strong leadership in the singular. This essay focuses on effective leaderships in the plural. Some of the greatest failures of democratic transitions (Egypt, Syria, Libya) have multiple but highly conflictual leaderships. However, a key lesson in democratization theory is that successful democratic transitions often involve the formation of a powerful coalition, within the opposition, of one-time enemies. This was accomplished in Chile, Spain, and Indonesia. In greater detail, this essay examines Tunisia, the sole reasonably successful democratic transition of the Arab Spring. In all four cases, religious tensions had once figured prominently, yet were safely transcended by the actions of multiple leaders via mutual ideological and religious accommodations, negotiated socioeconomic pacts, and unprecedented political cooperation. A multiplicity of cooperating leaders, rather than a single "strong leader," produced effective democratic leadership in Tunisia, Indonesia, Spain, and Chile.

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Many of the classic studies of leadership focus on strong leadership in the singular.[1] In this essay, I focus instead on effective leaderships in the plural, particularly in democratic transitions. Some of the greatest failures of democratic transitions have multiple but highly conflictual leaderships; whereas many of the most successful democratic transitions have multiple but complementary leaderships. Cases in which multiple leaders have been able to transform initially conflictual relationships into collaborative and complementary ones have been understudied, and are my primary concern here.

The Arab Spring illustrates three of the classic forms of democratic failure that can come about from multiple but conflictual leaderships: statelessness; prolonged and inconclusive civil wars; and what I call

doi:10.1162/DAED_ a_00400

"Brumairian abdication" of the chance to rule democratically in return for protection from a nondemocratic actor, such as the military.[2]

Libya is a clear example of the extreme peril – in this case, statelessness – of multiple oppositions that cannot craft any complementary goals. Qadhafi had for a long time created, dismantled, and recreated chains of commands and security structures at will. He supported his sons' emergence as possible dynastic successors, and entrusted core security posts to relatives. Few business groups could assume any politically relevant autonomy. It took a civil war – and massive help for the rebels in the form of a UN-backed NATO bombing campaign – to topple the "Brother Leader."

Weber asserted that a "state is a human community that [successfully] claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a given territory."[3] It will be a long time before such a successful monopolistic claim can be made in Libya, and likely longer before a useable state comes into existence throughout its territory. A reporter who had traveled widely in the country's interior just two months before the July 2012 parliamentary elections documented the threats of Libya's extreme version of multiple leaderships with absolutely no complementary goals:

> Libya has no army. It has no government. These things exist on paper, but in practice Libya has yet to recover from the long maelstrom of Qadhafi's rule. . . . What Libya does have is militias, more than 60 of them. . . . Each brigade exercises unfettered authority over its own turf. . . . There are no rules.[4]

Obviously, Syria is also a case of multiple leaderships in opposition to Assad that have virtually no complementary goals. Some of these conflicting leaderships have included liberal-secular forces, jihadist militias (even before the arrival of ISIS), and the Kurds, who are increasingly focused on securing their own territorial autonomy. Western interventions have not helped. In this context of multiple leaderships in prolonged and inconclusive civil wars, a peaceful democracy in one state is inconceivable.

In Egypt, three generals ruled the country from 1952 until the Tahrir Square protests of 2011. But after Mubarak stepped down in the face of sustained protests, there were quite distinct leadership groups in Egypt: the Muslim Brotherhood, which had not renewed its membership or ideology in over twenty years and was committed to using "sharia as the only source of legislation"; a variety of secular leaders who feared and opposed the Muslim Brotherhood as much or even more than they opposed the military; and the "military as institution," which helped overthrow Mubarak as the "military as government," but stepped into his shoes and retained many prerogatives inconsistent with the democratic spirit of many in the opposition.

At the height of the Tahrir Square protests in February 2011, such multiple-but-conflicting leaderships did not strike most of the protestors as a problem. Indeed, because they believed a headless protest was invulnerable to "decapitation," many young protestors were against any kind of leadership.

This perception missed a fundamental point about the history and theory of successful versus failed democratic transitions in recent decades. The scholarly literature on democratic transitions normally makes a distinction between the tasks of resistance within "civil society" that help to *deconstruct authoritarianism*, and the tasks of "political society" that help to *construct democracy*. Among political society's constructive tasks is to help bring diverse groups of democratic opposition leaders – who may even dislike each other – into agreements concerning shared goals and tactics to erode the authoritarian regime, and even on plans for an interim government and for elections capable of generating constitution-making authorities with democratic legitimacy.

Civil society in Egypt was, if anything, more diverse and robust than in Tunisia. However, to this date, Egypt has done remarkably little to create an effective political society. Why, and with what consequences? The leading U.S. scholar of the Muslim Brotherhood, Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, has explained that its "leaders affiliated with the reformist trend have never gained more than a marginal presence in the Guidance Bureau, the group's highest decision-making body."[5] Given this doctrinal opposition within the Muslim Brotherhood to internal reform, and the reluctance of secularists to reach out for possible Islamist allies who did not agree with the Brotherhood's political theology, the multiple potentially democratic Islamic and secular leaderships never tried, much less attained, any complementary goals with each other of the sort I will document were achieved in Tunisia. This may account for the fact that in Egypt, after the fall of Mubarak, but six months *before* the Muslim Brotherhood's Morsi became president, 62 percent of respondents in a survey were already hedging their democratic bets by agreeing to the statement that the military "should continue to intervene when *it* thinks necessary."[6] Indeed, a columnist in a widely read Cairo publication, *Ahram Online*, asserted as early as September 2011 that: "In general, liberal parties would like the constitution to be written before the elections take place, fearing that a post-election constitution-making process will be dominated by Islamists."[7]

Thus, in classic Eighteenth-Brumairian fashion, many Egyptian citizens were willing to abdicate their right to rule to a nondemocratic force such as the military, in return for protection from a potential and unwanted, but democratically elected, government.

A key lesson in democratization theory is that successful democratic transitions often involve the formation of a coalition, within the opposition, of one-time enemies. I look very briefly at how this task of transforming conflicting multiple leaderships into a complementary coalition was accomplished in three important cases: Chile, Spain, and Indonesia. Then, in greater detail, I will examine the case of Tunisia, the sole reasonably successful transition of the Arab Spring. What makes these cases noteworthy is that in each, religious tensions and differences figured prominently, yet to a large extent were safely transcended by the actions of multiple leaders.

In 1973, the Christian Democratic Party in Chile, with the tacit support of the U.S. government and the Roman Catholic Church, in effect asked General Pinochet to overthrow the legally elected socialist government of Salvador Allende. After this, from 1973 until the early 1980s, any possibility of joint cooperation between the Christian Democrats and Socialists in order to act against Pinochet was impossible. However, starting in the early 1980s, with the support of the German Christian Democrat Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and the German Social Democrat Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the Chilean Christian Democrats and the Chilean Socialists began to consider whether they hated each other less than they hated Pinochet. Eventually, by the mid-1980s, the two parties mobilized joint anti-Pinochet protest demonstrations. These shared activities slowly turned into shared political programs. They formed an electoral coalition with a joint platform in 1988 that defeated Pinochet in a plebiscite based on Pinochet's own 1980 constitution. In 1989, this coalition won the presidency and ruled together as a successful, reformist coalition from 1990 – 2010, with the presidency oscillating between the Christian Democratic and Socialist parties.

In the Spanish case, the legacy of the civil war was poisonous; it left approximately five hundred thousand people dead, and was followed by thirty-six years of dictatorial rule by General Franco. When Franco died in November 1976, there were many potentially conflictual leadership groups who had fought on opposite sides in the civil war. On the Republican side were the Socialists, most of whom had been militantly secularist and anticlerical, and the still very strong Communist Party, which was hated by the military but supported by many trade unionists. On the Nationalist side were the military, led by Franco; much of the Catholic Church; and many members of the propertied classes who during the civil war viewed the Communists as their mortal enemies. The idea of restoring the monarchy was a strongly divisive issue, with former Nationalists supportive, and former Republicans hostile to the idea.

The key leadership contribution of the first prime minister of post-Franco Spain, Adolfo Suárez, was that he helped transform within five years these potentially conflictual multiple leaderships into multiple but complementary, pro-democratic leaderships. Suárez talked informally to the leader of the Communist Party, Santiago Carrillo, soon after Carrillo was released from jail, and reached an implicit inclusionary agreement that the Communist Party would be legalized and could compete in parliamentary elections if it accepted democracy and a constitutional monarchy – which they did, partly because the Communist Party in Spain had already become a Euro-Communist party. With Cardinal Tarancón, the leader of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church, the politicians arrived at a mutually respectful position of "twin tolerations," whereby the Church agreed to respect and endorse the right of democratically elected officials to make legislation, and the democratic state allowed religious groups to participate in the public square.

On the key issue of socioeconomic reform and temporary price controls, Suárez invited the multiple leaders of every party with seats in the parliament to a series of private meetings in the prime minister's residence (the Moncloa). Between these Moncloa meetings, party leaders periodically held consultative meetings with their key civil society members, to explain decisions that were emerging from the process and to solicit their feedback. Suárez correctly understood that the give and take of these consultations was crucial for the Communist and Socialist opposition leaders if they were going to be able to get their own core union leaders to understand, and support, any painful Moncloa Pact wage-control policies and antistrike agreements for the first year of the democratic experiment.

Only after these extensive negotiations and agreements did Suárez call a formal session of both houses of parliament to vote on the Moncloa Pact. Despite difficult concessions made by many of the parties, there was only one vote against it in the Lower House. The Moncloa Pact is now widely considered one of the most successful pacts in the history of democratic transitions. In the process of constructing the agreement, the multiple, once-conflicting leaderships in Spain had arrived at the critical mass of complementary goals.

This pact continued to repay its members when, on February 23, 1981, the monarchy, as one of the multiple leaderships available to Spain's democracy, played its part in averting a military coup. The king, as head of state, ordered the rebellious tank commanders to end their revolt and return to their barracks. They did.[8]

In Indonesia, in the decade leading up to the fall of the thirty-six-year-long military dictatorship of General Suharto, Abdurrahman Wahid, the leader of the largest Muslim civil society group, created the "Democratic Forum," in which almost all the potentially conflicting religious and secular groups met regularly to formulate and release joint documents in favor of human rights, greater political freedoms, and democratic values.[9] These years of cooperation turned out to be very helpful in the surprisingly successful constitution-building process that followed the fall of Suharto in May 1998, a process that Donald L. Horowitz, a major comparative constitutional scholar, recently called "meticulously consensual."[10]

This brings me to a more detailed look at how Tunisia turned multiple conflicting leaderships into multiple but complementary (and democratic) relationships.

The Economist named Tunisia its "country of the year" in 2014.[11] That same year, the U.S.-based democracy-evaluating organization Freedom House awarded Tunisia its highest possible score for "political rights," marking the first time an Arab country received this distinction since Freedom House's rankings debuted in 1972. No other Muslim country in the world, including Indonesia, has as high a ranking, and this puts Tunisia in a place of its own compared with the other Arab Spring countries, not one of which is remotely close to being classified as democratic.[12]

This achievement is all the more noteworthy when we situate Tunisia geopolitically. When the Warsaw Pact disintegrated, nine Central European countries suddenly found themselves in a "supportive neighborhood" of peace and prosperity and were rapidly able to join the European Union. In contrast, Tunisia is obviously in what international relations theorists call a "difficult neighborhood": ISIS recruiting and training camps abut its porous desert borders with stateless Libya, it borders authoritarian Algeria and is close to economically and politically troubled Egypt, and it has no hope of joining the European Union.

ISIS-inspired attacks launched from Libya in 2015 killed sixty people at two of Tunisia's most popular tourist destinations: the Bardo National Museum in Tunis and the beach resort of Sousse. However, no ISIS-related group in Tunisia has been able to hold territory, or set up a ruling council to implement their version of Islamic law; thus, Tunisia is not one of the eleven officially recognized "provinces" of the ISIS "caliphate" spreading from Iraq to Nigeria. I do not think such attacks will destroy Tunisia's fledgling democracy, but they did strengthen hard-line voices in the democratic coalition. They may also so hurt the Tunisian economy that despite being a democracy, Tunisia will lose its attractiveness to other countries in the Arab world.[13] But this makes it all the more important for Western nations to encourage trade with Tunisia, to give more economic and security aid to the country, and to recognize how Tunisia achieved a degree of democratic success in such a very difficult neighborhood.

Even more than in Chile, Spain, or Indonesia, the role of religion in Tunisia is central to our concern with multiple but conflicting leaderships, and raises significant questions regarding the possibility of creating effective, coalition-friendly democratic leaderships in Muslim-majority Arab countries. In my six research trips to Tunisia since the fall of Ben Ali in January 2011, four questions in particular have caught my attention, which I will use the rest of this essay to address.

First, why and how were secular, modernizing, authoritarian leaders in Muslim majority countries – like Kemal Atatürk in Turkey or Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia – able to build what I call a *constituency of coercion* against any party with Muslim-influenced religious goals, even a pro-democratic party?

Second, what religious and political arguments can be utilized by Islamic leaders to support democracy, build coalitions with pro-democratic secular leaders, and carry the day within a major Islamic party and against the constituency for coercion?

Third, unlike Egypt, why and how was Tunisia able to bring together most of the pro-democratic secular and Islamic leaderships into a joint civil and political society, unite opposition to the authoritarian regime, and eventually construct the most progressive and democratic constitution in the history of the Muslim world?

Fourth, how and why was there, in fact, a peaceful alternation of power away from the initial, Islamist-led ruling coalition? Many people believe that should a Muslim-controlled party win free and fair elections, the Muslim majority will insist on holding onto power, and democracy will end: they fear there will only be "one person, one vote, one time." Tunisia shows this need not be so. How?

What were the origins and consequences of the "constituency of coercion" that existed in Tunisia before the Arab Spring? Lack of trust between secularists and Islamists inhibited their cooperation against the nondemocratic regime of the first two presidents of independent Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba (1956 – 1987) and Ben Ali (1987 – 2011). One of the reasons for this was that, unlike in Indonesia or even Senegal, by the time Tunisia became independent from France in 1956, the country formed a part of what I call the *iron triangle* of aggressive *laïcité* secularism: the three points being France from 1905 to 1958 (before de Gaulle allowed the state to subsidize Catholic schools); Atatürk's Turkey; and Tunisia under Bourguiba and Ben Ali (1956 – 2011).[14]

Islam in Tunisia was relatively progressive in the mid-nineteenth century. The country abolished slavery in 1846, two years before France. In 1861, Tunisia created the first constitution in the Arab world. This constitution, in Jean-Pierre Filiu's judgment, "enshrined a political power distinct from religion," and built upon the previous "Covenant of Social Peace," emphasizing freedom of religion.[15] The great Arabist Albert Hourani highlighted the progressive role of Zeitouna Mosque University in this period.[16]

After gaining independence in 1956, Bourguiba, in the name of modernism and *laïcité*, attempted to remove religion from the public square and from most programs of higher education, and in essence closed the progressive Zeitouna Mosque University, which had been founded in Tunis in 737 CE, more than two centuries before Cairo's Al-Azhar University.[17]

From independence until 2011, Tunisia was ruled by only two presidents, Bourguiba and then Ben Ali. In this entire period neither president allowed one fully free and fair election. Bourguiba, however, saw himself, and was seen by many, as a modernizing, secular leader. Concerning women's rights, he passed the most progressive family code in the Muslim world; in fact, it was at the time one of the most advanced family codes anywhere. Polygamy was banned and polygamists subject to imprisonment, men's right to unilaterally divorce their wives was abolished, women's rights to initiate divorce and receive alimony were put into law, and women's child custody rights were strengthened. Abortion was legalized, under some conditions, as early as 1965. Women's access to higher education soon rivaled men's.[18]

Bourguiba and Ben Ali skillfully used the progressive family code and women-friendly educational policies to help build a constituency for coercion. They crafted this constituency by maintaining that if there were free elections, Muslim extremists would win and curtail women's freedoms, so it was in women's interest not to push too hard for elections. Parties with religious affiliations were forbidden and many Muslim leaders were accused of being terrorists, sentenced to imprisonment and torture. The autocratic state's discourse about Muslim terrorism strengthened the constituency of coercion and intensified following the events in Algeria, where after the Islamist party had won the first round of elections in 1990, the military canceled the second round in January 1991. The outcome was a civil war between Islamists and the military that ravaged the country from 1992 to 1997, claiming as many as one hundred thousand lives.[19]

In these circumstances, the multiple leaderships of secularists who opposed Ben Ali and Muslims who opposed Ben Ali were not available to each other as potential allies. Most secularists who opposed the authoritarian regime of Ben Ali and wanted democracy did not see Islamists as desirable or even possible allies, given what they assumed were their anti-democratic ideologies and jihadist tendencies. For their part, Islamic activists viewed *laïcité* secularists as deeply anti-religious and complicit in the repression of Islamic parties. Thus, there existed multiple opposition leaders, but no complementary goals.

But from 2003 to 2011, something similar to what happened in Chile, Spain, and Indonesia began to happen in Tunisia: an accommodation between enemies. This accommodation was greatly encouraged by the internal democratizing changes within the major Islamic activist group known as Ennahda ("renaissance"), starting many years before in the early 1980s. These changes were led by Rachid Ghannouchi, Ennahda's leader.

One of Ghannouchi's key arguments about democracy that eased Ennahda's entry into electoral politics – first briefly in 1989, and then as the largest party in Tunisia's National Constituent Assembly (NCA) from 2011 to 2014 – was that, while democracy has universal principles, each democratic country has historic "specificities" that new political parties, such as Ennahda, should respect. One such "specificity" for Ghannouchi was Tunisia's women-friendly educational and legal system. During a brief thaw in the transition from Bourguiba to Ben Ali, Ennahda participated in the 1989 elections, and articulated the reasons why good Muslims should treat men and women as equals. Ennahda polled very well in the capital city, Tunis, before the party was outlawed by Ben Ali, on ill-documented terrorism charges.

In the two decades of exile that followed for Ghannouchi in the United Kingdom, from 1991 to 2011, he wrote hundreds of articles in English, French, and Arabic, in which he increasingly advanced arguments against violence and against the imposition of Sharia on people (whether Muslims or not). He also insisted, along with the key Islamic democratic leaders in Indonesia and Senegal, that, as stated in one of the shortest and most explicit injunctions in the Koran (sura 2:256), "in matters of religion there can be no compulsion."

Ghannouchi noted also that the Islamic juridical virtue of *ijma* ("consensus"), when combined with the Koranic injunction against compulsion in matters of religion, creates a space in Islam for a version of democracy that respects individual rights and pluralism. Ghannouchi further stressed that in the modern conditions of cities, with their populations in millions, the traditional Islamic virtue of *shura* ("consultation") is best achieved by consulting the citizens of a polity, both Muslim and non-Muslim, in open competitive elections.

In June 2003, representatives from approximately twenty Tunisian opposition organizations met in France. Their goal was to see if they could overcome secular-Islamist distrust and become more unified and powerful, and thus erode Ben Ali's "constituency of coercion." Participants at the meeting included Islamist Ennahda and two secular, center-left parties: the Congress for the Republic (CPR) and Ettakatol. Together, eventually, these three parties would between 2011 and 2014 constitute the ruling coalition in Tunisia's National Constituent Assembly.

The first meeting in France in 2003 of twenty political groups from Tunisia resulted in a document that has only recently become widely known: the "Call from Tunis." In essence, it endorsed the two fundamental principles that make democracy possible in a highly religious Muslim-majority country. First, any future elected government would have to be "founded on the sovereignty of the people as the sole source of legitimacy." Second, the state, while showing "respect for the people's identity and its Arab-Muslim values," would provide "the guarantee of liberty of beliefs to all and the political neutralization of places of worship." Ennahda accepted both these fundamental agreements. "The Call" also went on to demand "the full equality of women and men."[20]

The three main opposition political parties at the meeting, together with representatives of smaller parties and some civil society leaders, met nearly every year after 2003 to reaffirm, and even deepen, their commitment to the "Call from Tunis" principles. Their key 2005 manifesto, "Collectif du 18 Octobre pour les Droits et les Libertés," stated that after a "three-month dialogue among party leaders," they had reached consensus on a number of crucial issues. All parties, including Ennahda, supported in great detail the existing liberal family code. Moreover, the manifesto added the crucial proviso that any future democratic state would have to be a "*civic state*... drawing its sole legitimacy from the will of the people," for "political practice is a human discipline [without] any form of sanctity." Finally, the manifesto reasserted that "there can be no compulsion in religion. This includes the right to adopt a religion or doctrine or not."[21]

Agreement on a "civic state," in which citizens were to be the *sole* source of legitimacy, helped weaken any anti-democratic claim against elections along the lines that "only God, not men, makes laws." Ennahda could easily accept that "there can be no compulsion in religion," drawing support from the Koranic verse that Ghannouchi in Tunisia, Abdurrahman Wahid in Indonesia, and Sufi leaders in Senegal like Souleymane Bashir Diagne have consistently employed in their arguments against their own fundamentalists and to reassure classic secularists.

Ghannouchi could not participate directly in these meetings because he was forbidden from entering France. However, some secular leaders like Moncef Marzouki, head of the secular CPR party, along with Islamic leaders like Ghannouchi displayed an extraordinary willingness to cooperate. Marzouki made over twenty trips from France to London to meet with Ghannouchi and other Ennahda leaders.[22] Trust, cooperation, and goal complementarity between the multiple secular and Islamist democratic opposition leaderships were deepened by the fact that Marzouki had taken the risk of a major confrontation with Ben Ali by using the Tunisian League of Human Rights, an organization he had once headed, to defend the basic human and political rights of Ennahda.

Important as these accommodations and agreements were, a militant core of secularists and feminists never joined these dialogues; indeed, they denounced them. Nonetheless, in comparison with Egypt, the existence of secular-Islamic dialogues in Tunisia were of critical importance.

In the first four months after the fall of Ben Ali in Tunisia in January 2011, a diverse group of 155 members was tasked with forming a commission whose purpose was to create an even stronger political society by preparing for elections.[23] Known as the Ben Achour Commission, it agreed that the first polity-wide election should be to elect a Constituent Assembly, not a president. The decision as to whether the political system should be presidential, parliamentary, or semipresidential should be made by the elected Constituent Assembly, not an unelected working group such as the Ben Achour Commission.

The commission also agreed that there could not be an election without an electoral law outlining procedures on how to run the elections, and that transparency should be enhanced by a large network of national and international election observers. They decided to use an electoral system of proportional representation (PR), rather than a "first-past-the post" single-member-district system (as is used in the United Kingdom), because the general agreement, shared by Ennahda, was that the British system would produce an overwhelming Ennahda majority.

In an interview in Tunis on March 26, 2011, Ghannouchi told me that Ennahda could well win the first plurality in 90 percent of the seats under a first-past-the-post system, given the fragmentation of the newly emerging party system.[24] He said he was worried that such a result would produce an anti-democratic, Algerian-style backlash. Ghannouchi went on to estimate that with a PR system, Ennahda would probably not get more than 40 percent of the seats, and would thus need to govern with one or two secular parties, an outcome that he said would help protect Tunisia's young democracy. Ghannouchi, with the support of his party, was making a deliberate choice for multiple coalition leaderships, and was also helping to craft complementary goals.

The commission also decided, with strong backing from Ennahda, not only to have what is called a "closed list" PR system, with ranked names on every list, but to ensure that every other name on each electoral list be that of a woman.

The final April 11, 2011, vote on the proposals saw only two abstentions and two walk-outs; all other members of the commission voted yes. This exceptionally creative and consensual political society work helped contribute to the success of the October 2011 election of the National Constituent Assembly, which was widely considered by national and international observers alike to be free and fair. The results were roughly as predicted, with Ennahda receiving the first plurality with 40 percent of the vote, and forming a coalition government with two secular parties with which Ennahda had been negotiating since 2003: Ettakatol, whose leader, Mustapha Ben Jaafar, became president of the Constituent Assembly, and CPR, whose leader, Moncef Marzouki, was elected interim president of Tunisia by the Constituent Assembly. These three parties, with their multiple but complementary leaderships, became the ruling troika during the constitution-writing period. Once again, nothing remotely like this consensual, political society-building process occurred in Egypt.

Despite its auspicious beginning in free and fair elections in October 2011, for a six-month period, from July to December 2013, Tunisia experienced a crisis that threatened the entire transition process. But by December of that year, Tunisia had managed to reequilibrate and consensually pass an inclusionary constitution in January 2014. How did innovative consensus-building, in the midst of crisis, enable this democratic reequilibration in Tunisia?

The roots of the crisis lay in the constitution-making process and expectations about its speed. The majority of members of the Constituent Assembly pledged to complete the new constitution within one year of starting their deliberations. This was unnecessarily fast, dangerous, and unusual: India spent three years writing its constitution; Spain spent two.

In this context, some of the major actors in Tunisia who had not done well or had not participated in the Constituent Assembly elections – such as Beji Caid Essebsi, who had once been the interior minister under Bourguiba and had founded the new secular opposition party Nidaa Tounes in the summer of 2012 – began to declare that the National Constituent Assembly, having failed to deliver on its promise, would become illegitimate on the one-year anniversary of its opening session. Essebsi suggested that other groups (of unclear origin) should draft a new constitution and send it to the reactivated NCA for its ratification.

Compounding this emerging crisis were the assassinations of two leading leftist Ennahda critics in February and July of 2013. The assassinations, and the fact that they were not solved, led to charges of Ennahda's incompetence or, worse, complicity. Events in Egypt colored the interpretations of those in Tunisia: the massive Egyptian petition movement called Tamarod ("rebellion"), directed against the Muslim Brotherhood President Mohamed Morsi, facilitated the Egyptian military's coup against Morsi on July 3, 2013. This, in turn, appeared to have strengthened the copycat Tamarod movement in Tunisia, and led to increasingly large protests outside the Constituent Assembly.

In this highly charged context, on August 6, 2013, one of the multiple leaders of the three-party ruling coalition, Mustapha Ben Jaafar, president of the Constituent Assembly and of the Ettakatol Party, temporally suspended the work of the NCA in order to buy time for the democratic groups, in and outside the Assembly, to develop ways to transcend the crisis.[25] Ben Jaafar's persuasive leadership achieved something virtually unprecedented in democratic constitution-making. He managed to convince every party with seats in the NCA, no matter how large or small, to agree to have only one "voice" in the decisions about every contested article in a body that came to be called the Consensus Committee.

This was a major sacrifice of power for Ennahda: with 41 percent of the seats in the NCA, their representation in the Consensus Committee was no more than that of parties with less than 5 percent of the seats. It was also agreed that there would be no formal votes in the Consensus Committee. Rather, an article would be considered consensually agreed-upon when it was approved as the "sense of the meeting" by two-thirds of the participants. Progress in overcoming deadlocks in this fashion commenced rapidly once Ben Jaafar reopened the NCA.

Ben Jaafar used the period of the NCA's suspension to reach as many key actors in civil society who were *outside* the Assembly as possible. The most important of these was a secular group led by the most powerful trade union in all of North Africa, the UCTT; it was rapidly supported by the Tunisian League of Human Rights and the Tunisian Bar Association, and was eventually joined by the leading employer's association, UTICA.[26] These four groups together intensified a process increasingly referred to as "the Dialogue." This external group was never a formal part of the Consensus Committee in the NCA, but in interviews, its leaders explained that, with the agreement of the Consensus Committee, they regularly sent two representatives to key meetings to listen and offer the Dialogue's suggestions.

The Dialogue leaders eventually brought other weighty political and social actors into discussions about a "road map" to transcend the crisis. This road map, which approximately twenty groups and parties supported, entailed dates for signing the constitution, the voluntary resignation of the Ennahda-led troika coalition, the appointment of an interim technocratic prime minister and government, the final appointment of an electoral commission, and the holding of parliamentary and then presidential elections.

Ennahda agreed to everything but, understandably, refused to resign until the day the final constitution was signed. On the same day the constitution was approved, Ennahda duly stepped down, and an interim government of technocrats took over to run the administration and oversee the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections. The crisis had been consensually resolved.

The Tunisian Constitution, after four drafts, was ratified on January 27, 2014. The final vote of the 216 deputies to the Constituent Assembly was quite consensual: two hundred voted yes and twelve voted no, with four abstentions. Some of the articles in the final constitution are the most progressive ever passed in an Arab or Muslim country; indeed they are more progressive than what is law in many long-standing democracies. The preamble states flatly that the Tunisian polity is based upon "equality of rights and duties between all citizens, male and female." Article 46 also affirms that "the state works to attain parity between women and men in elected Assemblies."

To accuse a person in many Muslim countries of being an "apostate" often puts that person at great risk, possibly even of death. In Article 6 of the Tunisian constitution, probably for the first time in the constitution of a Muslim-majority country, making such an accusation has itself been criminalized.

Although many members of Ennahda's base may have wanted Sharia law, Ghannouchi gave a major speech *before* the first of the four drafts of the constitution was written arguing against Sharia appearing in the constitution. This was followed by the chief executive body of Ennahda – the Shura Council – voting against including *any* reference to Sharia in the constitution. Like Indonesia, and unlike el-Sisi's Egypt, there is thus *no* reference to Sharia in the 2014 Tunisian constitution.[27]

Many commentators have argued that once an Islamic party wins power in elections, they will never relinquish power. However, in the parliamentary elections of October 26, 2014, Essebsi's secularist party, Nidaa Tounes, won the first plurality (and the right to nominate the prime minister); three weeks later, in December 2014, Essebsi won the presidency in a tight, second-round run-off election in which Ennahda honored its pledge not to run a candidate.

I talked to Ghannouchi three days after Ennahda's parliamentary defeat. He was philosophical and his reflections mainly concerned the future of democracy in Tunisia, to which he was convinced Ennahda had contributed:

> In a period of transition it was useful we did not push religion too hard. We are very keen to make a success of the transition. We have a very heavy responsibility for the success of democracy. Even if we lose in elections, democracy gains. The main goal is to make a success of democracy.
>
> Tunisia has got rid of despotism. There is chaos in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Egypt, and Iraq. We saved our country. We lose power but we saved Tunisia.
>
> We will try to oblige Nidaa Tounes to accept the game of democracy. Moving from government to opposition, and preserving the right to come back, this is the point of democracy. [28]

On the night of the presidential elections, Ghannouchi quickly phoned Essebsi to congratulate him on his victory and accept the results of the free and fair election.

President Essebsi's Nidaa Tounes won a plurality in the parliamentary elections with eighty-six seats, but this was twenty-three seats short of the absolute majority needed to form a government by itself. Eventually, Nidaa Tounes crafted a majority by putting together a coalition of five parties that included Ennahda. The formation of this coalition was very unpopular with those members of Nidaa Tounes's base and allies who had fought an anti-Islamist campaign, and was just as unpopular with many in Ennahda's base who feared a return to anti-Islamic repression and who did not want to share the inevitable costs of government with opponents. So why did the coalition form, when Nidaa Tounes and Essebsi could have put together a majority without Ennahda, and when Ennahda, with sixty-nine seats in parliament, was only given one ministry, while a party with only eight seats in parliament was given three?

In a democratic context, even the leaders of the two most opposing parties may at times deem it in their interest to pursue complementary rather than conflictual goals. Before the coalition was agreed upon, there was talk in Tunis of the possibility of a "two-sheikh" leadership formula that could be a "multiple-sum" compromise, rather than a "zero-sum" conflict. The two-sheikh metaphor refers to the aging founding leaders of the two major conflicting parties in Tunisia: Beji Caid Essebsi, of Nidaa Tounes, and Rachid Ghannouchi, of Ennahda.

Of the largest parties in parliament, the only two with significant overlaps in economic policy – despite great differences on Islam – are Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda. The leader of the former, Essebsi, was then eighty-eight years old, and the coalition offered the promise of majority support for many of his difficult economic reforms. If Essebsi wanted to leave a legacy of statesman-led growth, Ennahda, rather than his Marxist-secularist Popular Front allies, could help him more.

For his part, Ghannouchi probably calculated that he would be in a better position to pressure Essebsi to accept Ennahda as a normal part of democratic participation in Tunisia if that party was in the governing coalition and thus had the potential to cause the fall of the government in the event of renewed undemocratic repression against them. For Ghannouchi, the achievement of the "normalcy" of Ennahda and the persistence of Tunisian democratic politics would be his great legacy.

Tunisia has completed a "democratic transition," but a fully "consolidated democracy" normally requires more time, a supportive geopolitical neighborhood, and more tangible socioeconomic benefits from democracy than Tunisia has had so far.[29] The magnitude of Tunisia's future democratic tasks becomes clear when we situate Tunisia in a comparative geopolitical framework. I have noted the contrast between Tunisia's difficult neighborhood and that in which some Central European countries found themselves following the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact. Not only has Tunisia no hope of joining the European Union, but the United States, which gives $1.3 billion a year to the military of authoritarian Egypt, allocated only $166 million to democratic Tunisia in 2015.

The ISIS-inspired attacks at two of Tunisia's most popular tourist destinations were followed, more recently, by the ISIS onslaught of March 8, 2016, on Tunisian army and police posts near the southern border with Libya. Although repulsed, the attack was unprecedented in that ISIS seemed to have intended to hold territory within Tunisia. Such attacks may not destroy Tunisia's democracy, but economically and politically, they will make a full consolidation of democracy much more difficult to achieve.

If Tunisia, the Arab country that has by far the best chance of consolidating democracy, fails despite its multiple and complementary leaderships, democracy as a credible prospect to aspire to withers everywhere in the Arab world. It is time for the United States and other democracies to give Tunisia's fledgling but imperiled democracy much greater priority and help.

ENDNOTES

[1] A major exception is Archie Brown; see, for example, Archie Brown, *The Myth of the Strong Leader: Political Leadership in the Modern Age* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

[2] My term "Brumairian abdication" builds on Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon," *Die Revolution* (1852). Tensions between different revolutionary leaderships led some of them to make deals with Napoleon (in hopes of using him for their own ends), which in turn created the opening for him to seize power. In Brazil in 1964, Chile in 1973, and Egypt in July 2013, the Brumairian abdication was also a Brumairian invitation for the military to rule.

[3] See Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 78.

[4] Robert F. Worth, "In Libya, the Captors Have Become the Captive," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 9, 2012.

[5] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Organization* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013), 286.

[6] Emphasis added. Data supplied to me by Professor Stephen Whitefield of Oxford University based on a not-yet-published poll he and his colleagues conducted in Egypt in December 2011 with 2,001 respondents.

[7] Samir El-Sayed, writing for *Ahram Online*, on September 23, 2011.

[8] For multiple leaderships in the Spanish transition, see Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 87 – 115.

[9] See Mirjam Künkler, "How Pluralist Democracy Became the Consensual Discourse Among Secular and Nonsecular Muslims in Indonesia," in *Democracy and Islam in Indonesia*, ed. Mirjam Künkler and Alfred Stepan (New York: Columbia University, Press, 2013), 53 – 72.

[10] Donald L. Horowitz, *Constitutional Change and Democracy in Indonesia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 293.

[11] "Our Country of the Year: Hope Springs," *The Economist*, December 20, 2014.

[12] On Freedom House's seven-point scale, the highest score for political rights is one, and the worst score is seven. In 2015, Egypt and Libya received the second lowest possible score, a six, and Syria the lowest possible score, a seven.

[13] See "Islamic State: Spreading its Tentacles," and "Tunisia's Economy: The Other Victim," both in *The Economist*, July 4, 2015, 39 – 40.

[14] For a discussion of "aggressive secularism" in France and Turkey, in contrast to a religion-friendly "passive secularism" in the United States, see Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies Toward Religion: The United States, France and Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[15] Jean-Pierre Filiu, *The Arab Revolution: Ten Lessons from the Democratic Uprising* (London: C. Hurst, 2011), 14.

[16] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798 – 1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 65.

[17] Alfred Stepan, "Tunisia's Transition and the Twin Tolerations," *Journal of Democracy* 23 (2012): 89 – 103, esp. 99 – 102.

[18] M. M. Charrad, *States and Women's Rights in the Making of Post-Colonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[19] Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 254 – 275.

[20] The original version was drafted in Arabic and French.

[21] Original in Arabic. Emphasis added.

[22] Interview with Marzouki in Tunis, and a separate confirmatory interview with Ghannouchi in Tunis, both in May 2013.

[23] Stepan, "Tunisia's Transition and the Twin Tolerations," esp. 91 – 94.

[24] Ghannouchi was right in this estimate: Ennahda did win a plurality in about 90 percent of the electoral districts.

[25] What follows concerning the new style of internal work of the NCA is based largely, but not exclusively, on a long interview Monica Marks and I conducted with Mustapha Ben Jaafar on November 4, 2014, in his NCA presidential office in Tunis.

[26] Monica Marks and I interviewed top leaders of these organizations in Tunis from October 30 through November 3, 2014.

[27] Article 2 of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution passed under the domination of General el-Sisi stipulates that the "principles of Islamic Sharia are the main source of legislation."

[28] Interview with Rachid Ghannouchi, October 29, 2014, Tunis.

[29] For a definition and more extensive discussion of democratic consolidation, see Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, chap. 1, esp. 5 – 15.