ABSTRACT
This research examines Tunisian democratic transition and underlines the extent to which Tunisian political elite engaged in a democratic political practice. The Tunisian revolution, often referred to as the "Jasmine Revolution", offered a great opportunity to leave behind a gloomy past tainted with long years of despotism and to lay the foundations of popular, representative and direct governance deeply rooted in people desire for freedom and justice. Accordingly, the research will first analyze the new political landscape and the major political powers contributing to the unfolding democratic transition. Second, the relationship between these actors will be underlined by discussing their approaches to democracy and their willingness to inaugurate a stable and sustained democracy that fits with a unique Tunisian model.

Indexing terms/Keywords
Democratic Transition, Conflict and Reconciliation, Political Islam, Elections, Individual Liberty, Salafism, Secularism.

Academic Discipline And Sub-Disciplines
Political Science : Democratic Transitions

TYPE (METHOD/APPROACH)
Qualitative approach based on historical inquiry.

INTRODUCTION
Since the outbreak of the "Jasmine Revolution", Tunisia endorsed a democratic approach founded on the highest principles of individual freedom and civil liberty. Long years under totalitarianism and oppression did not impede Tunisians from tasting the flavor of democracy for the first time since the country’s independence in 1956. Right after the ouster of Ben Ali, significant changes took place in the Tunisian scene ranging from major political transformations, large legislative reforms to comprehensive institutional restructuring. Tunisian identity is reshaped thanks to fair and transparent elections in 2011 and 2014, a vast political participation among parties and civil societies, and a popular aspiration for a better future. The democratization process unfolding in Tunisia seems like a dream with an outstanding success of creating a model that may be applied all over the MENA region. The making of such democratic transition advances sustained and effective political mechanisms that protect human rights, guarantee a vast popular direct participation in the political arena and fulfill short-term and long-term socio-economic programs.

The democratic transition in Tunisia is relatively successful while it virtually continues to provide welfare and well-being for all citizens. Several factors come into play, most notably serious security issues being the outcome of transnational terrorism and civil war in the neighbor Libya, alarming economic hardships with unemployment rate reaching 15.6%, and growing social disparities generating feelings of frustration and anger. Notwithstanding the important steps taken so far to smoothly consolidate democracy, inadequate governance and inefficient initiations create a certain degree of discontent best expressed through several social violent outbreaks in poor suburbs and interior rural areas. The mere transfer of power from an absolute rule of a hybrid regime to a state of democracy with legitimate institutions doesn’t ensure a stable and gradual development. The same can be said about security which shattered the country’s economy after the assassination of two leftist political leaders, shooting at the National Museum Bardo and bombing in the capital Tunis. Medium and long-term strategies of the post-revolution governments are heavily criticized as they bring about negative social, economic and security ramifications.

The gradual evolution of the democratic transition along with a collective ability to overcome major national crises, at least security issues, makes the Jasmine revolution a unique model in the MENA region. Given the rise of multiple political parties, divergent in ideologies and different in objectives, the smoothness of the political transition since 2011 is genuinely surprising. The plurality of visions and the diversity of ideas did not hinder multilateral communication and peaceful coexistence. Unlike similar revolutions in other parts of the MENA region, most notably Egypt and Yemen, Tunisia laid the foundations of a dynamic mechanism based on conflict and reconciliation. The importance of this mechanism is two-fold: it identifies the different actors’ perceptions and their plans for the future, and constructs a collective consciousness about the necessity to bring together these visions into one democratic project founded on principles of common consensus and historical responsibility. If the democratic transition is to have any hope of stability and reliability, exhaustive participation of all the subsisting actors in an interactive and harmonious mood. The recently developed pattern of National Dialogue Platforms contributed to a large extent to the fostering of national reconciliation by including not only rising political movements, but also officials who had served for long decades during Ben Ali and Bourguiba autocratic regimes.
Literature Review

The existing literature pertaining to democracy is diverse, as it dates back to Polis1, the City-State of Athens around the fifth century BC, to the third wave of democracy in the 1970’s affecting Eastern Europe and large parts of Latin America, and finally the wave of uprisings in the MENA region, often referred to as “Arab Spring”. Although all these phases have democracy as a common theme, each epoch is marked by its own political particularity and historical context in a way that pinpointing any relationship between them becomes rather an arduous task. According to the topic discussed in this research, i.e. Tunisian democratic transition, it is more relevant to classify the literature thematically rather than chronologically. It may not be necessary to locate every single event in its historical setting giving that one single historical experience through a thematic classification becomes more straightforward. Accordingly, literature review in this research is divided into two major groups. First, the opposition between autonomy and dependence in new democracies will be underlined, with an attempt to move from a classical definition to a modern perception of democracy. The second group of literature will highlight the main factors contributing to a solid and stable democratic transition, most notably the internals factors being the outcome of popular desire for change and the extent to which governance is democratically exercised.

First group: Autonomy versus Dependence

The term democracy is questionable and open to different interpretations. Josiah Ober2 argues that classical Athens used the terms democracy and government interchangeably (Ober, 1993). Democracy and government translated the same idea, the possibility of contribution to the political life by people through democratic practice within the government. Such interdependence is referred to as “democratic knowledge” (Ober, 1993). Democratic knowledge suggests that people have the right and the desire to fulfill various activities that shape a self-conscious democratic practice. These activities include direct and free participation in the political arena, free expression and free opposition. Although a self-conscious democratic practice may be subject to a constant conflict between people and the government, these practices suggest that Classical Athens’ governance was mainly based on an inexplicit social contract by which all decisions are collectively taken (Bitros and Karayannis, 2013). This contract forms a binary structure through which democratic knowledge is translated into “collective opinion”, a term used by Ober to account for the importance of consensus among Athenian citizens as a basis of stable relationship between people and the government. Ober social contract consists of an intersection between conventional procedures and conventional effects. The former refers to people free will to participate in the political life, while the latter has to do with final decrees and judgments, i.e. legislation by and large. In short, democracy is a self-conscious knowledge which cannot be turned into a practice unless collective consensus among people does exist.

The autonomy of democratic practice may be true to some extent. However, it should be reconsidered for two reasons. First, democracy as a practice is an implementation of an acquired knowledge. This implementation requires the interference of other factors such as institutions, and therefore the theory of autonomy is systematically repudiated. Second, an inexplicit social contract between people and government doesn’t guarantee an effective and stable democratic practice, for it may be violated any time. It is argued that institutions ensure legitimacy (Institute of Development Studies, 1998). Institutions provide the legal and the constitutional framework according to which democracy is best practised. Larry Diamond3 argues that legitimacy, performance and political institutions are the guiding lines toward a strong and safe democratic implementation (Diamond, 2015). Robert Dahl4 delineates that people are not only entitled to govern themselves, but also to guarantee “judicial guardianship” that allows them have access all the institutional resources to do so. He argues that this very change brought about a major transformation (Dahl, 1989). Dahl reminds us that democratic model in the Greek City-States was based on a direct participation of people in their political arena. All settlements were almost made collectively and almost all people participated directly in decisions making process. However, the introduction of the concept of institutions brought about a transformation in the democratic paradigm. Decisions are no longer collectively and directly taken, but rather a designated group of people are chosen to represent people interests and opinions. According to Maija Setälä5, there are two main differences between the direct form of democracy and the new model of representation (Setälä, 2009). First, the implementation of the direct form often took place in small geographical places, where the contribution of all people was possible. As for representative democracy, it is often practised in Nation States which are larger geographical units with larger population. Second, the definition of citizenship entirely changed. In Classical Athens, citizenship was confined to a small proportion of males who have the exclusive political rights. In representative democracy, males and females have the rights to freely and equally participate in the political life. In short, democratic practice is autonomous, but dependent. On the one hand, it is completely autonomous when it discusses beliefs, ideas and convictions. This means that democracy is an individual and collective choice reflecting people desire to adopt a democratic approach to governance. On the other hand, democracy doesn’t exist unless its representative form and institutional structure are well defined and recognized.

1 Polis literally means a city in Greece, but it also refers to the ancient Greek world. Later, Polis was translated to City-State
2 A professor at Stanford and an American historian in Ancient Greece
3 Larry Diamond is a political sociologist and a professor of political science in the field of democracy. See Diamond L.,’Facing up to the Democratic Recession’,Journal of Democracy,Vol.26,No.1,2015.
4 Robert Dahl is a political theorist and a professor of political science at the University of Yale. He established many theories such as the pluralist theory and the empirical theory. He also published many books such as THE CONCEPT OF POWER (1957), A PREFACE TO ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY (1985).
5 Maija Setälä is a professor of political science at the University of Turku. See Setälä M., Schiller T., Referendums and Representative Democracy:Responsivenss,accountability and deliberation., Routledge ECPR, 2009.
Second group: Contributing Actors

Seymour M. Lipset argues that citizens in democracies usually have a common psychological behavior based on consensus and harmony (Lipset, 1959). Consensus refers to the collective ability to recognize that sharing the same belief in representative popular governance is one step further toward a sustained democracy. Lipset also refers to Dankwart A. Rustow who points to the common psychological stance as "the rules of the game" (Dankwart, 1970). The idea of common psychological stance is best illustrated in Maslow hierarchy of needs. Em Griffin states that Maslow that Maslow theory of self actualization reveals a natural human tendency toward self satisfaction achieved through "the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (Griffin, 2002). However, Marijana Markovik in her article "Political attitude and Personality in a Democratic Society" believes that Maslow' self actualization may be true to some extent. It is true that socio-political changes bring more radical changes within society, and thus increasing individualism. However, Marijana argues that individualism does not contradict with the importance of social exchange, as the social space provides the room for individualism to be exercised. Accordingly, democracy may be defined as a competition between individuals with different needs, but rather individuals who share the same democratic knowledge and aim to achieve a common objective, i.e. wellbeing and welfare.

It is easy now to move from the importance of psychological readiness to inaugurate democracy toward the issue of diversity and distinctiveness. Sharing the same belief about democracy does not suggest that diversity is not worth considering. Dankwart deems that conflict and reconciliation are two essential factors to achieve a healthy democracy. People have the right to actively participate in the political structure in different groups, each with its own ideology, identity and objective. These groups undergo two phases. First, they diverge in approaches and perspectives. Each group seeks to introduce its own interpretation, solutions and plans on everyday issues. Second, they end up concluding that such conflict in thoughts is an auto-realization of their common commitment to democracy and democratic values, and therefore reconciliation becomes inevitable. Harry Eckstein refers to this reconciliation as "the theory of congruence" (Dankwart, 1970). He underlines that these various groups such as trade unions, local societies, families and even businesses, should implement a more democratic approach in order to have a more significant impact on the central authority.

The rise of Political Islam in Tunisia

The rise of Political Islam in Tunisia dates back to the 1970’s when Rached Ghannouchi founded Al Jamaa Al Islamiya in 1972, which is known in the 1980’s as "Mouvement De La Tendance Islamique" (MTI), and later Ennahda movement. The plain dynamic nature of the Ghannouchi’s movement, in terminology and structure, is the natural outcome of post-colonial policies which eradicate all forms of Islamic movements in the name of modernity and anti-terrorism. The political thought developed by Habib Bourguiba and his Socialist Destourism Party repudiated any potential existence of Islamism in politics. Antagonism between Ennahda movement and the regime became more acute even with a political change in 1987 and the rise of Ben Ali to presidency. The resulting decades of oppression, despotism and marginalization left Ennahda movement's members react in a more violent way.

In the wake of Tunisian democratic transition, Ennahda movement took over power when it surprisingly succeeded in the 2011 elections, deemed as the first fair and transparent elections in the history of Tunisia. With 41% of total votes, Ennahda won 89 seats out of 218 in the National Constituent Assembly. This is not as interesting as the achievements of other parties in the 2011 elections. Among more than 100 parties and dozens of independent candidates, Tunisians didn’t vote for parties with a long history of opposition to Ben Ali and Bourguiba regimes such as the Popular Front and the Republican Party. These unforeseen results are open to several interpretations. First, Ennahda maneuvered its discourse into an endeavor to rally popular support through introducing itself as the knight of the revolution. Its ability to rapidly shift from an opposition into a ruling party testifies to the potency of its heroic discourse rooted in its long resistance to Ben Ali and Bourguiba. Second, Ennahda after the revolution and Ennahda before the revolution ran on opposite principles, with Ennahda after the revolution accepting democracy and embracing its values. This daring decision was a step forward to the National Constituent Assembly. Many of Ennahda members repeatedly underlined the importance of democracy by discarding its Islamic ideology based on Shariaa’s principles and adopting a civic attitude aiming at protecting civil liberties and individual freedoms. Third, the nature of the relationship between Ennahda and few secular parties remarkably changed. While many observers presumed that Rached Ghanouchi party would dominate the Tunisian political scene, Ennahda surprisingly decided to start a coalition with two secular parties: the Centric Congress for the Republic (CPR) and the Leftist Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties (Ettagakol). Ennahda members astutely reshaped their relationship with secularists in an attempt to introduce themselves as democracy advocates.

Since it gained power, Ennahda movement had been criticized on several levels, many of which had to do with its relationship with democracy and the extent to which it is willing to genuinely cooperate with other political parties. The

6 Dankwart A. was a professor of political science and sociology. His research focus was on the theory of transitology.
7 Maslow hierarchy is a theory developed by Abraham Maslow during the 1940’s. It suggests that there are some human needs which are more powerful than others. The theory has become widely accepted in the fields of psychology and anthropology.
8 See http://www.kppcenter.org/WBPreview2010-1-1-Markovik.pdf
9 Rached Ghannouchi is the co-founder of Ennahda movement in Tunisia. He was named as one of the most influential people in the world by Times.
10 Habib Bourguiba (1903-2000) is a Tunisian statesman who served as the leader of the country since its independence in 1956. He significantly contributed to the National movement for independence and participated in the Independence movement

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relationship between Political Islam by and large and democracy is often complex and suspicious. No wonder Ennahda’s members had been consistently discredited by the opposition for manipulating the discourse of democracy just to rally support and sternly compete in elections. Secular skepticism of political Islam often builds its speculations on two arguments. First, Ennahda’s commitment to ballot box is not as deliberate as it seems, for it is no longer in a favorite position to opt for violence and hostility as a means to achieve its long-term political ambitions. The second argument calls into question the objectives Ennahda targets rather than the means Ennahda uses. Ennahda members may easily continue to use the same rhetoric of harmony and peaceful coexistence. However, the real challenge was whether Rached Ghannouchi and his supporters have other plans to introduce Shariaa by any means in the Tunisian political arena. To stay clear of identity-based politics, establishing a system of checks and balances is a top priority.

Around this process of major political transformations, the rise of Salafism in Tunisia illustrates the dark side of the democratic transition best expressed in religious radicalism and political violence. Salafism is defined as the violent and extreme form of Political Islam. It reflects the radical Muslims’ exaggerated enthusiasm to blindly restate the religious principles set by the Prophet Mouhamed. As much as Salafism is a religious proselytism, it is conclusively politicized movement that has existed since Tunisia independence. Almost five decades of exclusion, salafists were imprisoned and tortured under Ben Ali and Bourguiba regimes, as they represented an alarming threat not only to national security, but also to former president’s political powers and personal interests. The fall of Ben Ali regime revealed three major Salafist movements: the Reform Front (Jabhat Al-Islah), Party of Liberation (Hizb Al-Tahrir) and Al-Shariaa movement (Ansar Al-Shariaa). Notwithstanding this political classification, Salafism in Tunisia may also be discussed in terms of civic inclusion and consent to democracy (Allani, 2012). On the one hand, Salafist Reformists completely reject violence but repudiate democracy with all its related values and prepare for an extreme form of political Islam. On the other hand, Salafist Jihadists who came into light thanks to Ansar Al-Shariaa believe in neither democracy nor popular governance. While Shariaa is their religious inspiration and the source of their political interpretation, Salafist Jihadists publicly legitimize the use of violence to achieve egocentric political aspirations in the name of religion and God. For many Salafist groups, the ouster of Ben Ali was not as promising as expected. In the wake of Tunisian democratic transition, Beji Caid Essebsi, the current president and the former prime minister, denied the legal authorization for the Reform Front (Jabhat Al-Islah) and many other similar movements for they persistently represent democracy as a sin and an unjustifiable transgression against divine law.

The puzzle question now is the nature of the relationship between two major political Islam movements, i.e. Ennahda and Salafism, similar in ideology and doctrine, but different in political groundwork and strategic implementation. Given Ennahda and Salafism common history of resistance and opposition to Ben Ali, Rached Ghannouchi logically opted for the inclusion moderation hypothesis rooted in the smooth integration of radical Islamists into the subsisting political scope. In an attempt to protect its traditional ally and rally more support, Ennahda offered Salafists a chance to gradually reduce their radicalism and moderately remodel their political identity first by rejecting all forms of violence and hatred and later by accepting democracy as the only legitimate source for political practice. This promising vision for a better future also involves an open opportunity for peaceful coexistence between a modernized version of Salafism and a tolerating secularism open to all political thoughts.

Ennahda serious commitment to the smooth and gradual inclusion of Salafists was immediately undermined by the latter inability to adapt in a pluralistic society. In the summer of 2012, Salafists published a written statement warning all restaurants and cafés owners all over the country not to open their facilities during the whole month of Ramadan, as according to them Ramadan is a month of complete devotion to God. Few months later, a group of Salafists attacked a movie theatre in the capital Tunis and physically violated many of the audience, accusing them of watching an anti-Islam movie and arousing God wrath. More violent events caused by Salafists were likely to develop. University of Manouba was the scene of barbarity when a young Salafist replaced the flag of the Tunisian republic with the black Salafist flag. While Tunisians were still in a state of shock and distress, Salafists promptly moved to a higher level of violence when they attacked the US embassy. The unexpected move raised serious concerns among the different Tunisian political actors and the international community which places high expectation on the success of the Tunisian democratic transition and thus the success of the “Arab Spring” by and large.

Within this dramatic turnout of events, Ennahda mysteriously resorted to complete silence and chose not to comment on any of these aggressions. In short, Ennahda was either weak and paralyzed or opportunistic and dishonest, and both facets don’t meet Tunisians’ expectations. The assassination of two leftist political leaders in 2013 pushed the unfolding democratic transition to the edge. Political parties, civil society organizations, trade unions and several universities organized massive anti-Ennahda protests calling for the immediate resignation of the government and be replaced by a group of independent technocrats who prepare new presidential and parliamentary elections. Four opposition groups, most notably the Popular Front, pulled out of the National Constituent Assembly in protest against Ennahda government security policies. No wonder Rached Ghannouchi party has become under a huge popular and political pressure, and an immediate positive reaction was desperately needed.

**Post Revolution Political Party Landscape**

In the wake of the Tunisian democratic transition, more than 107 political parties were given legal authorization to participate in the 2011 elections, generating an unusual hyper-active political life and paving the way for the birth of secular radical democracy based on plurality and divergence. Around this great number, a revolutionary mood mixed with the spirit of freedom and liberty prevailed the country for several months, which created an abundance of novel ideas and innovative visions for the future. Usually, any new political party comes into light out of desire to bring about a change. Accordingly, the party becomes the instrument through which change may be realized. This is exactly what many of the rising Tunisian political parties failed to understand as they couldn’t clearly make the distinction between short-term strategies expressed through political campaigns and long-term objectives rooted in strong commitment for future
engagement. Many of these small young political parties disappeared after the 2011 elections, powerless and unqualified to effectively contribute to the new political scene. Accordingly, it becomes possible to outline post election Tunisian political parties cycle which starts with minor transformations such as coalitions and alliances and ends up with major changes ranging from restructuring and reidentification.

Along with Ennahda and Salafism, the “Jasmine revolution” was a fertile ground for the emergence of weighty political parties which created a certain degree of balance of power, particularly after the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections. Among these major political forces, it becomes imperative to discuss the rise of Nidaa Tounis. It is a neo-conservative party that remarkably succeeded in the 2014 elections to share legislative powers with Ennahda movement. Nidaa Tounis was founded in 2012 by Beji Caid Essebsi, a former prime minister and the current president in Tunisia. The party is almost controlled by business men and former officials who served during Ben Ali and Bourguiba regime. Although Nidaa Tounis rose in a context of political remodeling, its ideological identity stems from Bourguiba political and cultural heritage, with minor adjustments and changes. The victory of Nidaa Tounis directly goes to the success of Beji Caid Essebsi himself. Thanks to his unique personality and his ability to introduce himself as the new modern version of Bourguiba, he promised change and prosperity while repeatedly portraying himself as the protector of state and civic life. Unsurprisingly, Nidaa Tounis built its political campaign on the failure of the Troika government and promised more security, anti-terrorism effective strategies and more economic stability aiming at reducing unemployment rates and creating a modern dynamic economic model capable of meeting today urgent needs.

Nidaa Tounis and Popular front ran on opposite platforms, while the Popular front promised change without concrete solid explanations. Popular front is an extreme leftist party including several small leftist groups such as the Arab Nationalists and the Leftist Extremists, in an attempt to present themselves as a united and influential electoral block. Notwithstanding their demand for political change and economic recovery, many Popular Front members are criticized for their negative attitude with other political parties and their inability to compromise with Islamism and former members of Ben Ali regime. Either powerless or unwilling to share power with other political actors, the Popular Front repeatedly outlined its responsibilities as an opposition leader in the National Constituent Assembly, by repudiating any liberal economic programs deeply rooted in capitalism and the principles set by the Washington Consensus, criticizing the irrational and wicked alliance between Ennahda and Nidaa Tounis and completely rejecting any political proposal to participate in the governmental activities.

The mechanism of conflict and reconciliation

Given the dynamic political scene in Tunisia marked by a plethora of parties, active civil society groups and prevailed by an unorthodox spirit of individual freedom and civil liberty, the democratic transition may run into an inability to establish a sustained peaceful coexistence between not only involved political actors but also citizens. If the democratic transition is to succeed, it will likely require, first a certain degree of collective assumption that Tunisia has become a home of diversity and emancipation, and second a common willingness to compromise. Divergence in ideas and visions shouldn’t generate polarity or antagonism, but rather a solid commitment to democratic values by accepting the other and harmoniously cope with any differences. The puzzle question is whether Tunisian politicians were effective in taking these steps and the extent to which the unfolding democratic transition, from a political lens, may be sustained and stable.

The complex relationship between Ennahda, Salafism and Secularism evidently illustrates the mechanism of conflict and reconciliation marking the early phases of the Tunisian democratic transition. Following the violent attacks caused by Salafism, and the unexpected inimical Salafist attack on the US embassy, Ennahda finally decided to put an end to the inclusion moderation hypothesis and accordingly alienate itself from Salafism. With this decision, Ennahda showed positive signs and relatively succeeded in absorbing popular pressure. Accordingly, it is legitimate to assume that Ennahda is actually ready to take part in the collective efforts of democracy inauguration by almost leaving behind its Islamic identity and expressing strong desire to adopt a civic-based approach. In an attempt to further enhance the new strategy, Ennahda took two more important decisions. First, Ennahda neither suggested nor referred to Shariaa as a source of political practice in Tunisia. In contrast, Rached Ghannouchi consistently reminded his supporters as well as other political parties that Tunisian democracy will not succeed unless every segment of the society accepts the constitution as the only legitimate source of political practice. The only reference to religion is the article 1 of the Tunisian constitution, signed and ratified by the National Constituent Assembly in 2014. Second, Ennahda strategy includes a propensity for alliance with secular parties. After the unsatisfactory experience of the Troika’s government between 2011 and 2014, Ennahda seriously initiated negotiations with Nidaa Tounis after the 2014 elections, in an attempt to form a new governmental coalition and to reduce the fear of dominance. This is more surprising than Ennahda decision to alienate itself from Salafism. Nidaa Tounis is a bourguibism revivalist to a large extent and positions itself within Bourguiba political and cultural patrimony. Long years of oppression and marginalization under Bourguiba regime did not impede Ennahda from cooperating with Nidaa Tounis, although few observers argue that it is Rached Ghannouchi and Beji Caid Essebsi alliance rather than Ennahda-Nidaa Tounis coalition.

The hypothesis underlining Ennahda unconditional endorsement of democracy may be true to some extent. Ennahda did not deliberately alienate itself from Salafism and Ansar Al-Shariaa. With the assassination of two leftist political leaders in 2013, Ennahda came up against vast political and popular pressure calling for the immediate resignation of the Troika government and be replaced by an interim government of professional technocrats capable of organizing new presidential and parliamentary elections. Left with fewer alternatives, Ennahda reluctantly decided to take part in the National Dialogue Conference on 5th October 2013 aiming at drafting a road map presented by four civil society organizations, including

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UGTT\textsuperscript{11} is the largest Trade Union. The proposed road map includes a plan for a smooth dissolution of Ennahda government, a collective consensus on an interim government of independent technocrats and a date for the next presidential and parliamentary elections. According to many Ennahda MPs, the road map is not legally binding, yet Ennahda consultative council published a statement proclaiming its unconditional support of the road map and willingness to abide by its provisions to contribute to the unfolding national reconciliation. This promising, yet surprising decision is grounded on two possible considerations. First, Ennahda received guarantees that its members wouldn’t be persecuted as the case of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The 2013 road map foregrounds the equal and fair participation of all political actors, including Ennahda, in a smooth and peaceful transition of power whereby the legitimacy of reconciliation is more significant than the legitimacy of polls. Second, after the attack on the US embassy in Tunis, the White House demanded an immediate crackdown of Salafism and called Ennahda for more cooperation with other political parties to enhance a more stable democratic transition (Cavatorta et al., 2013). Accordingly, the salafist Ansar Al-Shariaa was officially named as a terrorist group which helped Ennahda absorb pressure from both Tunisian opposition and the International community.

Ennahda now is left with one task: to contribute to the drafting of the new constitution. The process started with significant dissent among the participating political parties on several issues, most notably the theme of liberties, which represented one of the most important factors generating the eruption of the revolt in 2011. In a mood of total freedom mixed with a large degree of uncontrolled revolutionary spirit, several disagreements emerged between Ennahda extreme conservative members and several secular groups. An artistic exhibition in the capital Tunis generated massive discontent among Ennahda members as it was deemed too offensive to Islam. On the one hand, Hela Ammar, one of the participants in the exhibition, states that “ants coming out of a child’ schoolbag and forming the name of Allah (God), is by no means blasphemous” (Feuer, 2012). On the other hand, Rached Ghannouchi expressed his frustration for Tunisian religious and cultural norms were no longer respected. The gap became wider when many secular groups accused Ennahda members of consistently exercising Takfir, which is a public condemnation of living against the rules of God. The alarming rise of the culture clash and the continuous polarization of the Tunisian society raised a red flag on the future of the unfolding transition.

Once again, the uniqueness of Tunisian democracy stems from the ability to collectively shift from a state of complete dissenis to a platform of settlement and reconciliation. Thanks to the National Constituent Assembly, an additional article was included in the new constitution ensuring the protection of the religious practice and the prohibition of any call for Takfir. The article 6 successfully illustrates the common ground according to which peaceful coexistence between Islamism and Secularism is possible. The different religious and cultural groups enjoy exceptional levels of mutual respect and trust deeply rooted in the principles of cultural diversity and religious tolerance.

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\textsuperscript{11}UGTT is the largest national trade center in Tunisia. It was founded on January 20, 1946. More than 517,000 members are active within the Union.
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