



Instituto de Estudos
Econômicos e Internacionais

ENSAIOS DO IEEI

Número 12

**FROM THE ARAB SPRING TO THE ISLAMIC SPRING?
OR HOW TO BUILD “A DEMOCRACY WITHOUT DEMOCRATS”**

ABDELWAHAB HIBA HECHICHE

São Paulo, março de 2012



**Instituto de Estudos
Econômicos e Internacionais**

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Publicação que objetiva divulgar os resultados dos estudos realizados no Instituto de Estudos Econômicos e Internacionais.

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ISSN 2176-8773

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Introduction

Several years ago, as a fellow at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, at Harvard, I presented a paper I entitled “Teaching Controversial Issues in the Classroom: The Case of Middle Eastern Studies.” In the summer of the 2011 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, a scholar asked “Why Middle East Studies scholars missed the Arab Spring?” The same scholar asserted that “The vast majority of academic specialists on the Arab world were as surprised as everyone else by the upheavals that toppled two Arab leaders and that now threaten several others.”² We now know that a third dictator was to be toppled in Libya, and the fourth is still surviving in Damascus only thanks to his ruthless and bloodiest repression in modern Middle East history. One can but question Professor Gause’s assertion that “...few, if any political scientists working on the Middle East explained the peculiar stability of the Arab regimes in cultural terms...”³ One is even more surprised by the view that “The literature on how Arab dictators endured did not include old sources about how Islam is inimical to democracy or how Arab culture remains too patriarchal and traditional to support democratic changes.”⁴ A few points may help us respond to the above mentioned comments:

When France decided to crush Algerian resistance to the point of almost de-Arabizing it, it was the French Department of War that decided to have Ibn Khaldun’s work translated in order to understand Arab mentality and societal structures. In more contemporary times, the late Professor Ernest Gellner helped the West better understand Morocco and Moroccans. As a matter of fact, at a seminar in Tangiers in the very early 1980s, Moroccan scholars referred to Professor Gellner’s authoritative studies.

² F.Gregory Gausell, *Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring?: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability*, *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2011, pp. 81-90

³ *Ibid.* p.82.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 82-83.

In 1983, a very serious collective effort offered us a very precious collection of papers on how Muslim history had been challenged by colonialism, and how “During the twentieth century, religion re-emerged in the politics of the Muslim world, inspiring anti-colonialist movements and the struggle for independence.”⁵ Yet, even John Esposito’s view that “During the post-independence period, Islam receded from the political arena as newly-established Muslim states sought to modernize and to develop as separate nations” is quite relative. The central issue in the Arab world was to be used and abused by all leaders and regimes: The Loss of Palestine and the consequent Arab-Israeli conflict.

Part I: Arab Nationalism vs. Islamic Reforms

A. Religion, Identity, and the Struggle against Colonialism

It has become common place to believe that the Iranian Revolution, self-identified the Islamic Revolution, has more than ever created a fusion between religion and politics. This is all the more significant historically as modern Arab-Muslim reformism goes back to the latter part of the 19th century with names such as Afghani, Rashid Ridha, Mohammed Abdu...According to Hichem Djait, after the interval of a new Arab nationalism from the 1920s to the 1960s, we can see “...a return to a dialectic of civilizations” whether it takes the form of a developmentalist ideology or that of a resurgence of Islam.”⁶ What is remarkable in Djait’s analysis is the fact that such questioning- self-questioning about Arab and Muslim identity-after almost one century, is mirroring Khayr-Eddine, Afghani, and Abduh’s own existential questioning: Why are we behind? Why should we give up our faith and our own being?

⁵ Voices of Resurgent Islam, edited by J. Esposito, N.Y, Oxford University Press, 1983.

⁶ Hichem Djait, La Crise de la Culture Islamique, Fayard, Paris, 2004, p. 194.

After over a century of colonization, this “return to the same obsessive questioning, reveals a continuity...which can be explained by the same relative autonomy.”⁷ It is important to underline the fact that long before the Iranian Revolution, the challenge to Arab nationalism as a liberating ideology came from two major Egyptian Muslim Brothers: Hassan Al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1920s, and his disciple, Sayyid Kutb, who became the nemesis of the charismatic leader of Pan-Arabism from the 1950s to his death in 1970, Gamal Abdul-Nasser. Kutb’s political writings carefully analyzed what he believed to be the disease of Muslims who struggle to fit alien models, attempting to replicate them in their own countries. He captured the hopes and dreams of those who sought to bring about change...He moved from a stance of an observer and interpreter of society...to a revolutionary who chartered the vision of a new order to which he wanted to lead all people. Having been disillusioned by all other solutions, he formulated his own, grounded in the Quranic vision, yet relevant for the everyday life of Muslims in the Arab world.”⁸ Yvonne Haddad also reminds us of the significant fact that one of Sayyid Kutb’s followers had been the Iranian Ali Shariati who would help topple the Shah of Iran.⁹

Hichem Djait’s analysis goes even deeper in comparing the Iranian Islamic Revolution with Islamic reformism. For Djait, in the case of Iranian political Islam, we are facing “a direct control of power...and this religious Islam is coming back not to reform itself, but to reform the global society and to impose itself to it. The recuperation of politics as action, and not only as a thought, by the religious, and, on the opposite, the integration of the religious in an eminently political process, we have here without any

⁷ Hichem Djait, *ibid.*, p. 195.

⁸ Haddad, Yvonne, *Sayyid Kutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival*, in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, Oxford University Press, N.Y, 1983, pp. 67-68

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 68.

doubt something representing a major phenomenon the novelty of which deserves our full attention.”¹⁰

B. Revolts or Revolutions?

“In less than four months, the toppling of two dictators-Tunisian and Egyptian-has crushed the myth according to which the Arabs would be incapable of breaking the chains of oppression and to live in democracy.”¹¹ Under the title “ Les Revolutions dans l’Histoire” (Revolutions in History), the periodical “Maniere de Voir, in its front page, reminds us of the futility of this fable of the “Arab Exception” propagated by the promoters of colonialism and by the unconditional supporters of the “Free World” and of “The Clash of Civilizations.” No force in the world can prevent man or woman from rising to “dissipate darkness” as poetically expressed by Abu Kacen Es-Shabi, the Tunisian poet. Yes! One totally agrees with those eloquent and so powerful verses still chanted by Tunisians when using their national anthem. But the question remains: After breaking the chains of colonialism, and after toppling a dictator, are the Tunisian people prepared to resist the darkness of classical, traditionalist, and backward interpretation of Islamic Law, the Shari’a?

During the French Renaissance, Etienne de la Boetie confronted the same dilemma from other perspectives: “How can people submit to the yoke of one single man, a tyrant, instead of opposing him. Isn’t the sentiment of liberty a prerequisite of human nature? How can this situation define the condition of humans if it contradicts their nature?”¹² It is true that the Arabs in general, and the Tunisians in particular seemed to

¹⁰ Hichem Djait, *La Crise de la Culture Islamique*, p. 196.

¹¹ Kamal Labidi, *Quand le Peuple prend l’Avantage*, in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, aout 2011, p. 26.

¹² Etienne de la Boétie, *Discours sur la Servitude volontaire*, Translated into Modern French by Myriam Marache-Gouraud, *Pholio Plus Philosophie*, Décembre 2010, p. 71.

be too servile in their passivity under paternalistically oppressive and repressive regimes. In dealing with this issue, Ibn Khaldun used his original concept of “Asabya” or group solidarity or group feeling, to explain the use of “religious propaganda” which gives a dynasty at its beginning another power in addition to that of the group feeling it possessed as the result of the number of its supporters.”¹³ According to Zaid Ahmad, “The tension between religious orthodoxy and philosophy is an age old problem in Islamic intellectual circles. It began as early as the first penetration of the Greeks into the Arab-Islamic world... and later became one of the most topical subjects of discussion.”¹⁴ What seems to be essential in Zaid Ahmad’s analysis is the dichotomy between revelation and reason, and the primacy of the former over the latter. This contradicts my own understanding of a Hadith well supported by the late French Orientalist, Jacques Berque, in which we learn how, according to Prophet Mohammed, the ultimate answer to any dilemma is to be found in Ijtihad, i.e., the intellectual strife where reason is the ultimate arbiter. Naturally, Zaid Ahnad’s own view that “Ibn Khaldun’s stance is more inclined toward orthodoxy” is open for debate.¹⁵

¹³ Abderrahman, Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History, Part III, ON Dynasties, Royal Authority, the Caliphate, Government Ranks, And All that goes with these things*, Translation by Franz Rosenthal, Vol. I, p. 313.

¹⁴ Zaid Ahmad, *The Epistemology of Ibn Khaldun: Orthodoxy Vs. Philosophy*, Routledge Curzon, London, New York, 2003, p. 7.

¹⁵ Zaid Ahmad’s view is based on his study of Chapter VI of the *Muqaddimah* entitled: Refutation of Philosophy, in his *Epistemology of Ibn Khaldun*, p. 7.

Part II: Islam, Secularization, and Democracy

A. Islam and Politics: A Conceptual Approach

The very fact that a UN Conference on Democracy and the Arab World has been hosted in Beirut in January 2012, is a testimony to the urgency of understanding the difference between upheavals, revolts, and revolutions, and building democratic institutions as a genuine tool of democratization. Ernest Krauz explained it eloquently: “Secularization is a process whereby religious thinking, practice, and institutions lose social significance, and are increasingly restricted to the domain of private faith.”¹⁶ It is also quite plausible that “More generally, many commentators...believe that present Islamic activism is primarily nationalist or socialist or economically motivated movements dressed under the garb of religion.”¹⁷ Using a more systematic approach, Olivier Roy detects a major mutation in the evolution of Islamist movements since the 1980s. For Him, the revolutionary Iranian political model was replaced by “...a strategy of re-Islamization from the bottom of society encompassing customs, culture...”¹⁸ It’s exactly what has been happening in Tunisia and Egypt before and since the early stages of the so-called “Arab Spring” of 2011. On one hand, it compelled governments to appear as champions of Islam and of an Islamic way of life. On the other hand, it exerted pressure on the Muslim populations. As a corollary of this strategy, for the neo-fundamentalists, “...the reform of society passes through the reform of social customs on the basis of the Shari’a (Islamic Law), and not simply through a change

¹⁶ Krauz, Ernest, “Religion and Secularization: A Matter of Definitions”, in *Social Compass*, (1971-72): 212, quoted by Daniel Pipes, “Understanding Islam and Politics”, *Middle east Review*, vol. XVI, No. 2, Winter 1983-84, p. 4, note 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Roy, Olivier, *Islam: Qu’est-ce que le néo-fondamentalisme?*, in *Esprit*, Juillet-août 1990, Paris, p.5, quoted by Abdelwahab Hechiche in “What Jews Should Know About Islam and Muslims: Remembering a Common heritage”, *Publisud*, Paris, p. 197.

of government. This phase and component of the strategy was made more visible and more tangible through various charity and welfare programs run and financed by the Islamist movements, allowing them to create “Islamized spaces”, particularly in poor neighborhoods, where the so-called secularized and Westernized Muslim state has failed to improve the economic, social, educational conditions of the underprivileged. This subtle strategy worked in Turkey, Egypt, and later in Tunisia before and after December 16, 2010, the critical turning point that was marked by the self-immolation of the young Tunisian, Mr. Mohammed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid. The names of some religiously oriented political parties are self-explanatory: “The Welfare Party”, “The Justice and Development Party”, and “The Virtue Party.”

Former Tunisian Ambassador to the UN and former member of the UN Commission on Human Rights, H.E Nejb Bouziri, offers us a remarkable view of how article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was debated at the 1994 spring session. For instance, we learn that the phrases “freedom to have or to adopt a religion of one’s choice”, and “freedom to change one’s religion” in actuality meant the same thing. H.E Bouziri also mentions the fact that, in some instances, a phrase was retained “diplomatically” to make it more acceptable to the Muslim states.¹⁹ When the Committee on Human Rights discussed the compatibility of apostasy with Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the view of the Sudanese Representative was categorical;” “The offense of apostasy can be sanctioned by death. Islam must be considered not only as a religion, but also as a comprehensive set of precepts for public and private life. Persons who commit apostasy are a danger for society and may be compared with

¹⁹ Bouziri, Néjb, *Le Pacte International Relatif Aux Droits Civils et Politiques*(Elaboration et Application), Doctoral Dissertation, University of Paris, Panthéon-Assas, (Paris II), Droit, Economie, Sciences Sociales, Paris, September 19, 1994, p. 581.

traitors... The Islamist movements, in a certain number of countries, had tried to have such countries abrogate all dispositions that are opposed to Islamic Law.”²⁰

Once again, we can see how difficult it is to separate religion from politics in Islam.²¹ However, this dilemma may be found in other religions, and well established democracies. For instance, US foreign policy has become deeply associated with religion because of family planning policies adopted by some recipients of foreign aid who have legalized abortion. This issue has also affected US domestic policy in February 2012 when the Obama Administration caused a strong reaction from the Catholic Church. France and the US have not yet resolved the issue of religion at school. Israel’s Knesset has tabled the thorny question “Who is a Jew?” since the 1990s. One answer to this problematique may be Herbert Spencer’s view that “The state always preserves some of the characteristics of the Church, even at the end of a long process of secularization. It is the nature of power to maintain, either in an overt or in a masked form, a political religion.”²² According to George Balandier, what is more perplexing, and clearly paradoxical, is Luc de Heusch’s brilliant formula: “Political Science derives from the comparative history of religions.”²³ George Balandier’s own perceptive understanding of history sheds more light in the area of interaction between religion and politics when he states: “In this respect, the political philosophy of Marx foreshadows the work of sociologists and anthropologists, for whom it provides a point of departure by showing the presence, in every society possessing a State, of a dualism similar to the opposition of the

²⁰ Committee on Human Rights, 1991, p. 138, quoted by H.E Bouziri, p. 581, see A. Hechiche, What Jews Should Know About Islam and Muslims..., pp. 210-211.

²¹ Think of the case of the Saudi journalist who was arrested in Malaysia and may be deported back to Saudi Arabia for having been accused of blasphemy toward the Prophet. New York Times...February 2012....

²² Spencer, Herbert, Principles of Sociology, referred to by George balandier in Politcal Anthropology, Translated from French by A.N Sheridan Smith, Pantheon Books, 1970, p. 100.

²³ Geoge Balandier, Ibid.

sacred and the profane. The members of the political State are religious by virtue of the dualism between the individual life and the generic life, between the life of the civil society and political life...According to Marx, State power and religion are similar in their essence, even when the State is separated from the Church and in opposition to it. This essential similarity is due to the fact that the State is situated (or appears to be) beyond real life, in a sphere whose distance is reminiscent of that of God of the gods...”²⁴

B. The Nationalization of Religion: A Double-Edged and Necessary Tool for Democratization

Although Balandier’s analysis brings some relativism to Bassam Tibi’s central idea about Islam as “a defensive culture”, it also helps us better understand the power struggle between Islamism and Muslim states today. This struggle, in its subtleties and fervor, has been remarkably analyzed and dissected by Professor and Dean Yadh Ben Achour: “It is precisely through a historical struggle against their “secular” adversaries, that the legitimists constructed the normative Islamic system and gave it its coherence and its totality. Therefore, it is correct to speak of “integrism” (fundamentalism) when referring to religious movements which, wholeheartedly, defend the coherence of the system against the multiple forms of secularism of the modern world, and against the ruses of the secular reason in religious thought...The fundamentalist is the one who pursues the combat of a Ghazali, or of Ibn Tamy’a for an integral Islam, one and unfragmented. However, fundamentalism is not a mere militant ideology, but a type of thought, that the believer who totally adheres to the Islamic normative system, and who considers that any fissure in the coherence and in the unity of the system is a sign of

²⁴ Ibid.

heresy.”²⁵ Thus, Ben Achour joins Balandier and de Heusch in the analytical opposition between “The state of Islam” and “The Islam of the State”, which leads him to assert that religion as a personal matter has become possible in the land of Islam, in spite of and because of the very Islamist rejectionism. But, the more important reason is of a constitutional nature. “Islam as the religion of the State has nothing to do with the “state of Islam” of antiquity. Then, the State was...the servant of one single polity. The very one which wanted to appear non-political, that is the one which pretended to be above politics. Though this may be another way, perhaps the best way, to practice the art of politics, since it consisted of making regicide and disobedience offenses to God Himself; nonetheless, the theory of “the state of Islam” has nothing to do with the theory of “Islam: Religion of the State” of our constitution.”²⁶ Professor Ben Achour supports his argument with a pertinent comparison with a certain “statism” in Christian Europe of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries among Lutherans and Anglicans, or, in the view of Hobbes and Spinoza. With a quote from the latter, Ben Achour touches on the centrality of today’s debate and renewed struggle-after the promises of the Arab Spring- between Islamism and Constitutional Islam. According to Spinoza, “Religion acquires legal authority only on the basis of the decree of those who are entitled to rule the State, that God’s reign on them is established only by those who hold political power.”²⁷ Thus, “Islam, religion of the State” becomes the credo of the new statism in the land of Islam. For Ben Achour, it does not mean the introduction of religion into politics, but rather its exit.”²⁸ This is posited on the implicit constitutional idea that “It is forbidden to be more Muslim than one’s Prince.” For different reasons and circumstances, that was the case under President Habib Bourguiba and his successor,

²⁵ Ben Achour, *Yadh, Normes, Foi, et Loi, en particulier dans l’Islam*, CERES Editions, 1994, Tunis, pp. 242-243.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Spinoza, Baruch, *Traité de Théologie Politique*, p. 113, quoted by Ben Achour, p. 258.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 259

President Zein Al Abideen Ben Ali who felt challenged by En-Nahdha and its leader Mr. Rached Ghannouchi whose ideology, propaganda, and direct or indirect involvement in acts of terror before and after the Arab Spring, implied that the rest of the nation was not Islamic enough. For Ben Achour, the new form of “statism” must be understood as follows: “ In statism-here the submission of religion to the State...means: The believer, in his/her conviction, remains perfectly free to determine his/her belief or disbelief...and his/her particular religious life. In this area, neither the State, nor the community may interfere. But, this believer delegates to the State, and only to it, public and collective religious manifestations. The believer keeps the religion of the law, but leaves political religion for the State.”²⁹

Part III: The Promises of the Jasmin Revolution in Tunisia

A. Islamic Ideology vs. Political Culture: The Specificity of Tunisianity

Hichem Djait helps us better grasp the above discussed problematique through his judicious analysis of what he called “The Crisis of the Islamic Culture.” For him, there may never have been an Islamic polity, even under the institution of the Caliphate, but rather an “incarnation of the sacred in some men” whose main objective may have been “to place Islam in the social world...with a conceptual and judicial framework.”³⁰ This, Djait asserts, was the target of the Abbasid Caliphs of the classical era as well as that of the great jurists. For Djait, “That was certainly an Islamic ideology but not a political culture.”³¹

We started this reflection with the scholars who blamed Middle Eastern Studies for having failed to predict the Arab Spring. More recently, other distinguished scholars

²⁹ Quoted by Ben Achour, p. 215.

³⁰ Djait, Hichem, *La Crise de la Culture Islamique*, Fayard, Paris, 2004, p. 207.

³¹ Ibid.

tried to remind us that nothing is new under the sun. “In Tunisia, protesters escalated calls for the restoration of the country’s suspended constitution. Meanwhile, Egyptians rose in revolt as strikes across the country brought daily life to a halt and toppled the government. In Libya, provincial leaders worked feverishly to strengthen their newly independent republic... Any student of the Middle East and North Africa would have considered these events as a meticulous report of the events of 2010-2011 from Tunis, to Cairo, to Libya...”³² In actuality, what Professor Anderson was describing took place in 1919. For her, the trigger, the spark was then, President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Point-Speech and his famous and so debatable principle of self-determination of people. Yet, more pragmatic observers saw a more direct link between the failure of economic policies and the ongoing political revolutions. Jean François Daguzan saw this link as the end of a model of governance in the Arab world, that of “an authoritarian stability.” For him, “These models were very convenient globally for Western powers which, since the 1980s, considered them as a bulwark against radical Islam. During that period, the democratic parody 90% electoral success, and even more for the leader of the ruling party was the grape leaf of a political stagnation and of the absence of civil liberties.”³³ More to the point, Daguzan adds: “Thirteen years after Barcelona, one year before the opening of a free trade zone, and with a paralyzed Mediterranean Union, the economic convergence, especially with the Northern neighbors, was not achieved.”³⁴ Thus, “The socio-economic crisis reveals the fragility of societies hastily considered stable. The crisis also demonstrates the fact that nations are capable of contesting the Chinese model of development: Growth without democracy, an implicit reference to the

³² Anderson, Lisa, *Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya*, in *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2011, p. 2.

³³ Daguzan, Jean-François, *De la Crise Economique à La Révolution Politique*, in *Maghreb-Machrek*, No. 206, Hiver 2010-2011, p. 9.

³⁴ Daguzan, pp. 9-10.

Arab dictators.”³⁵ Joining Lisa Anderson about the fact that the so-called Arab Spring may have been exaggeratedly considered as a surprise, not to mention as a revolution, Jean-François Daguzan timidly reminds his readers of the *Review Maghreb-Machrek*, that in May 1988, he wrote: “However, repression and the unlimited French aid cannot be, alone, the veritable guaranties for Tunisia’s future. Despite the economic success, the political positive evolution will depend on the capacity of the head of State to guaranty a democratic opening in a country where fire is alive under the ashes.”³⁶ Like the Algerian case, the resolution of the Islamic problem could not be achieved or kept under control without breaking the security spiral, leading to the involvement of civil society in the governance of the city. Eliminating the last relics of the classical model of Oriental despotism inherited from the past, in order to offer a modern alternative of government that will respect the specificities of the Maghreb and its citizens, that is the challenge for the 21st century Tunisia.³⁷

B. The Role of Social Media/What is it exactly?

According to Professor Clay Shirky, “Since the rise of the Internet in the early 1990s, the world’s networked population has grown from the low millions to the low billions.” Over the same period, social media have become a fact of life for civil society worldwide, involving many actors: Regular citizens, activists, non-governmental organizations, telecommunication firms, software providers, governments. This raises an obvious question for the US government: How does the ubiquity of social media affect US interests, and how should US policy respond to it?”³⁸ Obviously, the extreme novelty of such technology and its already discovered side effects-in civilizational,

³⁵ Ibid. p. 10.

³⁶ Ibid. pp. 12-13.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Shirky, Clay, *The Political Power of Social Media, Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change*, in *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2011, pp. 28-29.

ethical, political, and legal terms-may be due to the fact that “It does not have a pre-ordained outcome.”³⁹Using paradigms and experiments of the former Soviet Union, Professor Chirky considers that “Empirical work on the subject is also hard to come by, in part because these tools are so new and in part because relevant examples are so rare.”⁴⁰More pertinently for our topic, Professor Shirskey adds: The safest characterization of recent quantitative attempts to answer the question -“Do digital tools enhance democracy?”-is that these tools probably do not hurt in the short run, and might help in the long run-and that they have the most dramatic effects in states where a public sphere already constrains the actions of government.⁴¹

Another perspective is defended by Professor M. El Oifi according to whom, in 1996, the launching of the Qatari T.V Channel Al-Jazeera, constituted a major turn in the history of pan-Arab media, the genesis of which goes back to the end of the 19th century. Naturally, this pan-Arab character of these new T.V channels increases the audience, enhances their power and their impact thanks to the rapidity with which news and images circulate.⁴²

“The late imposition of the Nation-State in the old Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, the linguistic homogeneity, and the relative historic and religious unity of the Middle East –very questionable today- made it possible for the concept of transnational media to be operational... This phenomenon invites us to re-think the question of the relationship between media and politics in the Arab world, and, more

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 30.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Mohammed el Oifi, *Faire de la Politique par les Médias dans le Monde Arabe*, quoting Hughes Miles, *Al-jazeera, How Arab T.V News Challenged the World*, London, Abacus, 2005, in *Maghreb-Machrek*, No. 193, Autumn 2007, p.81. We can also add, that since 2003, the US and other main regional actors resorted to such tools in Iraq to enhance their respective interests and image by creating or supporting new channels such as Al-Hurriya (US), Iranian-influenced Al-Alam, Saudi –influenced Al-‘Arabya, and France 24 (France). This flourishing of media in the Arab-Muslim world is but the mirror of a tough ideological competition among the Arab states.

generally, the role of the media in international political life. As a matter of fact, the power of pan-Arab media does not only reflect the impotence of politics, but also the sign of institutional deregulation to the extent that these new channels have started to function as substitute political stages. Their audience and the legitimacy they have acquired within the Arabic-speaking public is the sign of the fragility of the nation-state in the Middle East as well as the demonstration of the persistence of supra-state identifications.”⁴³

As a specialist of Tunisia, and after disagreeing with those who were surprised by the Arab Spring, Professor Lisa Anderson considered that “The important story about the 2011 Arab revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, is not how the globalization of the norms of civic engagement shaped the protesters’ aspirations. Nor is it about how activists used technology... Instead, the critical issue is how and why these ambitions and techniques resonated in their various local contexts. The patterns and demographics of the protests varied widely.”⁴⁴ The chronology of the spectacular events in Tunisia did start in economically and culturally neglected regions (Sidi-Bouzyd, Kasserine) triggering a march to the coastal cities of luxury hotels and resort beaches, up to the capital, Tunis. “In Egypt, by contrast, urban and cosmopolitan young people in the major cities organized the uprisings. Meanwhile, in Libya, ragtag bands of armed rebels in the Eastern province ignited the protests, revealing the tribal and regional cleavage that has beset the country for decades. Although shared common calls for personal dignity and responsive government, the revolutions across these three countries reflected divergent economic grievances and social dynamics-legacies of their diverse encounters with modern Europe and decades under unique regimes.”⁴⁵ Tragically, as this

⁴³ Mohammed El Oifi, p. 82.

⁴⁴ Anderson. Lisa, *Demystifying the Arab Spring-Passing the Differences between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.*, Foreign Affairs, May-June 2011, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

paper is being drafted, on two occasions, young Moroccan unemployed university graduate imitated the young Tunisian Mohammed Bouazizi in self-immolations.⁴⁶

Facing such dramatic and tragic developments in Arab countries with a long tradition of friendship and cooperation, is the US old foreign policy based on “stability” still workable? Here again, Professor Anderson thinks that “For the United States to fulfill its goals in the region, it will need to understand these distinctions, and distance itself from the idea that the Tunisian, the Egyptian, and Libyan uprisings constitute a cohesive Arab revolt.”⁴⁷

Part IV: Impact of the Jasmin Revolution Regionally and Globally

A. The Demystification of Stability through Authoritarianism

Whatever the degree of perspicacity of the analysts, the new and more urgent question now is not about the causes of the Arab Spring but rather about its consequences. Reforms and elections have already taken place in Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt with fear and skepticism about the dreams of democracy. In Saudi Arabia, the King bought social peace with about 130 billion dollars upon his return to his kingdom from medical treatment, in the US. A Tunisian female activist, Professor Khedija Arfaoui, expressed it with total lucidity: “Revolution in Tunisia took place for two reasons: To fight poverty and to defend our liberties which used to be violated under the dictatorship. Yet, what do we see today? Every day our freedoms are violated, a confusion is being made between Jews and Israelis at the arrival of the leader of Hamas

⁴⁶ Morocco: 5 men set themselves on fire, demonstrating against lack of jobs, The New York Times, World Briefing, January 20, 2012, p. A6.

⁴⁷ Anderson, Lisa, Demystifying the Arab Spring..., p. 3.

at the Tunis-Carthage Airport.”⁴⁸ Dealing directly with the Tunisian Islamist movement, Professor Arfaoui added: “I join the intellectual Mohammed Talbi who did not cease to say that one could not trust En-Nahdha because the nahdhaouis (supporters of En-Nahdha), and, at their head, Rached Ghannouchi, are not democrats. I do not want anymore to hear about religion.”⁴⁹ Such views reflect a bitter disappointment by a woman who had challenged the Ben Ali regime dictatorship and who had been condemned by the latter as a member of the Tunisian Association of Democrat Women. Her experience and new fears may be supported by an external’s specialist observer’s view “That Tunisians may once again prove to be receptive to Ghannouchi’s brand of political Islam, but only if his Islamists can capture the imagination of Tunisia’s young people, who are principally concerned with receiving what they see as their fair share of the country’s wealth and employment opportunities.”⁵⁰ Tunisia’s new leadership must therefore incorporate a generation of young people with only theoretical expressions...into a system that fosters open political debate and contestation. And it must expand to some of the demands, especially of the labor movement that will feature prominently in those debates.”⁵¹ “Lisa Anderson’ recipe seems quite simple, may be even simplistic at a time when violence is being perpetrated in different parts of the country, from the Manouba University to the strategic region of Bizerte.

B. The Rise of the Islamists or How to Build “A democracy with democrats?”

For many years, US foreign policy in the Middle East was based on three major objectives or national interests: Stability, the free flow of oil, and the security of the

⁴⁸ Arfaoui, Khédija, *Tunisi: Un An Après la Révolution: Nos Libertés sont de plus en plus entravées*, in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 15/01/2012.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Anderson, Lisa, *Demystifying the Arab Spring..*, Foreign Affairs, p. 4.

⁵¹ In March 2011, I had the opportunity to attend some of the academic and political gatherings in Tunis. I reminded my colleagues that at the same time, in the US, the real country of democracy, some governors were striving to weaken, may to eliminate labor unions.

State of Israel. What was truly contradictory was the dichotomy between the preaching of modernization and progress on one hand and stability on the other. Only very recently, did some officials begin to recognize that contradiction when they realized that stability enabled autocratic regimes. Thus, for decades, US policy toward the Middle East has been paralyzed by “The Islamist dilemma.” How could the US promote democracy in the region without risking bringing Islamists to power? Now, it seems, the US no longer has a choice.”⁵² Writing several months before the Tunisian elections of October 2011, Shadi Hamid observed: “Popular revolutions have swept US-backed authoritarian regimes from power in Tunisia, and Egypt, and put Libya’s on notice. If truly democratic governments form in their wake, they are likely to include significant representation of main stream Islamist groups. Like it or not, the United States will have to learn how to live with political Islam.”⁵³ In such a geo-strategic context, Washington’s main concern is whether Islamists’ religious commitments can coexist with respect for democracy, pluralism, and women’s rights. For Shadi Hamid, although “There is no doubt that democracy will make the region more unpredictable and some governments there less amenable to US security interests...”⁵⁴ He also believed that some main stream Islamist organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and En-Nahdha in Tunisia “have strong pragmatic tendencies.”⁵⁵ This pragmatism may be seen in Muslim Brotherhood tactical plan “Reintroducing the Brotherhood to the West instead of calling for an Islamic state, the Brotherhood began calling for a “civil democratic state with an Islamist reference”, suggesting a newly found commitment to the separation of mosque and state (although not of religion and politics. This move seems to have been deliberately aimed, at least in part, at alleviating international

⁵² Shadi, Hamid, *The Rise of Islamists, How Islamists Will Change Politics, and Vice Versa*, Foreign Affairs, May-June 2011, p. 40.

⁵³ Shadi, Hamid, P. 40.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

fears...”⁵⁶In the aftermath of US withdrawal from Iraq in December 2011, the most urgent question became whether Islamism which re-emerged as a substitute for pan-Arabism, will be more successful in a pan-Arab regional integration? This is all the more critical for US-Israeli relations and for Euro-Arab relations as we see and learn that the Muslim Brotherhood and En-Nahdha refuse to recognize Israel’s right to exist and call for the liberation of all historic Palestine...”⁵⁷It is good to notice that the violent demonstrations and the racist slogans shouted by Tunisian nahdhaouis at the arrival of Prime Minister Ismail Haniya of Hamas in Tunis on January 17, 2012, have been publically denounced by the large majority of the Tunisian people and leadership including Mr. Rached Ghannouchi, according to the Monde and Le Figaro.⁵⁸

Part V. The International Community wants to help the Arab Spring:

What Model for Arab Democracy?

A. Islam in Secular Tunisia: From Bourguiba to Ben Ali

Many world leaders have responded with sympathy and a lot of good will to help the new march to democracy in the Maghreb and in the Middle East. In April 2011, former President Lech Walesa of Poland visited Tunisia and was hosted by interim President Fuad M’Bazza’a. H.E Walesa shared the Polish experiment in peaceful transition from communism to democracy.⁵⁹ In a June 2011 interview, he said “They told me that they want to purge everybody linked to the old regime.” When he asked his Tunisian hosts

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 41.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Visite houleuses du chef du Hamas en Tunisie, Le Monde, 11/01/12, and , Arielle Thedrel, A Sejnane, les salafistes tunisiens font la loi, Le Figaro, 20/01/12

⁵⁹ About six years ago, I had the honor and the pleasure to be introduced to H.H Lesh Walesa at the launching of the Book of Peace in Normandy, France. When I expressed my admiration for his courageous militant leadership, he humbly moderated it by saying that H.H Pope John Paul II deserved more recognition.

“How many is that?”, they told him 2.3 million people. Mr. Lesh Walesa told them.” That makes no sense...because it will mean civil war...you should convict the worst butchers and let the rest be.”⁶⁰ It is true that many other distinguished world leaders visited Tunisia to offer their experiences. Among them was the former President of Chile, H.E Michele Bachelet. Yet, for quite some time, and even before the Arab Spring, the most appealing and promising model for change in the Arab-Muslim world was Turkey, the Turkey of Prime Minister R. Tayyip Erdogan.

Nearly a year into its transition from authoritarianism to democracy, Tunisia may be credited with some significant achievements: The relatively early elections of October 2011 and the establishment of a National Constituent Assembly. “Some observers hope that the new government, put in place via an election instead of an ad hoc appointment process, will be able to act decisively under a popular mandate. At the same time, discussions of constitutional issues were largely absent...and the policy differences between parties and candidates were often opaque. While the main political factions accepted the results of the election, the campaign also entrenched mutual suspicions among some secularists and Islamists, and allegations of foul play-though difficult to verify- were made from a variety of angles, particularly with regard to campaign finance.”⁶¹ According to the Congressional Research Service, “The October 23, 2011 elections were widely viewed as fair, transparent, and well conducted...International observers stated that the voting process was marked by peaceful and enthusiastic participation, generally transparent procedures, and confidence in the independent electoral commission...A new electoral law promulgated

⁶⁰ H.E Lesh Walsa’s trip to Tunisia was part of a diplomatic push by Poland to share its experience. “Instead of sending F16s, we are sending Lesh Walsa, one newspaper enthused.” Garath Jones and Gabriella Boczynska, Special Report: Solidarity in the Arab Spring, Reuters, interview in Warsaw, June 16, 2011.

⁶¹ Congressional Research Service, Political Transition in Tunisia by Alex Arieff, Analyst in African Affairs, December 16, 2011, pp. 3-4.

in May 2011 set out a one-round voting system based on proportional representation that was designed to make it difficult for any party to gain an absolute majority. The law included a “parity” reservation for women on candidate lists.”⁶² The 217-seat National Constituent Assembly was charged with drafting new Constitution and preparing for future parliamentary and/or presidential elections, vital steps for the nature of the transitional process.⁶³ Following the elections, An-Nahdha formed a coalition with the CPR and Attakatol. This resulted in the election of Mutapha Ben Jaafar as President of the Assembly on November 22, and CPR leader Moncef Marzouki as President on December 12, 2011. Mr. Marzouki, in turn, appointed An-Nahdha’s Secretary General, Mr. Hamadi Jebali, as Prime Minister, the most powerful position within the “TROIKA.” At a joint Press Conference with Rached Ghannouchi on October 28, 2011, Mr. Hamadi Jebali, as Secretary General of En-Nahdha, re-asserted that the winning party in elections is entitled to head the government, after consultations with other parties. Thus, it became predictable that the “Troika” coalition may be subject to internal frictions, given the parties’ divergent histories, potential policy differences, and outside pressures.⁶⁴ This risk of fracture of the coalition appeared early when the PAD led partial opposition boycotts of the December 10 and 12 votes in order to protest purported efforts by An-Nahdha to enhance the authority of the Prime Minister at the

⁶² Previously, Tunisia had a 25% female reservation for party lists in parliamentary elections. Under the “parity” requirement, each list had to alternate male and female candidates. However, since male candidates were overwhelmingly placed at the top of the lists, the requirement did not ensure an equal number of elected female candidates, CRS, pp.5-6, note 10.

⁶³ The main Islamist Party, Harakat Al Nahdha-Renaissance-controls 89 seats (41%), by far the largest bloc in the Assembly, but not enough to rule without a coalition. It is followed by the Center-left, secular Congress for the Republic (CPR), with 29 seats; a popular, conservative, and fractious independent coalition, Al-Aridha Al-Cha’bia (Popular Petition) with 26 seats. The electoral success of Al-Aridha Coalition, a previously little known entity, was unforeseen by most observers and Tunisian elites. The coalition campaign appears to have focused on a popular platform and a grassroots approach that appealed to populations segments in Tunisia’s interior that may have been ignored by the main stream parties. (CRS, p. 6, note 15.

⁶⁴ Thomas, R. Nides, Rached Ghannouchi

expense of the Presidency, and a lack of term limits for the current government.⁶⁵ Could all these early difficulties in Islamic-secular cohabitation qualify Tunisia for the adoption of the Turkish model?

In 1989, Elbaki Hermassi wrote a lucid analysis of Tunisian Islamism. “There is, unquestionably, something specific if not unique in the Tunisian Islamist movement, and in particular in its capacity to stick to local realities in spite of anything that could deter it. We already knew that the movement muted itself with the fatigue of the post-independence state and that it recuperated a good number of those who did not benefit from growth, in particular that proletaroid intelligentsia, to speak like Max Weber... We also know that the movement could not be influenced by the environment in which it evolved, i.e., a society who experienced one century and a half of reforms. However, it is necessary to avoid all forms of reductionism because nothing could guaranty to the Islamist movement its structuration nor its orientation.”⁶⁶ In that very scholarly analysis, Professor Hermassi added: “As for Islamism and Islamists, everything shows three facets: Rehabilitation and re-affirmation of Islam as a national religion; a more conciliatory attitude toward what is being considered for the first time a moderate Islamism; and finally, the firmest vigilance, but this time on the legal plan, not the repressive one, toward any form of subversion in the name of Islam.”⁶⁷ The divorce between former President Ben Ali and Rached Ghannouchi may have been triggered by a law concerning political parties, stipulating that “No party has the right to refer, in its principles, its objectives, its action or program to religion, to a language, to a race, or to a region.” Obviously, such a judicious artifice was almost exclusively meant to block the road to the M.T.I (Mouvement des Tendances Islamiques). “It incarnates, so to

⁶⁵ CRS, p. 6.

⁶⁶ Hermassi, El-Baki, *L’Etat Tunisien et le Mouvement Islamiste*, *Annuaire de l’Afrique du Nord*, Tome XXVIII, 1989, p. 297. Professor Hermassi will become Minister of Culture, Ambassador to UNESCO, and Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Ben Ali Régime.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 301.

speak, the convergence of the party in power named the RCD (Rassemblement Consitutionnel Democratique), with the left, both being threatened by the rise of a new face; both being determined to defend the Bourguibian heritage against an enemy accused of duplicity and double talk.”⁶⁸ Even during his exile in Great Britain. Mr. Rached Ghannouchi remained a very controversial member of the Islamist circles.⁶⁹ In all fairness, one must ask: “Has he changed? Has he been influenced by the country of the great thinkers of the Puritanical Revolution?” From his most recent declarations, after his long exile in London, he seems to have matured. We must listen and read. In recent public speeches, he said: -That his party’s program is based on the principle of freedom of thought, belief, speech, and dress code. His movement will make no concessions on its principles, reference systems, or on the demands of the Revolution, for the establishment of a fair, free, in solidarity, developed regime. With a view of forming a coalition government, En-Nahdha will not enter into ⁷⁰an alliance with one single party, but with all those forces which had fought against dictatorship and oppression on the basis of the January 18 document. That document, he explained, is a platform for the partners and allies of An-Nahdha, be it the Congress for the Republic, Ettakatol, of the other parties which are striving to establish “a model consensual society that defines clearly the relation between religion and state, as well as that of women and men, and guarantees the freedom of opinion and of belief.” Contradicting, or implicitly criticizing some of his followers who, on many occasions, attacked or harassed unveiled Tunisian women. He said that veiled and unveiled women will be present in the next coalition government. More specifically, he said that his movement

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 303.

⁶⁹ His most well know case of a diplomatic fiasco took place in the early 1990s when an Islamist think Tank in Tampa, and then associated with the University of South Florida, invited him to participate in a seminar. His visa application caused a diplomatic crisis.

⁷⁰ Ghannouchi, Rached, Press Conference, Tunis, October 28, 2011, Ennahdha’s Programme is based on Freedom principles!, pp.2/3/4/

will not dictate on anyone to dress the Islamic costume and that he does not wish “To transform the Tunisians into hypocrites by presenting themselves in a way different from what they already are....The rule of the state consists in protecting people’s rights, and not into confiscating them.” Regrettably, such wonderfully crafted liberal views, to a certain degree, so close to the spirit of the Declaration of Human Rights, have been quickly contradicted by violent, sometimes savage acts by people who claim to follow Ennahdha and its Leader, Mr. Ghannouchi.

La Manouba University (Faculty of Letters): Salafia Islamists occupied the university asking for a mosque to be built there.

In Sajnane, Salafist have created an “Emirate” where Shari’a law (Islamic Law) is the law, with total passivity of the authorities.

Another significant development is the re-orientation of Tunisian diplomacy, with a new orbiting around the Islamist trends in the Arab world, and its critical implication for the Peace process.⁷¹

Worse than the above mentioned scandalous events, an Islamist leader, speaking of the Constitutional Assembly, in the presence of the media and official leaders, called for Jihad and justified it with some verses of the Holy Quran. Shocked by such fanatical extremism in the name of religion by a member of the Constitutional Assembly, a Tunisian female professor wrote: “To come back to this affair, where an elected official, Mr. Sadok Chourou, calls for the murders of his fellow-citizens, I wanted to say that, if En-nahdha does not have the monopoly of God and religion, it has that of violence and terrorism.”⁷² One of the most distinguished French journalists and a loyal friend of Tunisia during its long struggle for independence and after, sheds some light on the mistakes of France in its so-called “French Arab Policy” (Politique Arabe

⁷¹ Manoubi Mabrouk, Scandaleux!, Réalités, No. 1359, 12-18/1/2012, p. 6

⁷² Lajri, Nadia, Sadok Chourou appelle publiquement au Jihad...Guerre civile estampillée Halal, published by Jonolare, January 26, 2012, <https://www.gacebook.com>.

de la France). “This crisis of authority (within French diplomacy) became untenable from the moment we began to experience the spectacular historical events like the emergence of revolutions in certain Arab nations. Rejecting silently the little honorable confusion of Michele-Aliot Marie, and, with a serious tardiness with Barack Obama’s exemplary action, Nicolas Sarkozy discovers that we are entering a new era with the Arab Revolutions. The democratic claim of these peoples could, by turning their back to the Islamo-terrorist temptation, motivate us to focus more on helping them in their emancipation than contributing to the survival of authoritarian governments.”⁷³

Among those who want to help the Arab Spring, the Turkish model seemed to be the most attractive. A similar situation emerged after the elimination of the Taliban in Afghanistan. At that time, Washington saw two Muslim countries as potential rescuers and modernizers of Afghanistan: Turkey and Saudi Arabia. But, before even talking of models for Tunisia, a local analysis by a Tunisian is worth mentioning. “First, at the economic level, the macro-economic model of Washington’s consensus never paid attention to political participation, and failed to see the dangers of that authoritarianism which reduced the margin of liberty and expression... The last bankruptcy of this model is to be found in its incapacity to include the youth and the region of the interior in the dynamics of growth and development. Thus, the Washington consensus and the primacy/priority accorded to macroeconomics in the Arab countries were at the origin of a political exclusion, of an economic inefficiency, and of an increase of inequality.” Hakim Ben Hammouda adds: “It is this explosive cocktail that nourished frustrations, anger, and furor which became the trigger for the Arab revolts. The current transition... must divorce itself from the logic initiated in the 1980s. These transitions must be built on new economic logics and new paradigms

⁷³ Jean Daniel, *Comment Aider la Révolution Arabe: D’abord en comprenant ce que signifie :une politique arabe* de la France, in *Les Débats de l’Observateur*, 3-9 mars, 2011, p. 3.

which should emphasize more political participation, economic creativity, and social inclusion.”⁷⁴ Interestingly enough, the question of a model for the Arab Spring (Tunisia and Egypt in particular) has been floating in many circles and studies. For some respected observers, the central question joins our own primordial approach in this paper. “Will these series of popular uprisings indeed lead to a new era of democracy and progress in the Middle East? Or, will it lead to an era of violence and totalitarianism inspired by a Jihadi version of Islam?”⁷⁵ Referring more directly to the question of a model for the Arab Spring countries, Peter Berger adds: “At this time of writing, the two groupings (Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis) appear to have gathered about 60% of the votes.”⁷⁶ The political party set up by the Brotherhood has deliberately defined itself in terms of the so-called “Turkish model.” Supposedly, a liberal democracy inspired by “Islamic values”, but definitely not based on Shari’a law...⁷⁷

B. The Turkish Model: How applicable is it?

From the time of early independence, Tunisia’s specificity including the political characteristics of its leadership as incarnated by Habib Bourguiba, seemed to project a reasonable resemblance with Kamal Ata Turk’s Turkey. Therefore, it would be interesting to see how much the new fashionable Turkish model could be implemented in Tunisia. According to Jean Marcou, “When we hear Tayyip Erdogan declare that “the principles of Ata Turk’s project, based on the Republic, democracy, secularism, and the rule of law, are the foundations of today’s and tomorrow’s Turkey...we are tempted to think that those Turkish Islamists who wanted to change the secular Republic,

⁷⁴ Ben Hammouda, Hakim, *Les Révolutions arabes et le Consensus de Washington*, Réalités, No. 1329-16-22-2011, p. 64.

⁷⁵ Peter Berger, *Islamic Philosophy and the Future of the Arab Spring*, *The American Interest*, January-February 2012 issue.

⁷⁶ We have already seen that in Tunisia, Ennahdha got 40%.

⁷⁷ Peter Berger, *Ibid*.

eventually have been changed by the secular Republic.”⁷⁸For this author, “This regulation of Islamism in Turkey has been feasible because this protesting movement was confronted by the exercise of power.” Jean Marcou’s analysis becomes even more subtle when he adds: “Thus, apprenticeship with power, did not only consist of the Erbakan experience...When confronted by daily complexity of power, the Islamists began to change their discourse and to give up their militant and ideological provocations of their early days...This local experience in the use of power, essentially urban, allowed them to demonstrate governance skills and to gain more votes beyond their traditional constituencies. It is in this way that, by practicing the mechanics of representative democracy, that the Islamist dynamics was transformed to the point of giving birth/creating a government party.”⁷⁹

Beginning in the 1970s, quite a few countries experienced various forms of transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. “That democratization trend, dubbed “The Third wave”, began in Southern Europe, and in Latin America, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The Middle East, by contrast, has remained untouched. But no country held democratic elections that contained the possibility of real change in the locus of political power.”⁸⁰In her comparative study of Turkey and Tunisia, Michele Pennar Angrist noticed that “At first glance, a socio- cultural approach to the research question posed here-why Turkey’s single party regime made the transition to multiparty politics while Tunisia has experienced single party continuity-appears to provide a convincing explanation. The first part of this case narrative will suggest that, compared to its counterpart, the Tunisian business class would be characterized as younger,

⁷⁸ Jean Marcou, *Islamisme et Post-Islamisme en Turquie*, *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée*, Vol. II, No. 4, p. 606.

⁷⁹ Jean Marcou, *Islamisme et Post-Islamisme..* , p. 607.

⁸⁰ Michele Pennar Angrist, *The Expression of Political Dissent in the Middle East: Turkish Democratization and Authoritarian Continuity in Tunisia*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No.4 (October, 1999), 730-757.

smaller, weaker, and more content in its relationship with the regime. The conclusion: Political pluralism did not occur because the Tunisian private sector was neither capable of nor interested in pressing for this outcome.”⁸¹ Three observations deserve to be borrowed from this excellent analysis: 1. Decisions made by the Tunisian leadership have generated substantial political discontent, but this has not been effectively channeled into the form of substantial opposition party. Instead, dissent typically filters via elite channels, and/or explodes on the street in the form of riots and demonstrations.⁸²

Development of political parties and executive legislative relations in Tunisia has been qualitatively different from Turkey. The cases’ divergent institutional legacies may help us to understand why political dissent was expressed differently-and with different consequences-in the two countries.

The 1959 Tunisian Constitution created a very strong presidential executive branch and a very weak, peripheral parliament.⁸³

The preponderance of executive power established by the Constitution made the presidency the fulcrum of the post-independence Tunisian political system. Quoting Professors Entelis and Clement Henry Moore, Michele Pennar Angrist shows us how “The result of these factors has been significant in blurring the lines between party and State.”⁸⁴

Although one may disagree with Michele Pennar Angrist about the timing of the emergence of Islamism in Tunisia, she may be right in saying that as a movement, Tunisia’s Islamism “Can be understood in part as a product of the lack of effective

⁸¹ Michele Pennar Angrist, p. 744.

⁸² Tunisia had a few of them, one of which, in the early 1980s was called the “Couscous Revolt.”

⁸³ Michele Pennar Angrist, see note 86

Hafedh Ben Salah, “L’Exécutif tunisien: Quel Bi-Céphalisme?”, in *Revue Tunisienne de Droit* (1980, p. 96), Asma Larif-Beatrix, “L’Evolution de l’Etat Tunisien”, *Monde Arabe Maghreb-Machrek*, 116 (1987), p. 37

⁸⁴ Michele Pennar Angrist, “The Expression of Political Dissent in the Middle East...p. 752.

channels for political protest... This Islamic movement gained strength as ND (the Neo-Destour or The New Constitution) obstinacy became clear, and it represents a much graver challenge to the ND because it questions the very legitimacy of the secular republican polity that Bourguiba and the ND created.”⁸⁵ President Bourguiba’s successor, Zeine Al-Abideen Ben Ali , brought a lot of hope for “CHANGE”, but he simply changed the name of the Destour Socialist Party into the Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique (RCD).

Conclusion

It is time to recognize that the transition paradigm has outlived its usefulness... The almost automatic assumption of democracy promoters during the peak of the third wave that any country moving away from dictatorship was in “transition to democracy” has often been inaccurate and misleading. Some of those countries have hardly democratized at all. Many have taken on a smattering of democratic features but show few signs much further and are certainly not following any predictable democratization script.”⁸⁶

What could we say we have learned from the above presentation, and, above all, from the developments that shook the Arab-Islamic world from the Atlantic to the Arab-Persian Gulf? To answer our own question, it may be useful to consider a couple of frameworks:

1. The first and foremost would be the direct or indirect link between the Arab

⁸⁵ Michele Pennar Angrist, p. 757.

⁸⁶ Thomas Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm” in *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), 168; 176. Quoted by Larbi Sadiki in *Rethinking Arab Democratization: Elections Without Democracy*, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 7.

Spring and Euro-American interests in the region.

2. The second would be the quintessential nature of Arab-Islamic political thought regarding the fundamental notions of freedom, justice, and resistance to oppression.

In the first case, Antoine Sfeir saw three types of reaction: “In Tunisia and in Egypt, the US favored the success of the Arab Spring.”⁸⁷ In the case of Libya and Yemen, The US was more reluctant to intervene more openly. The US was clearly against intervention in Syria and in Bahrein, where the US has a navy base. Antoine Sfeir reminds us of an important adage “You do not go to war without Egypt. You cannot make peace without Syria.”⁸⁸ As for Europe, one cannot help connecting the Anglo-French collusion in the 1956 Suez crisis and the Franco-English intervention in Libya in March 2011. Beyond and above all considerations of external-real or perceived-subversive manipulations by World powers, social scientists, Arab and non-Arab, have been puzzled by one question: “On the ruins of the old international bi-polar system, a new unipolar system has emerged mixing the globalization of trade and the universality of democratic utopia. Everywhere, people are wondering why the Arab-Islamic world constitutes an exception to the rule of the propagation of the unfolding wave of democracy...”⁸⁹ It is undeniable that, before and after September 11, 2001, International Relations literature has been overflowed with books and articles making of Islam the new “enemy” replacing the “Red Peril” of the Cold war. In categorically refuting this view, Aziz Enhaili and Bassam Adam are right in saying that “...The problem is not associated with an Islam that is deeply rooted in Arab and Muslim

⁸⁷ Antoine Sfeir, *Les Etats-Unis et l'Arabie Saoudite à l'épreuve du Printemps arabe*, entretiens réalisés par Boris Eisenbaum, *Les Cahiers de l'Orient*, Automne 2011, p. 9.

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 10

⁸⁹ Aziz Enhaili and Bassam Adam, *Point de vue: Islam et démocratie dans le monde arabo-islamique*, *Confluences Méditerranée*, No. 29, Printemps 1999.

societies, but at the level of socio-political actors who refer to it.”⁹⁰ Their approach and perspective are corroborated by an outstanding auto-critique and scholarly analysis by Larbi Sadiki who opens a whole chapter of a book quoting two major Arab intellectuals. For Muhammad H. Haykal, “The problem of democracy in our homeland...is that all speak about it and yet all are far from it...”⁹¹ The other view is more pertinent because it reflects the daily life of millions of Arabs living in what some have even called “States without Citizens.”⁹² “Despite our civilizational heritage, of which Islam is a component...the poor Arab has become one of the last peoples of earth to be denied a level of civil and political rights. Consequently, the cheapest commodity in our crisis-ridden Arab homeland is its people, he is guilty under proven innocent...At the same time the Arab mass media speak of Arab dignity, strength and combating injustice, all of which belie reality...There is no Arab unity without excellence, and no excellence without democracy.”⁹³ Naturally, this is all the more tragic and pathetic as modern historians have recognized the significance of the “Liberal age of Arabic thought” (‘Asr al-Nahdha) as defined by the distinguished Arab scholar, Albert Hourani.⁹⁴ Since the Jasmin Revolution started in Tunisia, it may be quite pertinent to remind ourselves of the paramount fact that Tunisia, under Ahmed Bey in the 1860s, was “A prime example of political ‘islah (reforms) in which an ephemeral emulation of European political notions and institutions was attempted. The Bey’s ‘ahdu ‘al aman (Covenant of Social Peace), stressed Maslaha (public interest), liberty and equality before the law between

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Muhammad H. Haykal, *Al-salamu’lmustahil wa ‘l dimuqratiyyatu’lgha’ibah* (The Impossible Peace and the Absent Democracy), Beirut: Sharikat al-matbu’at li al tawzih wal nashr, 1988, p. 246, quoted by Sadiki in *The Search for Arab Democracy, Discourses and Counter-Discourses*, Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 198.

⁹² John Jandora, *States Without Citizens*,

⁹³ Muhammad Al-Rumayhi, *Sukutu ‘l Awham* (The Fall of Illusions), *Al-Arabi*, No. 95 (October 1991) pp. 13-14.

⁹⁴ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, London, Oxford University Press, 1982, quoted by Larbi Sadiki, p. 201, note. 13.

Muslims and non-Muslims, and between Tunisians and foreigners. A key reform of the Covenant was the introduction in 1860 of the Muslim world's first ever constitution.”⁹⁵

If the new Islamist movement in Tunisia is truly inspired by the original spirit of Arab-Islamic Renaissance of the 19th century, how could it tolerate the shouting slogans against the Jews by its followers during the visit of Hamas Leader and prime Minister to Tunisia in 2012 when the true essence of Islam as a faith and as a practiced governance under the Prophet, was Tolerance. In March 2011, a genuine international collective expression of solidarity, bringing together the two shores of the Mediterranean, contributed to a significant conference held in Tunisia.⁹⁶ The presence of such distinguished scholars and diplomats from countries well experienced with the question of transition from dictatorship or authoritarianism to democracy was meant to share some processes of democratization without underestimating the specificity of each case. But the participants were aware of the fact that “If each country is distinct through its socio-cultural and historical context...what is important is the management of the process of transition and of negotiation between all the concerned parties.”⁹⁷ In actuality, the question of democratization and its transitional process is not new. For Steve Heydemann, “For about a century, the question of democracy has been burdening not only the specialists of the Arab world, but also the leaders of those countries...It has been only for about ten years, (and may be ironically) under the impact of the

⁹⁵ Albert Hourani, *Arab Thought in the Liberal Age*, pp. 64-65.

⁹⁶ *Expériences de Transition Démocratique: Quelle Voie pour la Tunisie?*, A Seminar co-organized by the Institute of Strategic Studies of the European Union (IESUE), Paris, and the Association of Research on Democracy and Development (ARD2), Tunis in collaboration with CERSS-Rabat-Morocco, the IEEI-Lisbon and the support of the Portuguese Cooperation, Tunis, March 9-11, 2011, Golden Tulip Carthage-Tunis Hotel.

⁹⁷ See *Rapport de Synthèse* of the Seminar *Expériences de Transition Démocratique*, p.1.

persistence of authoritarianism, that this area of studies is beginning to liberate itself from this heavy heritage and of its avatar, “transitology.”⁹⁸

Using a subtle comparative approach to the various fashionable theories of development, Heydemann touches on the central point still being debated about modernization and Westernization. “If the sin of the theory of modernization, with the primacy of the socio-economic prerequisites, was due to its euro-centrism and linearity, it had the merit to avoid worse mistakes of other studies which defined the prerequisites not in terms of social complexity or level of development, but in terms of essential identities and culture. Issawi, for instance, opposes his socio-economic vision of prerequisites to those that explain the failure of democracy in those countries by the ineptitude of the Arabs to “subordinate their selfish tendencies to a common goal.”⁹⁹ This is quite a perplexing view from a scholar such as Charles Issawi because the intrinsic difference between Arab-Islamic culture and Western culture is a drastic opposition between communalism and individualism. From another perspective, Heydemann adds “Those who attribute the failure of democracy to causes such as political and patriarchal cultures, innate affinity of the Arabs with authoritarianism or incompatibility between democracy and Islam, then the fate of those political societies is sealed forever.”¹⁰⁰ The March 2011 conference on democracy in transition in Tunisia seems to have wisely stressed the difference between mere imitation and cross borrowing of naturally beneficial experiences, because “Foreign experiences have also shown the necessity of a global transition, beyond the political-judicial level, that is a

⁹⁸ Steve Heydemann, *La Question de la démocratie dans les travaux sur le monde arabe* (The question of democracy in studies of the Arab world), in *Critique Internationale*, No. 17, October 2002, p. 54.

⁹⁹ Heydemann, p. 56.

¹⁰⁰ Heydemann uses significant references: Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*, N.Y Oxford University Press, 1988, Elie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture*, Washington, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992; Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind*, N.Y Scribner, 1983; Abdalah Hammoudi, *Master and Disciple: The Central Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism*, Chicago University Press, 1997, in Heydemann, p. 62, note 11.

social, economic, and political, essentially cultural transition. Because democracy and well being go together, this can be achieved through a social pact between all the components of society. However, it is imperative that all concerned parties share the same view with regard to the diagnostic of the situation...In addition, it is also necessary not to let one single component of the society in charge of the full execution of the pact...As an example, in Spain, the democratic transition required mobilization of all the forces of society: Political parties, intellectuals, universities, unions, artists...All that was accomplished in a spirit of reconciliation, not in a spirit of revenge.”¹⁰¹

This reconciliatory approach mirrors what Alexis de Tocqueville wrote over one century and a half ago about democracy in America. “Nothing is more deserving of our attention than the intellectual and moral associations of America...In associations, feelings and opinions are recruited, the heart is enlarged, and the human mind is developed, only by the reciprocal influence of men upon each other.”¹⁰² But others fear that “material borrowing will involve omission of differences.” For this reason, Larbi Sadiki, in another exquisite book, cautions his readers: “Democratization, pacted transition, or civil society, all stumble upon experiences that Euro-American democratic theory cannot foresee outside its Western preview. This is why an anti-foundationalist ontology recognizes that Euro-American democratization is function of time and context. Specific knowledge is needed for Arab re-reading of democratic transition...There is obsession with outcome not progress. It favors an institutionalist reading of democratization as though elections and constitutions are the only building blocs of good government. Such discourse tends to mislocate its object of Arab democratization as it locates it in fragments of knowledge that are neither Arab nor do

¹⁰¹ March 2011 Conference on Democracy in Transition, Tunis, Rapport de Synthèse.

¹⁰² Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, quoted by Amaney A. Jamal, *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2007, p.4.

they speak to Arab peculiarities. Normatively, the quest for an Arab democratization is correct. Epistemologically, however, little is being done to develop a brand of transitology that thinks outside the institutionalist box,”¹⁰³ There is very old Tunisian adage that says “Ahrab Min Kutra, tah taht el Mizeb” (He fled from a drop of rain to stand under the gutter!) David Hume saw the same from a more sophisticated philosophical and historical perspective: “It is remarkable, that the principles of religion have a kind of flux and reflux in the human mind, and that men have a natural tendency to rise from idolatry to theism, and to sink again from theism into idolatry...”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Larbi Sadiki, *Rethinking Arab Democratization: Elections without Democracy*, see specifically, *Pacted Transition in the Arab Spring*, pp.40-42, Oxford University Press, 2009.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted by Abdelwahab Hechiche, *Roots of Terrorism: The Case of Jihad in Memory and History*, 2010 Oxford Round Table, *Terrorism: The Clear and Present Danger*, Harris Manchester College, July 18-23, 2010.