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GREAT EXPECTATIONS IN TUNISIA

Maha Yahya

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About the Author

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Summary

Tunisian society is in transition, but without a clear vision to guide it on this journey. The Tunisian political elite forged a new constitution that redefines state-citizen relations, but they have not translated this agreement into practice. Meanwhile, political life is in disarray, state legitimacy is in question, and Tunisians are increasingly worried about the future. Delivering on the great expectations of Tunisians means living up to the fundamental principles enshrined in the constitution and their promise of social justice.

A Society in Transition

- In contrast to the positive developments on the political front, the socio-economic policies of Tunisia's transitional phase following the popular protests that started in 2010 have not changed significantly since the pre-uprising period.
- There is a crisis of state legitimacy in the making. Tunisian citizens are extremely worried about their futures and concerned that their political elite are unable to deliver on the promise of a just and better future. They are increasingly disillusioned with the absence of leadership, dissatisfied with their standards of living, and apprehensive about the prospects of civil strife in their country.
- The continuity with the past amplifies Tunisians' disenchantment with the state and perpetuates the political and socioeconomic marginalization of the country's hinterland.
- There are few outlets through which Tunisians can voice their concerns. The regime of former president Zine el Abidine Ben Ali repressed civil society organizations, prevented politicians from becoming alternative centers of power, and tightly controlled opposition political parties. After the uprising, political life was thrown into disarray and no one has filled the void left by the collapse of the Ben Ali regime.
- Tunisian youth in particular are increasingly distant from formal institutions and political processes.
- While the idea of democracy is appealing to most Tunisians, they are not yet sure it will work for their country.

Ways to Manage Great Expectations

- Tunisia's leadership must tackle the structural political and economic challenges at the heart of its socioeconomic woes and implement a more inclusive development approach that moves away from Ben Ali-era policies and focuses more on regional investments based on economic complementarities.
- The trust of citizens is key. The government should work to win that trust and address the deep-seated discrimination against the inland regions.
- A tripartite socioeconomic dialogue that was established in 2012 is worth reinvigorating. Tunisia's leadership could use it to conduct transparent and open discussions about the country's five-year economic plan.
- The municipal elections planned for late 2016 may present an opportunity for the youth to engage more fully in the political process and make a difference in their own communities.

A Society in Transition

Tunisian society is in transition from a repressive yet stable past to an open-ended future where all options seem possible. The path it takes depends on whether its political leadership is able to forge a vision inclusive of all Tunisian citizens; one that recognizes and addresses the grievances that prompted their momentous December 2010 uprising.

By some measures, Tunisia already has a resounding success story. Since 2011, a historic compromise between the country's Islamist and secular parties and the support of a powerful civil society have allowed the key political parties to take a consensus-style political approach to governance. The country has witnessed successive peaceful transfers of power, including two presidential and parliamentary elections. In 2013, an elected representative body also approved a new constitution. And despite a number of security incidents, the country's political transition has remained relatively peaceful.

However, as important as Tunisia's achievements on the political front are, they are insufficient to maintain a sound transition.

The hope that marked the Arab region's first popular uprising has significantly diminished as the hardships marking the lives of ordinary Tunisians have grown. Challenges facing Tunisian society in 2016 include an economic downturn, regional disparities, a widening sense of insecurity, growing inflation, expanding informal-sector activities, rising unemployment levels, and increasing poverty, particularly among the youth. Perhaps most critical is the spreading disillusionment and alienation of large swaths of Tunisian society and their burgeoning misgivings about their prospects for a democratic and stable future.

Many of these challenges are rooted in the policies of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, the longtime ruler who was overthrown after the popular uprising that began in 2010. The apparent continuation of these policies by post-transition governments has aggravated conditions further. Tunisia's uprising may have opened the door to dramatic change, particularly at the levels of freedom of expression, association, participation, and public debate, but it did not bring about a rupture with the past.

The networks of privilege established and the economic liberalization policies enacted in the Ben Ali era accentuated profound disparities across regions and among Tunisians,¹ excluding and marginalizing certain populations on political and socioeconomic fronts. In turn, declining investment in human

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and physical capital constrained future opportunities for millions of Tunisians and fettered the country's development.

The inability of the post-uprising political establishment to actively deal with these challenges and its piecemeal focus on remedial policies means that Tunisians are overwhelmingly worried about issues ranging from financial security to their country's stability and the prospects of civil conflict to providing a decent education for their children.² While most are clear about what they want from their state, they are also concerned that successive governments are not meeting their expectations of dignity and social justice—demands that drove them to the streets in the first place.

These worries are greatly amplified in a context of widespread political fragmentation and declining state legitimacy, which is connected to the legacy of Ben Ali's destructive policies and his deliberate attempts to control public and political spaces. There is no unifying force, and the sense of injustice among ordinary Tunisians is intensifying. With nothing to hold on to, Tunisian society is ripe for further fissures.

In this void, Tunisians seem to be in agreement about the benefits of a democratic system according to polls conducted in 2013, particularly because they value the freedoms it brings, including the freedom to choose their rulers. But they are unsure that it can deliver on the promise of a better life and address their need for greater socioeconomic security.³

For the youth of the country, these are particularly troubling times, as young people bear the greatest brunt of those challenges. Following the euphoria of the uprising, many are disillusioned with the outcomes. In the words of a young university graduate working as a taxi driver, "All we got out of this uprising is inflation."⁴ Like most

Tunisians, what he wanted was access to justice and the opportunity for a dignified life. The absence of clear pathways to achieve those goals at both the political and economic levels is driving him and many others to the margins of society.

Addressing these bottlenecks in the transition and delivering on the great expectations of Tunisians means living up to the fundamental principles enshrined in the country's constitution and their promise of social justice and political freedoms for Tunisians. This requires an inclusive development model and a reversal of policies instated under Ben Ali. It also requires concrete steps to ensure greater participation in the political process, particularly for the youth.

Delivering on the great expectations of Tunisians means living up to the fundamental principles enshrined in the country's constitution and their promise of social justice and political freedoms for Tunisians.

The Roots of Discontent

On January 18, 2016, a young man in the Kasserine Governorate died of electric shock due to injuries sustained when he climbed to the top of an electricity

pole. A recent university graduate, he was protesting the apparently arbitrary removal of his name from the list of job candidates in the region's public education service and the administrative corruption that dictates such practices.⁵ His death triggered a round of demonstrations across much of Tunisia but especially in this long-marginalized region of the country's interior hinterland, eliciting a countrywide curfew.⁶

These protests come as a direct result of growing socioeconomic challenges that have caused an evident decline in ordinary Tunisians' quality of life, increased anxieties about the future, and profound disappointment that hopes for social justice are still not met. They also emerge from a widespread perception that despite a transformed political scene and a new constitution that realigns the relationship between the state and its citizens, the country continues to be working in line with Ben Ali-era policies. In other words, what was assumed to herald a rupture with the past has proved to be more of a continuity on different fronts. Moreover, with the collapse in central authority and state legitimacy, Tunisians it seems have ended up with Ben Ali-era policies but a state that no longer has the capacity to implement those policies.

Since the country gained independence from France in the 1950s and despite statewide advances in economic growth and development, political decisionmaking and policies in Tunisia have effectively privileged the country's capital and surrounding coastal zones. Habib Bourguiba, the first president and founding father of modern Tunisia, built state institutions, centralized decisionmaking, and instated a secular ethos at the heart of Tunisian national identity. The central state, under his rule, was the main purveyor of political power and economic policies. Most government and capital investments as well as most major economic activities and industrial poles were located in the coastal areas at the expense of its agricultural hinterland. Elite networks on the coast were also privileged politically and played central roles in the governance of Tunis to such a degree that the dichotomy of *afaki* versus *baldi-saheli* (hinterland versus coast) played a principal role in shaping national identity and political community, or Tunaisite.

After Ben Ali's arrival to power in 1987 following a military coup against Bourguiba, he continued along the same lines of centralized decisionmaking and economic structural adjustment programs that had been initiated in a 1986 agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The neoliberal reform policies instated during his regime included the privatization of public assets, the weakening of welfare policies, and the restructuring of tax and investment codes.⁷

The initial phase of this reform effort created economic growth, but it did not trickle down and was not sustainable. Tax breaks benefited the upper strata of society, while restructured investment codes played a significant role in fostering labor fragility. Meanwhile, with more than 80 percent of its exports going to Europe (and 70 percent of its imports coming from it),⁸ Tunisia was excessively dependent on external factors and vulnerable to global shocks,

which the country experienced when the 2008 financial crisis caused a significant economic downturn, aggravating unemployment and poverty. Other measures that Ben Ali undertook included downsizing the regulatory role of the state, reducing public investments and spending, and privatizing a range of state-owned companies and other assets. The challenges of rising unemployment levels and poverty were addressed through remedial steps such as project-based employment in the public sector and limited social safety nets.

A key element in the process of economic liberalization was a 1986 World Bank–sponsored agricultural sector adjustment loan that favored the redistribution of state-owned land formerly held by small state-managed cooperatives to large-scale farmers. Nearly 1 million hectares of state-owned cropland was transferred under this scheme. Rather than generating employment, many of the new owners initiated labor-downsizing programs. This move impoverished small farmers and rural dwellers because few efforts were undertaken to improve their access to credit, a change that would have been necessary to support their ability to compete in the new marketplace.⁹

Such asset inequality not only inhibited opportunities for inclusive economic growth but also drove an exponential increase in extralegal properties and informal economic activity. More critically, it created considerable obstacles for Tunisians who may have wanted to enter into the formal market but were unable to use their extralegal assets to do so.

In time, Ben Ali's programs and their effects, coupled with the concentration of investment in the coastal regions, created a spatial division in the labor market, making it far more difficult for those living in the interior and southern regions to have access to decent employment and ample labor opportunities.¹⁰ Tunisians witnessed a steady increase in intraregional inequalities as a result of such liberalization policies, which translated into forms of structural discrimination that augmented development disparities. The quality of life for citizens in these hinterland regions was worsening even as the rest of the country improved.¹¹ For example, in Kasserine, relative poverty rose from 30.3 percent in 1990 to 49.3 percent in 2000.¹² In Sidi Bouzid, the cradle of Tunisia's uprising, relative poverty also increased during the same period from 39.8 percent to 45.7 percent.¹³ Eventually, this imbalance triggered an upsurge in rural–urban migration, resulting in pockets of urban poverty around the capital and other coastal cities.

This pattern persisted well into the 2000s; economic growth was accompanied by greater inequality. By 2012, among all of Tunisia's governorates, Kasserine had the lowest human development ratings.¹⁴ It had the highest incidence of poverty in the country at 32 percent as compared with a national average of 15.5 percent and 9 percent in the capital¹⁵; a 25 percent unemployment level as compared with a national average of 17 percent; and an illiteracy rate of 32 percent compared with a 12 percent national rate.¹⁶ The area also suffers from considerable disparities in infrastructure. For example, one in every three homes has no access to drinking water.¹⁷ Road networks are also poor. And

while the national average distance to major facilities for trade activities, such as ports and airports, is estimated to be 97 kilometers (around 60 miles), for Kasserine it is 217 kilometers (around 135 miles), putting it at a great disadvantage for commercial activities relative to the rest of the country.¹⁸ Polarization on the basis of inequalities in income and consumption also increased from 50 percent in 2000 to 62.5 percent in 2010, pointing to an augmented sense of collective alienation.¹⁹

An overwhelming sense of injustice, rooted in the marginalization of Tunisia's interior and southern governorates, was at the heart of the popular uprising that began on December 17, 2010, in Sidi Bouzid and spread to Kasserine before moving to Tunis and the rest of the country. From the perspective of the citizens of Kasserine, the shared alienation translated into a greater sense of discrimination on the basis of their income level or region, a view that persists today. This was apparent in a national poll conducted in 2014 by the National Institute of Statistics. According to the poll, 37 percent of the residents of Kasserine felt they were discriminated against on the basis of their income as opposed to 5 percent in the coastal areas of the country, including Tunis. Similarly, 23 percent of Kasserine citizens felt discriminated against on the basis of their region in contrast to 8 percent in the same privileged areas in the southwest and coastal zones of the country. And residents expressed high levels of dissatisfaction with Kasserine's primary healthcare services (73 percent) as well as the state of social welfare—close to 70 percent of respondents thought that a large number of individuals who deserved support from social welfare services were not getting it.²⁰

Collectively, these factors drove the residents of Kasserine to submit a request in 2015 to the Truth and Dignity Commission, which is charged with overseeing transitional justice processes in Tunisia, to be considered as a case of collective victimization and “systematic marginalization or exclusion of a region,” in only the second such incident globally.²¹ They cited deliberate policies of structural marginalization and exclusion from the benefits of development by centralized power structures that favored the coastal regions and privileged cronyism and corruption at multiple levels.

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Tunisian Voices

In 2016, the protests in Kasserine extended to Kairouan, Jendouba, Sidi Bouzid, Gafsa, Beja, and Medenine, all underprivileged regions in Tunisia's hinterland, within days of their outbreak. Announcements that the government would create some 5,000 jobs, offer social housing, and reform the region's infrastructure did not stem the demonstrations; they continued to expand across the country.²² As one protester told the French news agency Agence France-Presse in

January 2016, “We’ve had enough of promises and being marginalized. We were the ones who led the revolution and we will not stay silent.”²³

Dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in 2016 is not limited to residents of Tunisia’s hinterland. Regular demonstrations by all segments of society, including syndicates, professional organizations such as those for teachers and doctors, civil society actors, farmers, students, unemployed youth, and even civil servants as well as the police have become a common occurrence. In 2015 alone there were 5,001 protests.²⁴ In addition, there have been continued attempts at individual suicide protests, reaching a high of 69 people in the month of September 2015.²⁵

Dissent by these citizens has revolved around a broad range of issues including questions of land and resource management, demands for wage increases or better working conditions, reform of property rights, as well as the proposed economic reconciliation bill that aims to forgive past economic corruption carried out under Ben Ali.²⁶

These protests not only are reactions to the deteriorating quality of life for Tunisians but also indicate a loss of state legitimacy. On the one hand, for Tunisians, the promise of more jobs in the public sector is the rabbit that is pulled out of the government’s hat every time it is faced with popular unrest. New jobs were promised in 2008 following protests by miners in Gafsa who were speaking out against corruption and nepotistic practices that limited employment opportunities and resulted in unequal development prospects. At the onset of the uprising in 2010, the then minister of development and international cooperation also announced the establishment of a \$10 million employment program.²⁷ Little has changed since then.

On the other hand, with Ben Ali’s overthrow, the collapse of the rentier state and the ruling party at the central level also meant its collapse at local levels. It opened the door for new networks and relationships of power to emerge, ones that want little to do with the central state and its institutions. Most of these relations are structured around the growth and expansion of smuggling and other illicit activities, particularly along the borders with Libya and Algeria. As a youth activist stated, “We live in a context where society has lost hope and is running away from the state; the peripheries have turned away from the center.”²⁸ And it is in this context that extremist organizations and terrorist networks are gaining a foothold.²⁹

Since 2011, in addition to the state’s diminishing control over its border zones, an economic downturn—particularly in key sectors such as tourism, which declined by 35 percent in 2015 in the wake of terrorist attacks—has also propelled an expansion in other forms of informal sector activity that carry no guarantees of social protection or security.³⁰ For example, informal employment increased from 30 percent of the Tunisian economy in 2010 to 38 percent in 2013. Around 72 percent of informal-sector workers are in rural regions, mainly taking part in agricultural production and irregular day labor.³¹ This economic instability is also having a profound impact on the youth whereby

only one in three young workers has access to a secure work contract that guarantees some form of social protection, including healthcare and social security.³² Meanwhile, in 2012, some 524,000 out of 616,000 businesses—or 85 percent—operated in the informal sector, with an estimated \$115 billion loss of income for the Tunisian state.³³ Despite the lack of social security, the relatively high income per capita in the informal sector of 18,725 Tunisian dinars (\$9,355), almost double that of civil servants, has also lured many individuals to such forms of work.³⁴

Amid these increasing socioeconomic challenges, public opinion polls indicate that Tunisians are increasingly dissatisfied with their financial or general standards of living. In a spring 2014 Pew Research Center poll, 88 percent of respondents considered the economic situation bad, and only 48 percent of those aged eighteen to twenty-nine believed things would get better.³⁵

More critically perhaps, Tunisians are extremely worried. In a 2013 World Values Survey, around 81 percent indicated that they were worried about not finding a job, 85 percent about their ability to provide a good education to their children, 89 percent about a war involving their country, and 91 percent about a terrorist attack (the same percentage also expressed concern about a possible civil war).³⁶ In a World Bank poll focused on the youth, employment in the informal sector and exploitation were cited as primary concerns.³⁷

Given this extensive level of worry, it comes as no surprise that the majority of Tunisians who took part in the World Values Survey also expressed high levels of discontent with the quality of healthcare, public transportation systems, water, and housing, and they voiced extreme levels of dissatisfaction with the quality of roads and highway infrastructure. This sense of discontent is further reflected in Tunisians' perceptions of and experience with inequality in their country and in their ability to address their own basic needs. A Pew poll in 2013 asked Tunisians to consider how big of a problem the gap between the rich and the poor was, and 82 percent of respondents indicated it was significant. In the same poll, 90 percent of respondents said rising prices and unemployment were very big problems. Meanwhile, around 40 percent of Tunisians indicated that they had not been able to afford medical care in the past year, and another approximately 30 percent did not have enough to buy essential food.³⁸

Analysis of the World Values data also indicated that Tunisians shared a strong sense of belonging to their country, and their vision of state priorities was similar irrespective of age, class, education level, or political affiliation. At the same time, around 44 percent believed state capitalism to be the best economic system for the country, as compared with 30 percent who chose the free market capitalist system that is at the heart of the country's neoliberal policies.

Tunisians are increasingly dissatisfied with their financial or general standards of living.

In Search of Change

These concerns and anxieties are amplified in a context where there is a preponderant feeling that despite Tunisians' struggles and sacrifices, post-transition policies continue to be in line with the neoliberal approach of the Ben Ali era, and the necessary reforms are not being enacted. This has undermined public support for the 2016–2020 development plan proposed by the government that prioritizes reforming the tax and subsidy systems, improving the investment climate, and addressing the fiscal deficit and the informal economy.³⁹ The absence of real societal dialogue around this plan has also been criticized, driving one opposition leader to go as far as stating that this was not a development plan that was “made in Tunis.”⁴⁰ With this, he echoed a widespread perception among Tunisians that the main propositions included in the plan merely reproduce policy proposals and loan conditions from international financial institutions.⁴¹ From this perspective, this approach not only robs the state of its sovereign decisionmaking capacity over economic matters but also perpetuates Tunisia's dependency on international aid.

The business-as-usual perception stems to some extent from the prevalence of familiar faces in the political sphere. The post-transition period, particularly following the 2014 parliamentary election, has seen the return of Ben Ali-era figures as well as the entry of a host of private actors into the political arena. A substantial portion of the 86 parliamentarians elected in 2014 from Nidaa Tounes, President Beji Caid Essebsi's political party, held significant positions in the Constitutional Democratic Rally of former president Ben Ali.⁴² At the same time, there has been an evident increase in the number of businessmen in parliament, such as the Free Patriotic Union of tycoon Slim Riahi. For ordinary Tunisians, this represents the continued predominance of private interests over the collective good, dashing their hopes for greater economic equity and opportunity.

In addition, there has been little in the way of tangible change because of a number of ingrained interests and viewpoints. Like most countries going through a political transition, the Tunisian government is torn between the need to sustain economic growth, to implement structural reforms that guarantee efficiency, and to enact redistributive policies that can achieve greater equity critical for maintaining social and political stability. The consensus-based approach adopted by the Tunisian leadership on political matters has been difficult to implement on economic issues because there is a broad range of actors involved who are focused on protecting their respective and often colliding interests. In the words of one opposition leader, “There is clear conflict of interest between the parties involved, and what we see is a continued preference for economic policies that privilege the few at the expense of the many.”⁴³

There are four principal political parties currently involved in governing the transition: the Islamist Ennahdha; Nidaa Tounes; Afek Tounes, headed by the Minister of Development, Investment, and International Cooperation,

Yassine Brahim; and the Free Patriotic Union. They share similar conservative positions on socioeconomic matters and have for the most part maintained the economic liberalization approach of Ben Ali-era policies.

Yet, the process of putting together the 2016–2020 development plan has been beset by a number of challenges.⁴⁴ One problem, according to members of the expert group working on this five-year plan, is that the civil servants and the political party advisers involved simply do not see eye to eye.⁴⁵ The civil service, which was described as the “party of bureaucrats” by a senior Ennahdha official,⁴⁶ resists any proposed reforms that may reduce their current benefits in subsidies, healthcare, and other areas.

What is more, the political parties are concerned about their own self-interest, particularly given the municipal elections planned for the end of 2016. Political party advisers have tried to steer clear of other unpopular reforms, many demanded by the IMF as loan conditionality, including civil sector reforms and changes in subsidies for staple goods that would anger the wider public and threaten their popular standing. The public has indeed been angered by proposed changes in the past. In March 2013, demonstrations against the government swept across the country in response to increases in consumer fuel prices and the price of milk as well as a 1 percent levy on salaries above 1,700 Tunisian dinars (\$1,075).⁴⁷ In 2014, and as per agreements with the IMF, an increase in the price of household gas and electricity by 10 percent and an intended increase in the price of fuel by 6 percent triggered considerable unrest.⁴⁸ In the words of a senior member of Nidaa Tounes, “The fact that the benefits of such reforms need a long time to materialize means that there are immediate losers but no instant winners.”⁴⁹

In part as a result of this tug-of-war between political paralysis and the politics of street demonstrations, successive governments since the uprising have adopted a piecemeal and selective approach to addressing ingrained socioeconomic challenges. Rather than implementing an integrated approach to social policies that considers social security—including access to pension funds, health insurance, and unemployment benefits—collectively, actions undertaken in the areas of social policy have focused on select policies that support the needs of vulnerable populations but do not empower them economically. These include increasing the number of families benefiting from national need-based programs (from 135,000 to 235,000), the number of those benefiting from free healthcare, and the amount of the monthly subsidy to needy families from 70 to 120 Tunisian dinars (\$35–\$59).⁵⁰ However, these measures have been unable to address the needs of Tunisian society; 37 percent of those working in Tunisia’s informal sector remain without social security.

Other efforts to address rising social discontent have included using employment as a quick fix. In line with Ben Ali-era policies, successive Tunisian

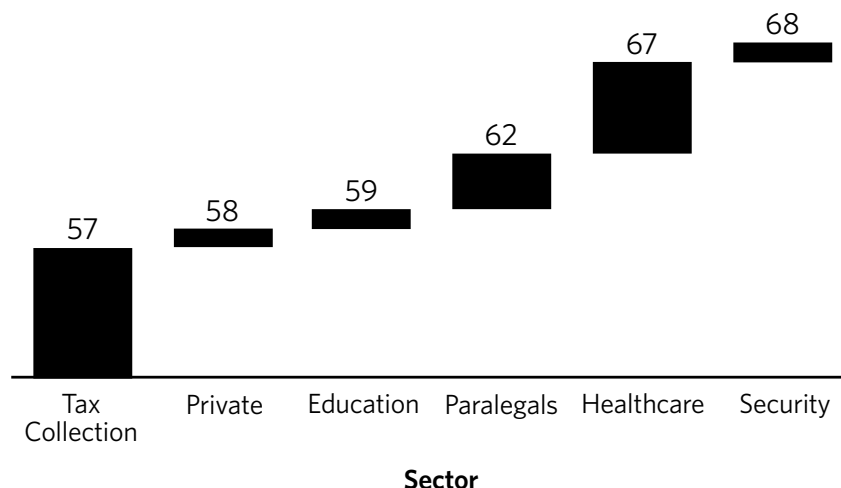
In part as a result of this tug-of-war between political paralysis and the politics of street demonstrations, successive governments since the uprising have adopted a piecemeal and selective approach to addressing ingrained socioeconomic challenges.

governments over the last five years have acted as the employer of last resort by hiring 90,000 new public-sector workers in permanent civil service jobs, bringing the total number of state employees to more than 600,000, excluding employees of publicly owned enterprises. This has driven a 44 percent increase in the wage bill and has reinforced the expectations of Tunisian citizens of their right to employment in the public sector.⁵¹ This tactic, following an upward trend in public-sector hiring adopted prior to the uprising, was again proposed in early 2016 as the solution to the unrest in Kasserine when the prime minister promised the creation of more than 50,000 new jobs in the public sector.⁵² However, the combined growth in the public-sector wage bill and the decline in government revenues make this trend increasingly unsustainable.

The government has also not activated the National Council of Social Dialogue, which was approved in a draft law in June 2015 and was a key element in the new social contract announced in January 2013 between the government, the Tunisian General Labor Union, and the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade, and Handicrafts, which represented the private sector.⁵³ This social contract was the outcome of dialogues that were launched in 2012 aiming to address the fundamental grievances that first drove Tunisians to the streets. This new social contract outlined a number of key principles that were meant to guide Tunisia's future. These involved inclusive and equitable development, social solidarity, decentralization, and guarantees of rights to healthcare, education, housing, decent employment, social protection, and social mobility for all Tunisians. While this dialogue echoed past practices in Tunis in which the reform of key sectors came as a result of similar tripartite engagement,⁵⁴ its significance lay in the comprehensive vision for Tunisia's development that it proposed.

Meanwhile, the perception that the corrupt business practices of the Ben Ali era are back with a vengeance has become quite extensive, and the government has shown no indication that it will tackle the issue head-on. When asked in 2011 for the main reason they took to the Tunisian streets, 40 percent of respondents cited worsening economic conditions and 30 percent cited corruption.⁵⁵ And it was not just corruption at the top but also petty corruption that confronted Tunisians at every level of their daily lives, including with regard to job prospects. In 2014, one in every two Tunisians still believed that corruption was widespread in the country, with the highest levels of perceived corruption in the healthcare and the security sectors (see figure 1). Many believed it to be endemic to state institutions (76 percent) and thought it had increased in these institutions (30 percent) or remained the same (24 percent) after the uprising.⁵⁶ Close to 70 percent of Tunisians also believed that the government was doing little to combat corruption while 55 percent denied knowledge of the National Council for Fighting Corruption, particularly in the center-west regions, where only 19 percent said they knew it existed.

Figure 1. Tunisians' Perceptions of Corruption in Various Sectors



Question asked: "Are there transactions based on bribery and corruption in the following sector in your area?"

Source: National Institute of Statistics, *Al-Maash al-Watani hawla Nazrat al-Muwaten Ila al-Amn wa al-Hurriyat was al-Hawkameh al-Mahaliyeh, 2014* [National survey on the perceptions of security, freedoms, and local governance in 2014] (Tunis: National Institute of Statistics, 2015), http://beta.ins.tn/sites/default/files/pdf_actualites/gouvernance%20%287%29.pdf.

Perhaps the most telling incident that saw a clear eruption of citizens' concerns regarding the return of corrupt practices from the previous era was the economic reconciliation bill proposed by the government. This draft bill, which sought to forgive around 7,000 individuals' past economic transgressions, including businessmen and petty civil servants, accentuated discord and augmented accusations of corruption and a lack of transparency.⁵⁷ For some, this law represented a backdoor deal between the political elite at the expense of ordinary citizens. In the words of a member of a newly established youth-driven political party called Jil Jadid (the New Generation), this law is an "attempted coup against transitional justice" by instating individual impunity and overriding the fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution. It is also seen as part of a larger pattern of infringement on constitutional institutions, such as the Truth and Dignity Commission, and an attempt "to reorganize the post-uprising political map of Tunisia by legitimizing corrupt members of the past regime," as the same Jil Jadid member put it.⁵⁸ Another member of Tunisia's burgeoning civil society organizations asked, "Why do we need a new law to address past transgressions when we have a constitutionally recognized entity in the Truth and Dignity Commission?" She continued, "This law reflects the contempt of politicians for our constitution."⁵⁹ Sponsors of the bill failed to present evidence of the public benefits of such a law and the monetary amounts they expected to recuperate from it, prompting a coalition of civil society groups to launch a

campaign entitled “Menish Musameh” (I Will Not Forgive) to overturn the bill. This was supported by opposition parties that succeeded in halting the bill’s passage through parliament, but all indications suggest that members of the ruling coalition, particularly those of Nidaa Tounes, will attempt once more to turn it into law in 2016.

In this turbulent context, Tunisians are focused on economic growth, security, and stability as priorities for their country.⁶⁰ This is particularly the case for those from thirty to forty-nine years of age, 80 percent of whom chose strong economic growth as the first aim for the country, presumably because they are at a stage in their lives when they already have or are planning to have family responsibilities.⁶¹

Similar preferences were echoed by the respondents to the World Values Survey opinion poll when they were asked to identify a personal first and second aim; the majority chose maintaining order in the nation and fighting inflation rather than engaging people in decisionmaking or protecting freedom of speech. On the order of priorities, participatory politics, beautifying cities, or protecting freedom of speech emerged as second choices for all age groups and classes but most clearly for those below age twenty-nine.⁶²

Filling a Political Void

As of 2016, the people’s demands in the uprising that began over five years ago have not been met. Tunisians’ two greatest worries about financial and personal security remain unaddressed and are actually getting worse. Fundamentally, what is at stake for Tunisians is the question of governance and the implementation of the new social contract between states and citizens as embodied by the constitution; one that upholds the demands of the 2010 uprising and promises Tunisians social justice on the basis of equal citizenship. Yet no clear champion for how to implement this vision has emerged. Given the fragmentation of the political landscape, perhaps this should not come as a surprise.

This fragmentation too is rooted in an earlier era. The national ethos of the first republic of Habib Bourguiba revolved around three key principles: modernizing state institutions, secularizing modes of life, and homogenizing national identity under the banner of the state. This hegemony was embodied in the concepts of *l’etat-patron* (state as guardian) and *l’etat-parti* (state as party).⁶³ The right to economic opportunity and social mobility was also at the heart of this identity.

The rise to power of Ben Ali on the heels of a military coup heralded a brief period of openness followed by a harsh clampdown on all potential opposition and alternative centers of power, including prison sentences and exile for their leaders. Ben Ali’s concerted focus on national unity as a process of rallying around the center undercut opportunities for civic participation and stifled political life dramatically. Even as he paid lip service to the principles

of democracy, such as holding parliamentary and presidential elections, his regime worked hard to co-opt and repress civil society organizations and to prevent politicians from forming substitute centers of power. It also tightly controlled opposition political parties. His repressive practices and manipulation of legislative procedures and electoral laws allowed him to skillfully sow profound divisions among opposition parties and to consolidate his grip on power. Political life was stunted as the costs of engagement increased while the struggle of civil society organizations for autonomy from state control suffered significant setbacks.

The environment of political freedom that the 2010 uprising opened up exposed the heavy burden of this legacy. The ousting of Ben Ali not only removed an autocrat but also shattered the myth of the state as the sole purveyor of political community and the idea that national unity may only be constructed around primary deference to the central state. The fact that political change in Tunisia occurred from outside the regime or even traditional opposition parties made room for new ways of imagining political life and new opportunities for realizing them. And the absence of a political party or leader, or union leaders, in instigating these demonstrations opened the door to a world of new possibilities.

Yet, his ouster also left a political void in its wake. Myriad political actors are jockeying for position and are unable individually or collectively to forge a vision for how to move the country forward. They have not been able to achieve the demands of citizens who have taken to the streets.

In addition to the steadfast presence of traditional political figures, what has characterized the Tunisian political landscape over the past five years is widespread fragmentation. During the 2011 elections for the National Constituent Assembly, more than 160 political parties ran.⁶⁴ These included previously banned parties such as Ennahdha or the Congress for the Republic Party (CRP) of Moncef Marzouki, who served as Tunisia's president from 2011 to 2014, as well as scores of small, newly established parties that simply disappeared after the elections. Many of the larger parties, such as the CRP, fragmented as prominent members resigned to form their own political entities or to join others. The electoral law put in place in 2011 and its system of proportional representation has made it difficult for any single political party to gain an absolute majority.⁶⁵

Against this background, the political scene in Tunis is dominated by multiple actors and muddied by open conflict driven by personal ambitions and petty bickering with public accusations of corruption.⁶⁶ The ongoing quandary in Nidaa Tounes is also adding to the current political turmoil in the country. This crisis has seen an effective splintering of the party into two camps, one led by the president's son Hafez Essebsi and the other by the director general of the party, Mohsen Marzouk. With the resignation of 32 parliamentarians from Nidaa Tounes's party membership, Ennahdha has effectively become the largest political party in the country. Meanwhile, allegations of nepotism and

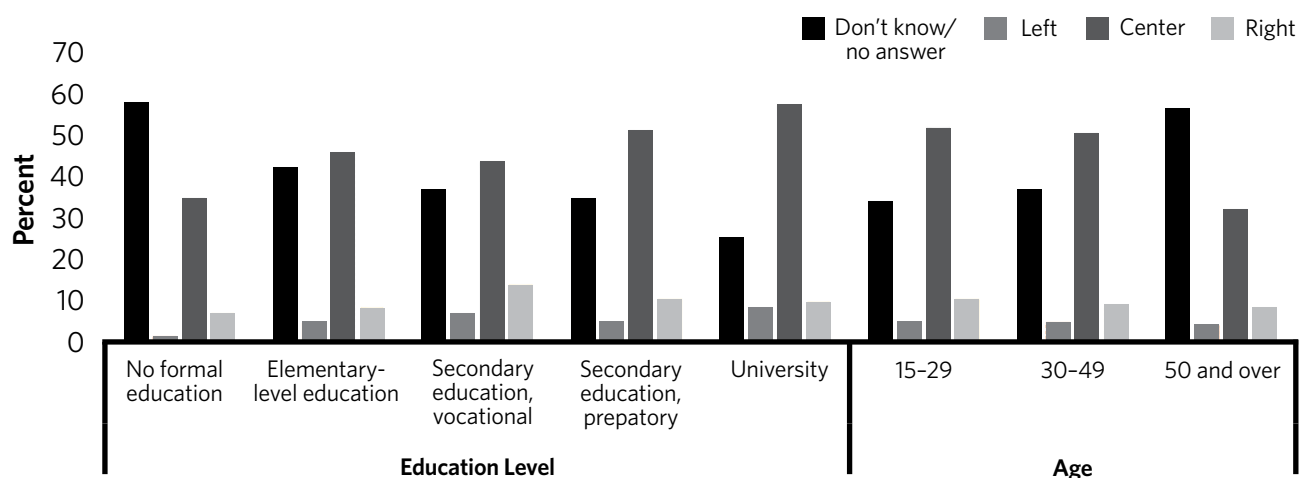
corruption and even accusations of deliberate attempts to undermine national unity have destabilized an already fragile political context.⁶⁷ Amid this deadlock, identity-based divisions have reemerged, with the president claiming that the Islamists are responsible for the turmoil in 2016.⁶⁸

Tunisians see in all of these developments the remnants of past repressive policies with opposition parties unable to constitute credible alternatives. In the larger context of political polarization, socioeconomic challenges, and a loss of state legitimacy, identity-based populist politics will drive additional fissures into Tunisian society.

This fragmentation in the political sphere comes at a time when traditional political categorizations are fading away with nothing to replace them. An analysis of the 2013 public opinion poll undertaken by the World Values Survey showed that traditional political categories such as being on the left or right or in the center have been voided of meaning and that differences in attitudes among Tunisians on key issues related to the role of the state or the political system have little relation to ideology. When asked to self-identify politically, 45.5 percent of Tunisians asserted they were in the center of the political spectrum, while only 5 percent indicated they were on the left and another 9 percent identified as on the right. Almost 41 percent of respondents were unable to define their political leanings.⁶⁹

Education level and age seem to directly affect political identification. Around 57 percent of those with no formal education indicated they were unable to define their political position, as opposed to 57 percent of those who had completed university and placed themselves in the center. About half of those fifteen to twenty-nine and thirty to forty-nine years old self-identify as being in the center while 56 percent of those who are over fifty could not identify a political position (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Education and Age as Determinants of Political Self-Identification



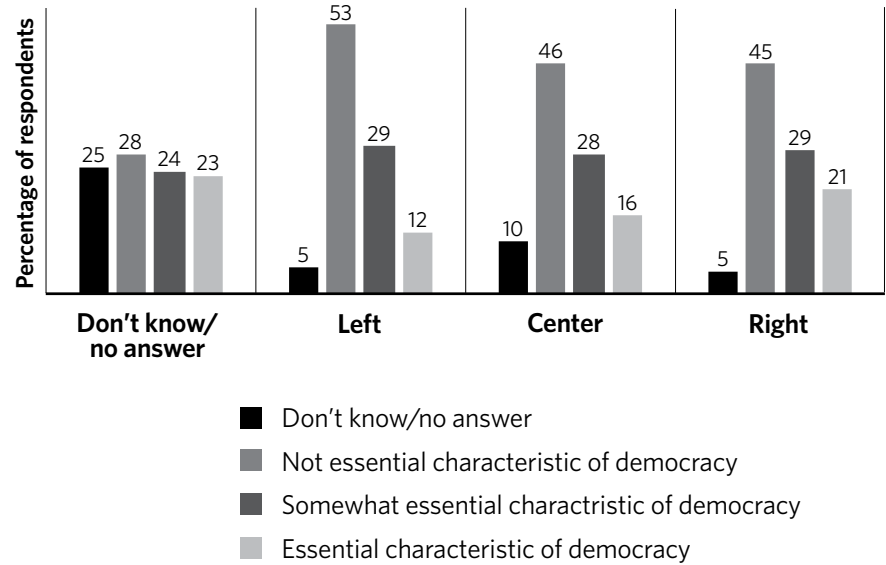
Source: Author analysis of WVS data. See "WVS Wave 6 (2010-2014)," World Values Survey, last updated January 1, 2016, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>.

When considering what these positions stand for on a number of key political issues, the results were even more indicative of the extent to which such labels have lost much political meaning.

Political self-identification is no longer associated with an ideological position, particularly when it comes to socioeconomic questions. For example, those that self-identify as being on the right would like to see government ownership of private enterprises. Meanwhile, those that self-identify as on the left are more likely to want private ownership of business and seem to believe that larger income differences are good incentives for individual efforts.

On political issues, the differences between the two groups are more consistent with traditional positions. Those on the right are more likely to believe that it is essential to democracy for the army to take over if the government is incompetent, while those on the left believe that a strong leader who does not bother with elections is bad for the country. On the role of religion in public life, their positions are also ideologically aligned, with 21 percent of those on the right thinking that religious authorities interpreting the laws is an essential characteristic of democracy, while only 12 percent of those on the left believe so (see figure 3).

Figure 3. **Should Religious Authorities Interpret the Law?**



Question asked: "Many things are desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. Please tell me for each of the following things how essential you think it is as a characteristic of democracy. Use this scale where 1 means 'not at all an essential characteristic of democracy' and 10 means it definitely is 'an essential characteristic of democracy.'"

Statement that was ranked: Religious authorities ultimately interpret the laws.

Source: Author analysis of WVS data. See "WVS Wave 6 (2010-2014)," World Values Survey, last updated January 1, 2016, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>.

The self-identified centrists, who are in the majority and seem to represent the more secular camp of Tunisians, believe that having a democratic system is good for the country. They would like to have experts, not the government, make decisions. However, a significant portion thinks that having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections is also positive for Tunisia. Members of this group are confused about the role of the army when the government is incompetent, believing it both essential and not essential to democracy. They are equally divided about whether a strong leader who does not bother with elections is good for the country. In addition, people in this group are characterized by a relatively significant feeling of empowerment or freedom of choice and control over their lives. Meanwhile, more than 46 percent believe that religious authorities should not have a role in interpreting the law and almost 50 percent consider people obeying their rulers to be a somewhat essential characteristic of democracy.

On socioeconomic issues, members of this centrist group are ambivalent about the specific characteristics of democracy. They would like to see state intervention in areas they view as somewhat essential to democracy, particularly

the provision of state aid for unemployment. They believe that incomes should be made more equal,⁷⁰ but they were less certain that achieving these goals is the role of a democratic state. However, some think it is essential to democracy for the government to tax the rich to subsidize the poor, and almost 70 percent of those who belong to this group would like to see public/private ownership of business.

The second-largest group—those who couldn't define themselves politically—appears to be the liberal camp of Tunisian society that nevertheless is split on the role of religion in public life. Like the centrists, members of this group are firm advocates of a democratic system—95 percent believe it is good for the country—but members of this group are far more certain about the fundamental characteristics of democracy. They believe that protecting women's rights, choosing one's leader, ensuring civil rights, receiving state aid for employment, and allowing the government to tax the rich to subsidize the poor are all essential characteristics of democracy. They also believe that having a strong leader who does not bother with parliament is bad for the country. On socioeconomic issues, they are far more certain than the centrists that state aid for employment, the government taxing the rich to subsidize the poor, and the state playing an active role in equalizing incomes are all essential characteristics of democracy. They would like experts and not the government to make decisions and for the most part voice a preference for public/private ownership of business. The majority of this group believes that having the army rule is a bad way of governing the country. They seem to be equally divided on the role of religious authorities in interpreting the law in a democracy (see figure 3).

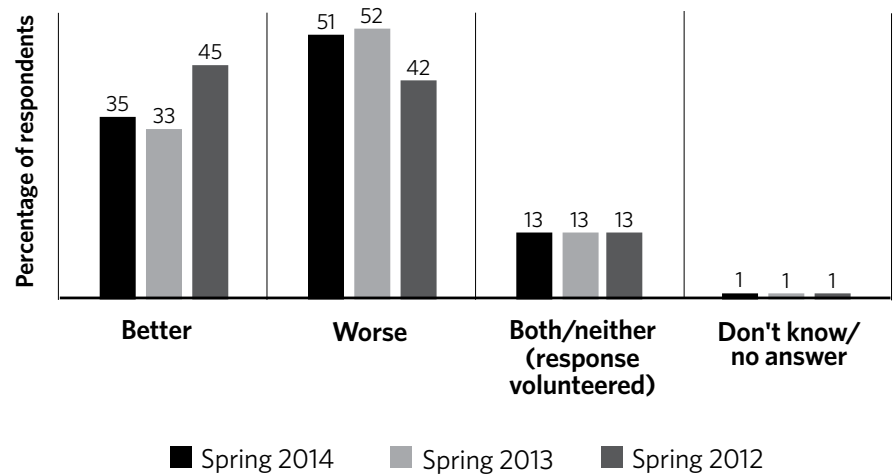
What emerges from this is that on the political front, there is a considerable desire across Tunisian society for a strong leader who governs with the help of experts, perhaps in a bid to depoliticize the governance of the country. Politics for many is perceived as a dirty game mired in corruption that is undermining Tunisia. In the same vein, the demand for a strong leader is very much evident across all groups, whether in the form of the army that is able to restore order to the country or an individual to lead the country. Tunisians' yearning for a strong leader was apparent in the 2014 election of President Essebsi as a leader who could restore *haibat al-dawla* (the prestige of the state), which had been undermined by the general disarray and the disintegration of state services that followed the 2010 uprising. Meanwhile, the ambivalence toward army rule is perhaps explained by the professionalism of the Tunisian army and its general preference to stay out of the game of politics.

On the socioeconomic front, there seems to be an overall consensus among Tunisians on the role of the state that is in line to some extent with the preference for a social market economy. This consensus revolves around the extension of state aid for unemployment and the equalization of incomes as well as the use of taxes as a mechanism to ensure equity. It also includes an overwhelming inclination for joint public/private ownership of business. The preference for

a social market economy reflects a rejection of the neoliberal approach implemented under the regime of Ben Ali, which included tax codes skewed to privilege the rich and extensive privatization policies that fostered great inequity amid an environment of rampant corruption and nepotism.

Tunisians, emerging from decades of authoritarianism, are still experimenting with the governance system best suited to address their needs. Despite broad public support for democratic governance, the absence of leadership at this critical juncture is undermining the potential of Tunisia’s transition. It is also leading to an increasing loss of confidence in the ability of a democratic system to deliver on the unfulfilled expectations of citizens. In 2014, 51 percent of Tunisians believed the country was worse off with Ben Ali out of power, as opposed to 42 percent in 2012, while more than 62 percent of Tunisians indicated that Tunisia would be better off with a stable if slightly undemocratic government (see figures 4 and 5).

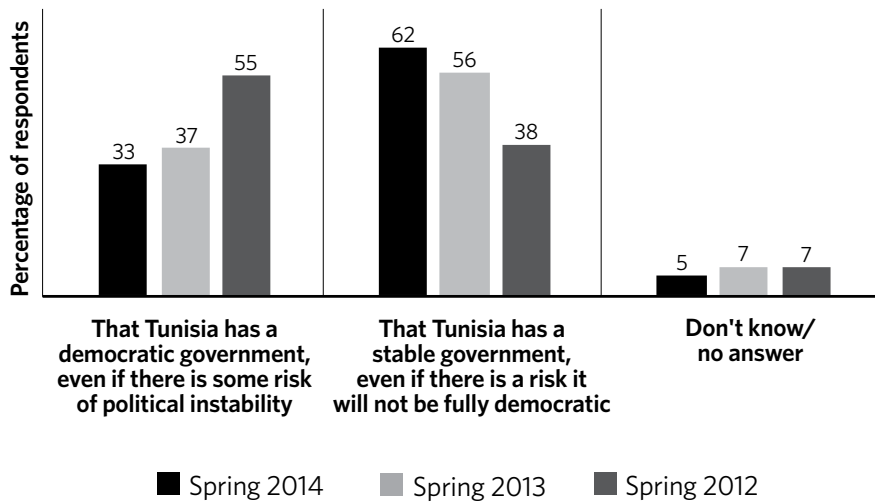
Figure 4. **With Ben Ali Gone, Is Tunisia Better or Worse Off?**



Question asked: "In your opinion, now that Zine El Abidine Ben Ali is not in power, is Tunisia better off or worse off?"

Source: Pew Research Center, "Tunisian Confidence in Democracy Wanes: Ratings for Islamist Ennahda Party Have Declined Since Revolution," Pew Research Center, October 15, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/10/15/tunisian-confidence-in-democracy-wanes/>.

Figure 5. Tunisians' Perceptions of Security vs. Stability

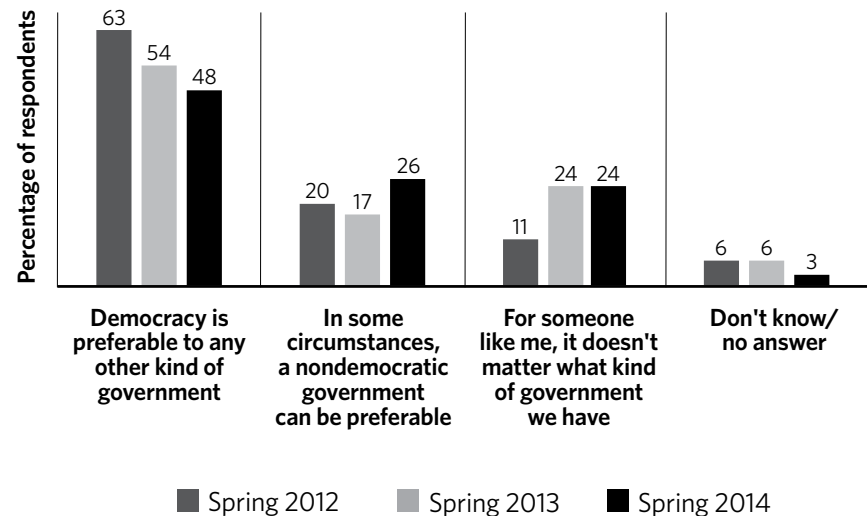


Question asked: "Which is more important to you? That [Tunisia] has a democratic government, even if there is some risk of political instability OR That [Tunisia] has a stable government, even if there is a risk it will not be fully democratic?"

Source: Pew Research Center, "Tunisian Confidence in Democracy Wanes: Ratings for Islamist Ennahda Party Have Declined Since Revolution," Pew Research Center, October 15, 2014, <http://www.pewgloal.org/2014/10/15/tunisian-confidence-in-democracy-wanes/>.

This should not be viewed as merely declining support for democracy (see figure 6).⁷¹ Rather, it represents a crisis of the state's legitimacy as a result of its inability to address the unmet promises of the uprising. For Tunisians, the links between democracy and economic growth are clear, whereby close to 80 percent believed that honest elections play a determining role in whether the country develops economically.⁷² However, the evident fragmentation of the political landscape and declining state legitimacy may be reasons that large numbers of Tunisians are looking for alternative forms of political organization, including the self-proclaimed Islamic State. Reports suggest that anywhere between 3,000 and 8,000 Tunisians have left the country to join the group or similar entities.⁷³

Figure 6. Tunisians' Views on Democratic Governance



Question asked: "Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion . . . Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government; in some circumstances a nondemocratic government can be preferable; for someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have?"

Source: Pew Research Center, "Tunisian Confidence in Democracy Wanes: Ratings for Islamist Ennahda Party Have Declined Since Revolution," Pew Research Center, October 15, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/10/15/tunisian-confidence-in-democracy-wanes/>.

Disengaged Youth

The youth in particular are growing more and more disengaged from active participation in political life. This young generation of Tunisians is seeking ways to express itself politically yet is actively avoiding doing so through institutional instruments, including mainstream political parties and civil society associations. Many feel despondent, with expectations of a better life nowhere to be found and a political process that is increasingly disenchanting. They have little if any trust in state institutions whether central, regional, or local. Only 8.8 percent of rural youth and 31 percent of urban youth have any faith in the political system, while more than 80 percent of all youth have faith in their local imam and religious organizations.⁷⁴

These trends were evident in the low youth turnout for the 2014 elections. Eighty percent of eligible youth (eighteen to twenty-five years old) did not vote in the parliamentary election, and they largely abstained from the presidential election.⁷⁵ Another example is their limited involvement in civil society organizations despite a 50 percent increase in the number of registered nongovernmental organizations after the uprising.⁷⁶

This population group finds itself ill-equipped to handle newfound political freedoms after the forced suppression of political and religious debate in the Bourguiba and Ben Ali eras and the steady dismantling of the religious and formal education systems. The censorship of religious teachings during the Ben Ali era left the door wide open for religious instruction to take place through television channels that propagated extremist thinking.

Moreover, while unemployed university graduates have often dominated the discourse on the position of the youth, the marginalization of Tunisian young people involves far more than high levels of unemployment. Indeed, those who are categorized by the World Bank as not enrolled in education, not employed, or not in training programs are those most affected by economic exclusion. This exclusion extends to the social and political spheres. The findings of an International Alert study about Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen, two poor neighborhoods known for their high levels of unemployment and stigmatized for being hotbeds of Salafi activity, are grim with regard to Tunisia's youth.⁷⁷ The principal findings point not only to abysmal prospects for education and employment leading to a continued reliance on patriarchal structures of authority but also to the continued stigmatization of these young people and their inability to break out of an unwanted present and an inglorious future. It is no wonder that jihadi networks are able to creep into the void created by the absence of alternate forms of belonging and options for the future.

The marginalization of the youth is further compounded by a growing sense of injustice and resentment of flawed accountability systems apparent among Tunisians in general, but particularly the youth.⁷⁸ The inability to bring those accused of human rights abuses and murder to justice is undermining the role of the state as the protector of individual and collective rights and diminishing state legitimacy in the eyes of its young citizens. As one youth civil society activist said, "This state is neither just nor is it carrying out its principal role in providing physical and socioeconomic security for its citizens . . . driving many to turn away and build a life and existence that is separate from the state."⁷⁹

Meeting Great Expectations

In 2011, Yadh Ben Achour, a lawyer and the former head of Tunisia's transitional revolutionary council that oversaw the first elections after Ben Ali was ousted, highlighted the need to move quickly on reforms. As quoted in the *Guardian*, he stated, "There is a wide discrepancy between the citizens' timeframe and [the] timeframe of politics," adding that "the larger the gap, the more threatened the revolution becomes."⁸⁰ However, in the furor of post-uprising politics and the euphoria of unseating an autocratic leader, much time has been wasted looking at political discord through the lens of ideology or identity politics focused on the secular-religious divide. Little attention has been paid to how to bolster the foundations of a democratic state in keeping

with its new constitution and how to address the structural economic problems that gave rise to the profound inequalities and sense of injustice in the first place. The subsequent social unrest is perhaps the most obvious result that prompted the popular uprising.

The fundamental questions for Tunisia's political elite in 2016 are what shape the Tunisian state will take after Bourguiba and Ben Ali, and whether the center will manage to bring back into the fold its abandoned peripheries. The absence of bold leadership to take the country out of its current impasse is troubling and will mean that waves of political and social unrest will continue for some time to come. The attrition of state institutions will also persist.

Tunisian political elites need to rebuild the bonds of trust between the citizens and their state, strengthen democratic institutions, and uphold the principles of equity and social justice as enshrined in the constitution. This is fundamental for restoring state legitimacy and for solidifying Tunisians' sense

Tunisian political elites need to rebuild the bonds of trust between the citizens and their state.

of identity and belonging to the country. And it is vital for maintaining social cohesion in the country at a time of tremendous uncertainty. The elites should also respond to the aspirations of the majority of Tunisians for a more equitable state, which are evident in responses to opinion polls.

One step in this direction would be for the Tunisian government to reactivate the tripartite economic dialogue initiated in 2012 and make use of the National Council of Social Dialogue. This dialogue would establish a space in which economic prospects, labor concerns, policy options, and priority reforms for achieving inclusive growth and development may be addressed between the government, the labor unions, and the private sector, rather than seeing those concerns voiced on the streets. The declaration of principles that emerged from the national council was an important step in establishing a common platform for dialogue on basic principles among political parties, civil society organizations, and the private sector, and for reflecting the basic concerns of Tunisian citizens.

The country's five-year economic plan may also be discussed at this council to ensure the active engagement and buy-in of as wide a spectrum of citizens as possible. Such dialogue can open up the possibility of a national socioeconomic consensus that complements the country's political-consensus-building approach. This kind of agreement could be forged on Tunisia's strategic priorities, its development options, and moving the role of the state away from the current rentier model and toward an inclusive development approach as indicated in the 2012 dialogue. This would also include discussions about how to respond to the voices of Tunisians and their demands for economic stability and security as well as about the kind and sequencing of reforms required by the restructuring of broader macroeconomic policies. In time, this approach may allow the government to implement the needed reforms, including revising public employment policies as well as investment and tax codes—which is included in the current five-year development plan with considerable consensus among most political

parties—revamping the civil service, or addressing the subsidy system as part of a comprehensive vision for the country’s long-term development.

While short-term measures are useful to address the fallout from the current discontent in the marginalized regions, such as those proposed by the prime minister including creating incentives for private sector investments in the hinterland areas, a long-term development vision for these regions is needed.⁸¹ The equitable distribution of the dividends of economic growth, agreed upon in the 2012 social dialogue, means that the government needs to propose concrete policies to address regional disparities focused on the development of its inland regions and to put forward a clear schedule for their implementation. Such a development strategy must ensure convergence in access to services by actively investing public funds in a number of needed social goods, such as roads, hospitals, schools, water networks, and more. This would create decent jobs, address some forms of labor fragility, and reestablish lost connections between citizens and their state, particularly those in marginalized regions such as Kasserine. Investments in infrastructure and housing would also promote labor mobility between regions, allowing the ruling coalition to both distribute the benefits of investments across a wider spectrum of citizens and address some of the worries that plague Tunisian citizens.

The development of these regions would additionally include a consideration of their economic complementarities as well as the distribution of state resources among regions and districts on the basis of socioeconomic indicators, including levels of inequality, polarization, and poverty. Decentralization, both at the political and economic levels, can go a long way in invigorating these regions if it is combined with the appropriate tool sets and budgets. The government would still need to ensure an alignment between local and national priorities, which would encompass reorganizing spending between the center and the regions—something that currently aggravates disparities. In the existing model, the center makes decisions about more than 90 percent of public spending as compared with 7 percent at the regional and subregional levels, while two-thirds of public investments managed by the government were allocated to coastal areas.⁸² Along the same lines, some form of budgetary compensation should be allowed for the inland regions that provide significantly to the national budget, particularly areas such as Gafsa, which has a large amount of natural resources.

For the youth, the municipal elections planned for the end of 2016 are one venue open to them to reengage with the process of political transformation. Municipalities provide a space for daily interactions between elected council members and their communities over a broad range of issues that touch people’s lives, including water, electricity, and social infrastructure. These upcoming elections offer Tunisia’s youth the possibility of building up social capital that could become political capital, of influencing the development of their own areas, and of playing a part in reshaping their future. While employment opportunities are important for their economic integration, encouraging their participation at the

local level and empowering them to make a difference in their communities will go a long way to addressing their current marginalization.

The sense of identity or of being a Tunisian citizen would stem from having a dignified life that includes equitable access to economic opportunities. As opinion polls have indicated, Tunisians do believe that democratic practices, including elections, are fundamental for economic prosperity, and they do want a measure of welfare support from their state. But they also want the opportunity to achieve their potential. The World Bank has suggested that Tunisia presents an economic paradox because it has everything it needs to become a so-called Tiger of the Mediterranean but has not yet achieved those economic heights. Only by rethinking Tunisia's development model and making it more inclusive will this potential be realized.

Notes

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- 2 These worries are evident in the author’s analysis of the primary data sets of the World Values Survey conducted in Tunisia in 2013 (all World Values Survey data presented in the paper were derived from the author’s analysis of the primary data sets). Analysis of the primary data sets of Pew Research Center opinion polls point to similar trends. Most likely the country has seen a further increase in the extent of these worries given the continued sense of instability and greater economic crisis. See World Values Survey Association, “World Values Survey Wave 6 2010–2014 Official Aggregate v.20150418,” last updated January 1, 2016, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVS-DocumentationWV6.jsp>; and Pew Research Center, “Tunisian Confidence in Democracy Wanes: Ratings for Islamist Ennahda Party Have Declined Since Revolution,” Pew Research Center, October 15, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/10/15/tunisian-confidence-in-democracy-wanes/>.
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- 11 Sami Bibi, *Poverty and Inequality in Tunisia, Morocco and Mauritania* (Tunis, Tunisia: African Development Bank, 2011).
- 12 Relative poverty measures focus more on the inability of certain groups to enjoy living standards and activities that are ordinarily observed in a society. According to the African Development Bank, growth patterns that raise the incomes of all, but

- proportionally more those of the non-poor, increase relative poverty, even though the absolute income of the poor has increased. This means that although the real income of the poor has increased, their marginalization has also increased because their ability to obtain the living conditions and amenities that are customary in their society has worsened. Ibid.
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