Public Governance in Tunisia

Principles, Status and Prospects

NOVEMBER 2013
BACKGROUND:
The Tunisian Association for Governance (ATG) is a leading actor in Tunisia’s civil society, politics and business scene. Its cross-disciplinary approach to governance issues allows the organization to have a complete, broad-based vision for the nation’s strategic priorities in political, social and economic development.

OBJECTIVES:
Serving as a think tank and discussion forum – but also as a leading institution specializing in governance issues – ATG brings Tunisian experts renowned for their expertise, competence and ability to process, investigate, analyze and publish reports and guides on best practices in public and private governance. With national and international social capital, ATG provides expert opinions and high-level insights to non-governmental and private Tunisian public policy organizations, allowing stakeholders and political actors to develop their ideas, programs and practices in the areas of governance.

VALUES:
ATG promotes transparency, fairness, competence, ethics and performance in political and state affairs with the aim of raising Tunisia to the level of prosperous and advanced nations.

PARTNERSHIP:
ATG has developed a set of partnerships on the national level (ADDS) as well as the international level (POMED), and the organization has helped to develop good governance practices in collaboration with other institutions. Its national and international reputation is affirmed through its publications and periodic conferences.
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WORKING GROUP ON PUBLIC GOVERNANCE IN TUNISIA
This report has been designed and developed by:

Mr. Hatem Ben Salem, Associate Professor of Law

Ms. Emna Ben Arab, Lecturer in English

Ms. Mouna Dridi Kraiem, Lecturer in Law

Mr. Khaled Dababi, Assistant in Law

Mr. Moez Joudi, President of the ATG

CONTACT:
Tunisian Association for Governance (ATG)

Address: Street Lake Geneva, NAWREZ Centre, Block B-B2-1, Les Berges du Lac, 1053 Tunis

Tel: (+216) 71 96 06 96

Fax: (+216) 71 96 57 37

Mob: (+216) 98 22 04 70
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FOREWORD

It is not possible to cover in a report all the aspects pertaining to governance, or to pretend to have adopted the right approach in expressing objectively opinions related to a mode of government in which public decision is subject to the risks of a major political transition. It is this conclusion, so frustrating I must admit that a team of young researchers, whom I was honored to coach in the last few months, have reached.

In fact, our mission consisted of attempting to apply a number of good governance parameters to a political process whose ambitious objective is to found a Tunisian State based on new constitutional grounds involving important political, economic and financial disruptions. The analytic approach, fundamentally pedagogical and necessarily neutral, will prove so complex to the extent that the researchers find themselves under the heavy weight of political realities with the risk of altering the rigor of their scientific analysis. It is undoubtedly a risky undertaking in which the support of our POMED partners helped bring to a conclusion.

This report is certainly unique in the political and economic annals of Tunisia and will be a source of inspiration and evaluation of the historical events experienced by our country. If it is only for this, the report is worth all the efforts and abnegation to bring it to a conclusion.

Dr. Hatem Ben Salem
INTRODUCTION

Following the regime change in Tunisia which profoundly impacted the political scene, the new ruling elite set on remaking the system of government. The dynamics of institutional reconstruction engaged, unfortunately in undue haste, were expected not only to change the nature of political relationships in Tunisia toward establishing a true democracy, but also to initiate a new approach to the management of public affairs based on good governance.

The elections of October 23, 2011 which were expected to lead to a new political landscape, have instead led to an ideological cleavage whose consequences inhibit any possibility of evolution toward a democratic regime. More troubling is the presence of a double crisis, one of identity crisis and the other a security problem, which seem to add to the political deadlock due primarily to the absence of ethics in the conduct of the State affairs and to a total politicization of the whole administrative machinery. Yet, the emergence through the ballot boxes of the majority that now governs the country can in no way be considered a faithful representation of the political tendencies of the actual Tunisian electorate. The winners of the elections are, in fact, the beneficiaries of a dysfunctional election mode adopted in haste. Through its ancient and modern history, the Tunisian society has been deeply committed to its Arab and Muslim values and has always rejected any overlap between politics and religion.

Currently, a false polarization of political life, between Islamist and secular Tunisians, has exacerbated the confusion and increased the inconsistency in the management of public affairs. In addition, the incompetence of a number of political and administrative officials led to taking several strategic decisions which have proved inadequate to a country in crisis, and unable to respond to the countless economic expectations of the Tunisian people. Combating corruption and nepotism, with no adequate legislative texts in place, yielded no tangible result while the process of drafting the constitution around which a national consensus could have been created led to the polarization of the Tunisian people. Therefore, during this transitional period, successive governments have faced the impossible task of putting in place the concept of good governance which underlies the values of fairness and probity in the management of public affairs. Parameters such as the rule of law, participation and transparency, which are the foundations of good governance, were just rhetoric.

The current report, in its political section, examines through the parameters mentioned above, the constitutional process that Tunisia has been going through since January 14, 2011, by identifying the failures which have made this process controversial. It is, in fact, an attempt to measure the extent to which the successive governments have adopted the different criteria of good governance each time a decision regarding the future of Tunisia is taken. The respect of the rule of law entails accountability of the government whose political responsibility has meaning only if it establishes the principle of the equality of all before the law. It is by strengthening these fundamental rules of democracy that the sustainability of the institutions is ensured and the foundations of a just society are laid.

The first transitional period (the one before the elections of October 23rd, 2011) created an institutional vacuum by suspending the constitution, and dissolving parliament, the Economic and Social Council and the Constitutional Council. This vacuum could not be filled after the elections of October 23rd by the National Constituent Assembly. The provisions of the Law on the Organization of Public Powers
(December 16th 2012) were not respected. The successive transitional governments, for lack of transparency, did not allow the ongoing constitutional process to evolve in the right direction, leading to a lack of synergy between the National Constituent Assembly, the government and civil society. This situation was at the origin of the inefficiency of public action and the dissatisfaction of the population. This hesitancy in the management of public affairs has particularly hurt the Tunisian public finances since the Tunisian economy is no longer in a position to meet the requirements of growth. This is what the second part of this report will attempt to analyze (Chapter II).

This transitional period is characterized by the difficulty of presenting to the Tunisian people a fundamental text around which national consensus can be achieved. Is it because of the lack of popular endorsement of the draft constitution that it is today rejected by groups of people who consider themselves dispossessed of their own revolution? The political part of the report (Chapter I) will attempt to demonstrate that it is because of the absence of parameters of good governance that the situation is so confusing today at a time when the national dialogue is starting out.
CHAPTER I: POLITICAL GOVERNANCE

THE PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNANCE

Governance refers to the full range of measures, rules, decision-making processes, and information, implementation and evaluation bodies which ensure the most appropriate control of a State, an institution or an organization whether it is public or private, regional or local, national or international. Governance is intended to put in place the strategic direction, to ensure that the objectives set are achieved, that the risks are managed appropriately and that resources are used in a responsible manner for the benefit of the citizens. In fact, the concept of Good Governance includes a set of principles and policies that establish the framework for appropriate development by putting the emphasis on the requirements of transparency and accountability in the political, economic and social sectors as well as combating corruption, strengthening civil society organizations, protecting human rights and promoting policies to support education, health and the environment.

The concept of “Good Governance”, introduced in international relations by the World Bank, is supposed to be apolitical and non-ideological. However, this concept was historically linked to the wave of structural adjustment plans of the 1990s whose main objective was the disengagement of the State from the economic, financial and social sectors. Despite the endorsement of this concept by many politicians and academics, including Francis Fukuyama, who consider Good Governance as being the answer to a viable approach to sustainable development, others view this concept as linked to liberal policies that the international financial institutions wanted to impose on peoples around the world.

It must be acknowledged that there are different understandings of the concept of Good Governance, which for the few emphasizes the aspects related to the efficiency of the state action while for others, it focuses on the democratic legitimacy of the government decision and on the citizens’ commitment to take part in the decision-making process. This said, Good Governance is meaningless outside the concepts of the rule of law, democratic reform, and accountability, and transparency, protection of human rights and effective participation of civil society organizations as a leading force of development in public life. Good Governance is, above all, a set of parameters for designing, conducting and evaluating public policies in the context of a democratic government.

For this preliminary report on Good Governance in Tunisia, we have chosen to apply only three parameters: the rule of law (Section I), participation (Section II) and transparency (Section III) and this in anticipation of a more comprehensive report which will cover the other criteria.

SECTION I: THE RULE OF LAW

The rule of law is meant to restrict the arbitrary actions of governments on the basis of certain requirements such as the separation of powers, commitment to protect civil rights and the control of the constitutionality of laws. The rule of law also implies the independence of the judicial power.

At this level of analysis, it is useful to explore the extent to which the Tunisian constitutional process has shown respect for the rule of law?

On January 14th, 2011 after the sudden departure of the former president of the Republic, Article 56 of the constitution, giving power to the Prime Minister in the event of the temporary incapacity of the president to carry out his duties, was invoked, only to be abandoned a few hours later in favor of Article 57 appealed to in the case of total vacancy for cause of death, resignation or
total incapacity of the president, opening the door for anticipated presidential and legislative elections. Article 56, which stipulates that in the event of temporary incapacity the president may delegate his powers by decree, was politically incorrect and morally reprehensible.

The Presidential speech on March 3rd, 2011 by the interim president was a decisive turning point in the transitional process. Formalized by the decree-law 14 of March 23rd, 2011, it marked a genuine break with the existing legal order. It is important to point out that other alternatives were available to the Tunisian people at the time including the revision of the original text of the constitution of 1959 and the maintenance of constitutional institutions such as Parliament and the Constitutional Council while democratizing their modes of operation. The election, on October 23rd, 2011 of a National Constituent Assembly was a step in the process of democratic transition.

Subsection 1: The Pre-Constituent Phase or the Phase of Consensual Legitimacy

During this phase, and despite numerous turbulences caused particularly by the social and economic crises, political life seemed to return to a phase of institutional normalization. This institutional normalization took place thanks in particular to the use of article 28, which allowed the interim president of the Republic to fill the normative gap caused by the dissolution of the two legislative chambers. Accordingly, several acts have contributed to the legal framework of this phase. First, the enactment of the Decree-law on the provisional organization of the public powers of March 23rd, 2011 (A), then the establishment of new institutions in support of the democratic transition (B)

1 - The Provisional Organization of the Public Powers

The decree-law 14 of March 23rd, 2011 is the founding act of the new constitutional order. It organizes the provisional operation of the State's institutions, “until a National Constituent Assembly, elected by universal suffrage..... takes its functions” (Article 1). It introduces a transitional political regime in which the executive power is entrusted to a Head of State who legislates through decree-laws and a Head of Government who carries out the executive function. Despite the absence of electoral legitimacy, the new Prime Minister was able to garner support from most political forces thanks to his charisma.

The decree-law officially dissolved the Chamber of Deputies, the House of Councilors, the Constitutional Council and the Economic and Social Council (Article 2). It redefined the legislative power now performed by the Head of State after deliberation within the Council of Ministers (Articles 4 and 5). The executive power was granted to an interim president assisted by a provisional government whose members cannot stand for election to the National Constituent Assembly (Articles 6 to 15). This text contains 19 articles. According to the constitutional literature, it is a “small constitution”. It incorporates the principles set out by the constitution of June 1st, 1959 such as the free universal suffrage, the sovereignty of the people, and the separation of powers. As an act of provisional organization of public powers, the decree-law of March 23rd, 2011 was a substitution to the 1959 Constitution.

2 - The Establishment of Independent Public Authorities

The existence of independent authorities generally expresses the desire to guarantee some independence of decision making from the executive. That is why they are placed outside the administrative hierarchy.

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1 Paragraph 5 of article 28 of the Tunisian Constitution of 1959 stipulates that: “The Chamber of Deputies and the House of Counselors can empower the president of the Republic, for a limited period and in view of a specific object, to issue decree-laws ... “.
These authorities include:

- The High Authority for the Achievement of the Goals of the Revolution, Political Reform and Democratic Transition (the High Authority);
- The National Commission on the Investigation of Corruption;
- The National Commission on the Investigation of the abuses recorded during the period from December 17th, 2010 up to the attainment of its objectives;
- The Independent National Institution for the Reform of the Sector of Information and Communication;
- The Independent High Authority for Elections (Instance Supérieure Indépendante Electorale, ISIE).

We will discuss only authorities that put forward the new rules of the political game; namely, the High Authority and the ISIE

a – The High Authority

This authority was created with the mission of initiating the necessary reforms toward democratic transition. It is, therefore, responsible for studying the legislative texts related to the political organization and to suggest reforms in order to achieve the goals of the revolution related to the democratic process. Originally a simple commission of experts whose appointment did not respond to the criteria previously defined, the High Authority transformed itself into a political organ for deliberation, a “mini parliament” by the effect of the decree-law of February 18th, 2011. It was also put in a position to give advice to the government.

Despite being challenged externally with respect to its formation (which dates back to the last days of the Ben Ali era), on the terms of the appointment of its members, and undermined from within by ideological conflicts especially with the withdrawal of Ennahdha (Islamist party in power), the High Authority gave the country the founding texts of its democratic process:

- The decree-law of May 10th, 2011 on the election of the National Constituent Assembly where the principles of universal, free, direct and secret suffrage, of the parity in the nomination of candidates, and ballot of lists to the proportional representation were maintained. In addition, it laid out the ineligibility of any person who had participated in previous governments (with the exception of those proven to have never joined the Democratic Constitutional Rally), of any person who had responsibilities within the party as well as of the ones who have sought the nomination of the deposed president in 2014 (Article 15).
- The decree-law 87 of September 24th, 2011 on political parties which repealed the earlier Act of 1988, a draconian law on the basis of which political authoritarianism was built.

Considering the impact that this High Authority could have had on the quality of the political debate and on future choices that could have provided a clearer vision of the constituent process, lingering questions remain as to the actual role played by this institution. It is true that the appointment process of its members as well as its prerogatives represented an impediment to its proper functioning, yet, it would have arguably been wiser to allow the true protagonists of the revolution, the youth especially, to participate in the decision making process within this authority and to be finally reconciled with politics.

b – The High Authority for Elections

The transitional process required the removal of the Interior Ministry from the supervision of the elections in order to avoid the excesses
of the past. In this sense, the High Authority for Elections was conceived to be a genuine independent public authority, with legal personality and financial autonomy\(^2\) in order to lead the electoral operation. It was responsible for the registration of voters on the electoral lists, of the management and control of the validity of the nominations, for the organization and control of the litigations related to the election campaign, the ballots counting and the writing of minutes, the announcement of the results, the examination of the appeals, as well as the drafting of a final report on the elections. At this stage, we can only note the lack of experience of the members of this Authority.

Despite the many obstacles encountered and the excesses which stained its action, the High Authority for Elections managed to achieve the objective for which it was created: the holding of free elections on October 23rd, 2011 ushering in the second phase of the democratic transition.

Subsection 2: The Post-Constituent Phase of Electoral Legitimacy

The second phase of the transitional process began with the election of a National Constituent Assembly on October 23rd, 2011. This election ushered in a new era for Tunisia. As a direct emanation of the will of the people expressed through universal suffrage, the NCA was a genuine constituent power.

The first article of the decree-law relates to the election of the NCA\(^3\) and stipulates that the members of the Constituent Assembly are elected by universal suffrage, in free, direct and secret elections and this is in accordance with the principles of democracy, equality, pluralism and transparency\(^4\). These elections, which witnessed an exceptional popular turnout of 51.9 %, were the first to be organized in an environment of total freedom. They resulted in a pluralistic Constituent Assembly where no one party holds the absolute majority. In fact, the NCA cannot be truly democratic if it does not reflect as accurately as possible the diversity of Tunisian society and the different political tendencies in it. For this purpose, the country’s main political forces agreed on the election mode according to proportional list with the strongest remaining minority groups. This choice was dictated by the need to ensure a fair representation of the country’s political forces according to their respective popular weight and to give the chance to minor political parties to win seats in the NCA.

The main mission of the National Constituent Assembly was to lay the foundations for the new institutions of the State through the drafting of a democratic Constitution that meets the goals of the revolution, including the consecration of the principles of freedom and the foundations of the rule of law based on the separation of powers and the respect of fundamental human rights.

The outcome of the elections was an assembly operating as a parliament with a ruling majority and an opposition. However, this configuration of the Assembly is not entirely consistent with the idea that, amid reconstruction, only consensus must prevail. The resulting Constitution must not reflect the image of a ruling majority or a minority in the opposition, but should express the wishes of all the people regardless of their political orientations. On December 2nd, 2011, the ad hoc commission for the provisional organization of public powers submitted the final draft of the provisional organization of public powers to the Speaker of the NCA, who submitted it, in turn, to the plenary session for debate. This text, called “a constituent law,” was rightly described as the “small Constitution.” It is composed of a preamble and 28 articles. What are the main characteristics of this text?

It is, as its name indicates, a “constituent” law\(^5\).

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\(^2\) Article 1 and 3 of the decree-law No. 2011-27 of the April 18, 2011 on the establishment of a higher independent authority for elections.

\(^3\) Decree-Law No. 2011-35 of May 10, 2011 related to the election of a National Constituent Assembly.

\(^4\) Article 1.

\(^5\) Constituent Law No. 6-2011 of December 16, 2011.
Firstly, it emanates from a constituent power; secondly, it creates and organizes the political powers under the head of state and the head of government, on the one hand, and the NCA, on the other. It is also a provisional law and therefore limited in time. Its duration expires with the ratification of the new Constitution. In fact, most provisional Constitutions are enacted with a view to adopt a final Constitution. These Constitutions are thus at once provisional in their duration and transitory as they allow the passage from one Constitution to another. This act organizes the public powers. The purpose of any provisional organization of public powers is to limit excesses of power. From this perspective, the organization has to ensure a certain balance in the division of powers between the different branches of government, particularly the executive and the legislative.

In addition to the preamble, the law includes 28 articles distributed as follows:

Chapter 1 includes article 2 and lists the powers of the National Constituent Assembly, namely the constituent function, the legislative function and the control of the government activity. Chapter 2 is limited to article 3 and describes the constituent function regarding the adoption of the Constitution. Chapter 3 describes the legislative function in articles 4 to 8. Chapter 4 is devoted to the executive power. It is divided into four sections; the first section (articles 9 to 14) describes the powers of the President of the Republic, the second (articles 15 to 19) is related to the head of government, the third is limited to article 20 and deals with the “conflicts of jurisdiction.” As to the fourth section, it is dedicated to the local public authorities. Generally, the powers of the Constituent Assembly are in competition with those powers entrusted to the executive power and more specifically to the head of government (at the expense of the president of the Republic.) Chapter 5 deals with the judiciary. Articles 22 and 23 stipulate that the judicial power shall be autonomous; in addition, a provisional court replacing the Higher Judiciary Council will be created according to an organic law which will set its composition and functions. As to the Administrative Tribunal, it will continue to exercise its powers in accordance with the laws and regulations in force. Chapter 7 deals with transitional justice while chapters 8 and 9 deal with the Central Bank and final regulations. It is worth noting that on the quantitative level, the organization of political powers has benefited from the lion’s share of the document at the expense of the constituent function which seems to be relegated to the background.

Two findings emerge from the reading of the constituent legislation related to the provisional organization of public powers: It makes the government the emblematic figure of the political regime, and does not limit the duration of the mandate of the National Constituent Assembly. In a democracy, any mandate is limited in its objectives and in its duration; however, we do not know when and how much time it will take for this new Constitution to be drafted and ratified. Why did the constituents decline to include the duration of the NCA in the law on the provisional organization of the public powers? It would have been appropriate, in our opinion, to include duration of approximately one year and leave the door open for a possible extension if necessary. Unlike the 1956 NCA whose mission was to set the foundations of the new state, the main mission of the current Assembly is to draft a new Constitution that reforms the already existing state, which does not justify the prolonged duration of the Assembly, especially given that a pre-election commitment to limit the duration of the Assembly to one year was signed by most of the parties represented in the assembly, and another moral commitment was made to the electorate who voted on October 24th, 2011 for a one-year NCA as indicated explicitly in the decree-law convening these constituents. However, the time factor might be overlooked if a balanced, non-partisan Constitution adapted to the realities of the country and the aspirations of the people is promulgated.
In June 2013, the National Constituent Assembly made public the third draft of the Constitution which to be debated in a plenary session. Although the revised project marks a significant step forward in terms of rights and freedoms, it nevertheless contains some anomalies particularly with regard to the contradictions of some of its articles regarding the character, both religious and civil, of the State, the imbalance that persists between the two heads of the executive in favor of the head of government, the absence of checks and balances, and the ambiguity which affects the control of the constitutionality of laws. Holding elections and appointing a government whose members emerged from these elections would contribute to the restoration of the rule of law and to the achievement of the objectives of the Revolution: transitional justice and reconciliation, transparency, participation, an independent justice, independent media, a democratic Constitution, the appointment of an independent body for the preparation of new elections, ensuring economic recovery, improving the living conditions of Tunisians and alleviating political tension. Yet these tasks seem to be increasingly arduous. The government is incapable of being in control. A situation of lawlessness and violence and a real war against terrorism seems to characterize the current phase.

The real objectives of the revolution namely dignity, freedom and employment seem to be relegated to the backburner in favor of other issues which have never been of any concern to the Tunisian people during their entire history. In fact, until the elections of October 23rd the debate about religion was almost absent within the existing institutions. The revolution was conducted by young unemployed graduates, young bloggers and internet users, who, by modern means of communication, were successful in mobilizing the street. They were mentored and encouraged by the UGTT, the Association of Tunisian Judges, parties of the left, the Tunisian League of Human Rights and feminist movements. However, the elections demonstrated a crucial difference between the “people of the revolution” and “the people of the election” who put their trust in Ennahdha Party. In fact, at the end of a relatively short period, between the departure of Ben Ali and the elections of October 23rd, the Ennahdha movement quickly occupied a prominent position in politics and assumed the leading position. The Islamist party managed to mobilize voters and formed a coalition government with the CPR and Ettakatol, whilst retaining its status as the actual decision maker.

Since the victory of the Islamist party, Tunisia has seen the emergence of “Salafist” groups which has increasingly led to a dangerous polarization of the intellectual, cultural and political life in the country. Now, Tunisians see the emergence of an “Islamized society” which seems to replace what they used to refer to as “the Arab-Muslim legacy”, with its tolerance and modernity that used to unite Tunisians. The dilemma of Ennahdha, regarding governance, stems from the fact that the Islamist party must reconcile its capacity to manage the political affairs without radicalism in order to guarantee Western financial support, and the satisfaction of its very conservative electoral base. Yet at the economic and social levels, and despite promises made in their electoral campaign regarding job creation and economic growth, the Islamists are faced with the realities of the daily management of public affairs and with the difficulty of assuming their role as rulers and this systematically affects the quality of their governance.

In this respect, it is interesting to note that politicking has often had the priority over the need to make appropriate decisions in the areas directly affecting the daily lives of Tunisians. This led to the emergence of secondary issues with a religious connotation to the detriment of the economic and social national priorities. This approach will create a feeling of confusion which will instill doubt among the economic actors, the ones capable of restarting the various vital sectors of the economy. The constitutional debate within the NCA illustrates this situation. The drafting of the Constitution is being delayed because
of debates held around secondary issues such as the Charia being the source of legislation, particularly with the new meaning conferred by article 141 of the draft Constitution to article 1 regarding the rights of women, the freedom of conscience, opinion and expression. These debates, revolving around personal convictions, have led to the estrangement of Tunisians from politics. As a result, the criteria of inclusion and participation have experienced a real decline, affecting the legitimacy of the decisions taken regarding the draft Constitution.

The question emerges whether it would have been more sensible to align the principles underlying these questions with the provisions of the United Nations covenants on human rights ratified by Tunisia in order to avoid this offset between the governors and the governed. In addition to these issues related to the religious or civilian status of the State, the aspect which severely handicapped government action is that of the emergence of violence in Tunisian political life.

In all societies, only the State has a monopoly on the use of force. Moreover, according to Max Weber, this monopolization of “legitimate” violence is one of the most important attributes of the state’s sovereignty. The use of force must be exercised only by the official authorities within the framework of the rule of law, in order to guarantee respect for the individual, public freedoms, and the physical and mental integrity of citizens. In Tunisia, this is no longer the case. Violence is carried out by groups, often unstructured, who impose threats and violence by force. Trafficking of all kinds, mainly cross-border trafficking in goods, narcotics and weapons, also constitutes an additional factor of destabilization. Uncontrolled actors have been attracted by the social and economic fragility of Tunisia. Unemployment and poverty have become the ideal breeding ground of Salafist preachers calling for the use of violence to impose their ideology and benefit from the disorder. The dramatic extension of the “non-State” territory and the emergence of violent gangs and networks are dangerous for civil peace, for the security, the confidence in the future of a democratic Tunisia, not only of the citizens, but also of investors who could give a new dynamism to the economy and to the job market.

The violence of politicized and radical groups has undoubtedly hindered the economic recovery, threatened the transitional process and undermined the rule of law. Violence has taken on several forms, such assaulting artists and academics or attacking bars and brothels. The undeclared objective of this wave of violence by these groups is to act as a substitute for the State and impose their own interpretation of religion whose main goal is to undermine the fundamental freedoms of the citizens. The attack on the Embassy of the United States of America and the destruction and looting of the Tunis American Cooperative School on September 14th, 2012, have both considerably influenced national and international opinion.

Despite the legal arsenal at its disposal, and given its permissive attitude toward these groups, the government could not galvanize public opinion to obtain support for its actions, thus, losing an opportunity to put the principle of participation, as a strategy of combating violence, into practice. The government, while condemning this violence, admitted it was unprepared, but also blamed the ineffectiveness of its action on the bureaucracy. This climate of violence and impunity is highlighted by the assassination of Chokri Belaid on February 6th, 2013 and of Mohamed Brahimi on July 25th, 2013.

Since the revolution, Tunisian judiciary found itself at the crossroads, torn between the interference
of the executive under the former regime, and its yearning for independence. Despite the increasingly active role of the judiciary unions, the independence of judges remains one of the essential conditions to the establishment of a judicial system that embodies the foundations of a democratic State. It has to be noted, that both the executive branch and the NCA, have consistently interfered in the justice, endangering the principle of the separation of powers. For example, the case of Sami Fehri, a known media figure, illustrates interference on the part of the executive. In fact, on the eve of the Appeal Court’s meeting to decide on his release, a new arrest warrant was rapidly issued against him, leaving no doubt about an intervention by the Ministry of Justice. Another case which received considerable attention is related to the rapper “Weld 15” who was sentenced to two years in jail for a song criticizing the police. Although the rapper’s insulting words are to be condemned, it is unacceptable, from a legal and moral point of view, that a post-revolutionary justice system sentences an artist to prison for exercising his right to freedom of expression and opinion.

The above-mentioned cases are examples of the interference in the judicial system on behalf of the executive branch. These cases could have been avoided if transitional justice had been put in place. Today, it appears more and more urgent to instate political and legal instruments which guarantee the independence of the judiciary. The rule of law can be achieved only through an independent judiciary that represents a true monitoring power for the promotion and protection of human rights.

SECTION II: PARTICIPATION
The principle of participation in government implies the inclusion of all relevant parties in the decision-making process directly or through legitimate institutions that represent their interests. Such a wide participation is based on the freedom of expression and association. The principle of participation remains closely linked to the concept of participatory democracy.

Participatory democracy allows the involvement of citizens in public decision-making processes, thus filling the deficiencies created by representative democracy. The disparity between politicians’ promises during campaign periods and their actions once in power can lead to a feeling of incomprehension and even rejection of politics by the public; participatory democracy can reverse these feelings and allow citizens direct control of their government’s actions. A major dilemma of political systems thus is to reconcile participatory democracy with rule of the majority.

Compared to representative democracy and direct democracy, participatory democracy is presented as a mixed system in which the people delegate power to representatives who propose and vote on laws but the public still retains legitimate and effective outlets for voicing its opinions.

Participatory democracy is not only a pillar of good governance but also an appropriate framework for the establishment of the principles of fairness and equality of opportunity. By allowing individuals to make their voices heard, express their needs, and participate in decision-making, participatory democracy allows each citizen, regardless of standing, to have an equal opportunity to effect change.

Here, the question becomes whether the Tunisian constitutional process has this principle of participation into account. Initially, the Tunisian constitutional process drew its strength from the broad participation of citizens. But with time, the involvement of Tunisians in the political process and their interest in the work of the NCA weakened. This new situation is due to the lack of mastery of the topics submitted to the constituents for examination. In addition, the debates of the ANC have often suffered from suspended sessions and significant delays in the processing of fundamental issues for the functioning of the government such as the discussion and adoption of the State budget.
high rate of absenteeism in the NCA led to public disappointment\(^8\).

If one adds to this the clear trend in the NCA to give priority to legislative issues related to the daily operation of the government over its primary task which consists of drafting the Constitution, one can understand the alienation and the disinterest of the Tunisian people towards the NCA\(^9\).

Constitutional experts as well as Civil Society organizations were not involved in the drafting of the Constitution. Despite training sessions by experts from international civil society groups that benefited Tunisian NGOs, and the relevant input of various conferences organized in order to improve and enrich the writing of the Constitution, the constituents, invoking their electoral legitimacy, opted to disregard the proposals made on behalf civil society. This position of exclusion and indifference of the government led to the protests in Siliana, during which citizens who were demonstrating peacefully were harshly repressed, consequently shedding a negative light on the image of the government, which was perceived to reject the principle of popular participation in deciding the future of regional development.

In addition to this, the new appointments made by the Troika government were based on party or family criteria\(^10\) rather than merit. At the regional level, the appointment of governors was also made on a partisan basis which created movements of protest, some of which led to the eviction of the governor by the population.\(^11\)

The Ennahdha party often influenced the appointments of the members of special delegations that temporarily replace the City Councils along party lines. An exceptional opportunity to promote an equitable participation of citizens in decision making at the communal level was thus missed. It is therefore not incorrect to note that the transitional governments have not effectively strengthened local democracy and have kept centralization as a mode of governance, even when it comes to decisions-making at the regional or local level. The criterion of participation is essential in any democratic society because good governance is built on local governance. It is to be noted in this respect that the NCA launched an appeal to civil society in order to receive suggestions regarding the Constitution. A number of independent experts, associations and representatives of civil society, academics and even national and foreign politicians formulated pre-projects, suggestions and even criticisms. Unfortunately, this consultation process led nowhere and the proposals were not genuinely considered.

Despite the above-mentioned deficiencies, the constitutional process has seen forms of participation that would be interesting to quote here. Under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Rights and Transitional Justice, a national dialogue was held under which non-governmental organizations, associations and political parties took an active part in the drafting of the law on transitional justice. Today, the country is undergoing the largest political crisis since January 14th, because the criterion

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8 For example, the Association “Al Bawsala” has published its report on the activities of the ANC during the period 17 January to February 23, 2013. According to this report, during this period, the ANC has held 22 plenary meetings for consideration and discussion of law relating to the creation of the ISIE. The average attendance is 90 elected per meeting. The largest number of presences is of 123 elected, 3 meetings have been marked by the presence of less than 50 elected and a meeting with less than 40 members. The average attendance is 41% the largest rate of presence being of 44% only. For more details Cf. http://tuniscope.com/index.php/article/222363/actualites/politique/ministres-deputes-absents-034416#.UnRk--KLJSY

9 Already in October 2012, SIGMA Council, in collaboration with the Maghreb newspaper, published its political barometer. 70% of Tunisians do not have confidence in the partisan institutions, 60% of respondents confirm that they no longer believe in the NCA, and believe that the latter is not ready to take their demands into consideration. While 55% say they do not trust the current government. For more details, see The Maghreb of October 09, 2012.

10 The most striking example is the appointment of Ennahda leader’s son-in-law minister of foreign affairs.

11 This is the case of the eviction of the governor of Kebili Mr. Salah SEBAI in May 2012.
of participation was not taken into account. This crisis began by sit-ins and demonstrations conducted by constituents as well as thousands of citizens at Bardo, calling for the departure of the government and the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. This resulted in a national dialogue which we hope will provide a way out of the crisis.

SECTION III: TRANSPARENCY
The concept of transparency in governance is based upon the free flow of information. People can have direct access to processes and institutions and the information available should be sufficient to comprehend and act upon the issues. Transparency empowers citizens: as they become informed about the action of the government, officials and institutions are accordingly held accountable.

The French codified this principle in article 15 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789: “Society has the right to hold accountable any public servant”. The Americans also shared similar ideas. In 1822, James Madison noted in a letter to William T. Barry, then lieutenant governor of Kentucky, “A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who seek to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.”

Thus, if the basis of the principle of transparency is citizenship, transparency cannot be a choice for the government; it is an obligation. This means, in fact, that the citizen has the right to reasonable control of the administration to the extent where it can assert its own vision in the management of public affairs. Transparency is not a goal in itself; it is a means to an end, with rule of law and participation, to achieve an “open government.”

Can it be said that the constitutional process in Tunisia has respected the principle of transparency?

After the removal of the former regime, the transitional government tried to be transparent to the public through press conferences organized on a regular basis by the head of the government. These press conferences highlighted the governmental actions conducted in various fields of policy and allowed the citizens to keep an eye on the choices made by the government. However, the policy of the Troika’s government with regard to appointments within the administration was not based on merit, but on party affiliation or family connections. According to the statistics collected by the Tunisian Union for the Public Service and the Neutrality of the Administration (UTSPNA), 90% of appointments in the public sector from December 2011 to February 2013 were made by the government on the basis of partisan, regional or family connections. According to the same source, 87% of appointments in the public sector were made in favor of the Troika (Ennahdha, CPR and Ettakatol), 93% of which were in favor of Ennahdha supporters.

The UTSPNA also revealed that out of 212 appointments in the public administration, only 114 were published in the Official Journal of the Republic of Tunisia (JORT), which represents a violation of the rule of publication – one of the foundations of Tunisian administrative law.

Figures in the JORT of 2012 show that only about 30 appointments either with the rank of minister or secretary of state were revealed. Several appointments have not been published in the JORT, or they were published after lengthy delays and even with errors:

9 appointments with the rank of minister, including:

- 4 appointed by the President, 2 of whom quit

12 See http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch18s35.html

• 5, including 2 counselors, appointed by the Prime Minister

20 appointments with the rank of Secretary of State:

• 8 counselors (7 in the prime minister's office and 1 in the presidency)

• One appointment was not published in the JORT: that of Samir Ben Amor, counselor to the presidency

• The last appointment published in the JORT is that of the cabinet director of the NCA Speaker, whose effective date of employment is 08/12/2011; the appointment, however, was published in JORT almost a year later.

The opacity adopted for governmental appointments can be considered a breach in the application of the principle of transparency, one of the pillars of good governance. However, during the selection of the members of the ISIE, the nation's election commission, the principle of transparency was respected more fully. In fact, the sorting of the nominations was subject to a selection grid previously adopted and published. The whole process was open to the control of the citizens and the media.

The criterion of transparency should be seen as a prerequisite to the monitoring of government action because it ensures equity and equality of all citizens in the access to positions of responsibility. This monitoring system will only be effective if the criterion of transparency becomes an integral part of an approach to the management of public affairs. This approach must respect the parameters of good governance within the context of a national consensus, which is not limited only to the aspects of political governance but must necessarily encompass economic and financial issues as well.
CHAPTER II: ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE IN TUNISIA

Today, in a Tunisia amid political, legal, economic and social changes, the rules of good governance and transparency must not only be strengthened at all levels, but also mentioned in the new constitution and provided with mechanisms that ensure their implementation.

This chapter will discuss the economic component of Governance and highlight the problems which seem to represent barriers to the economic recovery and also to democracy.

It should be noted that for a long time governance in Tunisia has suffered from several shortcomings particularly in the economic and financial areas. Some laws were adopted (including the law on financial safety passed in 2005) on which recommendations were made by several institutions of regulations in order to remedy this situation. Flaws are noticed particularly in the functioning of regulatory organs within the State, and regarding ethics and transparency. Conflicts of interest, partisan management of state affairs, the lack of separation of powers, the irresponsibility and complacency of some actors, all of these show the magnitude of the damage incurred.

SECTION I: THE STATE OF ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE IN TUNISIA

In a post-revolutionary Tunisia, where people are aspiring for a political, social and economic life based on good governance, we are experiencing a transitional phase full of challenges, obstacles and ambiguity where democratization requires increased vigilance on the part of various stakeholders, including civil society organizations.

At the economic and social levels, the outbreak of the uprising of young people in Sidi Bouzid in December 2010 clearly revealed the governance deficit that characterizes the Tunisian economy. In fact, Tunisia paid heavily for bad governance. Corruption damaged the administration and widened social and regional inequalities. In addition, the deterioration of the business climate discouraged foreign investment. Public companies, run in an autocratic way, opened the door to all kinds of economic skidding, and banks whose assets are riddled with non-performing loans and who looked toward adopting the transparency requirements of Bale 2, whereas these requirements have already moved to Bale 3. In short, the governance deficit impacted the economic development in Tunisia negatively and contributed to the loss of 1 to 2 points of annual growth.

Subsection 1: The Elements of the Economic Good Governance

With the advent of the revolution of January 14th 2011, we estimated that the time was historically favorable to build, create, and adopt the bases of the new Tunisian economy. This necessarily goes through the introduction of standards of good governance at all levels:

At the level of administrations: good governance is an essential condition to generate trust and a genuine social contract between the administrators and the administered, a favorable business climate for domestic and foreign investors, and equity at the level of the management of the job market.

14 See the reports of the IMF, the World Bank, the BAD and OCDE from 2000 to 2011


At the level of the financial sector: transparency helps to improve the quality of bank assets, financial services, and ensures the efficiency of the financial market.

At the level of companies: a separation between control and management, an efficient management of the various social bodies, and the existence of an independent administrator in compliance with international standards\(^\text{17}\) are guarantees of transparency and good governance.

The rule of law is necessary to eradicate the sources of nepotism and abuse of power. But, the development of a culture of good governance in the Tunisian economic system proves to be decisive in allowing businesses and banks to catch up with the international standards of performance and quality of service.

Where are we today from all these requirements? Are we more transparent and more efficient? What are the measures that have been taken and what are the obstacles? How can we assess governance in relation to the economic and financial sectors after more than 30 months into the Tunisian revolution?

As of October 2013 Tunisia suffers from abuse of power and corruption, which are affecting different sectors of activities of the national economy. The banks and the financial sector are primarily at stake, and their governance is faulty in many ways: dysfunctional audit committees, lack of reliable reporting systems, poor distribution of tasks, centralization of power, unreliable and irrelevant financial and accounting communication, etc. All these elements ensure that Tunisian banks are beginning to lose the confidence of their customers, their employees and all their stakeholders.

Subsection 2: The Current Economic Situation in Tunisia

Tunisia’s current economic situation remains difficult today with an account deficit that is reaching 7.4% in 2013, a growth rate of -2.2% during 2011 and relatively low growth rates in 2012 and 2013 evaluated at an average of 3 per cent at most. In addition, there has been a decrease in activity with the constant pressures on the balance of payments and the maintenance of the current account deficit at a high level during the first eight months of the year 2013, at 5.4% of GDP, against 5.7% a year earlier and this is due to the high foreign trade deficit\(^{18}\).

Overall, for the year 2013, the recorded introductory results denote a slowdown of the economic activity with a decline in domestic demand, thereby affecting the pace of exports and resulting in a trade balance deficit in September 2013 of 8 billion dinar. Similarly, the pace of exports has notably declined for mechanical and electrical engineering industries, as well as the industries of textiles, clothing, leather and footwear.

In addition, direct foreign investment has declined (-0.7% in the first eight months of 2013), the surplus on the balance of capital and financial transactions decreased to approximately 790 MDT, and the pressures on the exchange rate of the dinar has persisted. In relation to the evolution of economic and financial indicators, a decline of 7.7% to the euro is registered since the beginning of the year and up to September 20th, 2013, and of 5.4% in relation to the U.S. dollar. Banks have experienced an increased demand for liquidity during, during the month of September 2013 and for the fifth consecutive month. These and other elements have impacted the overall balance of payments.

It is worth noting however, that the net assets in foreign currency are maintained at an acceptable level, reaching 11,291 MDT or the equivalent of

\(^{17}\) An independent Administrator is an administrator free of conflicts of interest, which has no significant participation and no function or managerial wage within the company or any of its branches. Independent Administrators are seen today in developed countries and major institutions, as being the protagonists in the area of governance.

\(^{18}\) Press Release of the board of directors of the Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT) meeting of September 25, 2013
103 days of imports on September 25th, 2013 against 9,983 MDT and 98 days compared to the same time last year.

Inflation remains high, reaching 6.4% and 5% excluding fresh food products.

However, the biggest concern remains the liquidity crisis. Thus we note a decrease of term deposits of 7.2%, compared to the same period last year. The Central Bank of Tunisia had to intervene by injecting an average daily budget of 3.4 billion dinars since last year. The average interest rate has experienced an increase of 3.73% since the beginning of April 2013 against 3.48% in March and 3.42% in February. One of the most alarming indicators is also the value of the Tunisian dinar which is currently at 2.3 in relation to the euro and 1.7 in relation to the US dollar.

Section II: Toward Cohesive Economic Decisions and a Better Management of the Post-Revolution Situation

These elements will certainly affect the level of investments, which may not be “boosted” without more favorable interest rates, political stability, more security and an improved infrastructure.

At the macro level, the analysis must take into account a set of parameters that come back into play in the optimization of the political decision. In fact, today, it may be obvious that austerity measures would be the only solution to “save what we can”. This policy which advocates the increase of taxation and cuts on public expenditure for the purpose of reducing the deficit would be justified at this time in Tunisia. In order to control inflation, the government needs to adjust the wages and prevent pay rise movements which can cause a general rise in prices and thus lead to a vicious circle.

Austerity measures should be taken on the medium and long terms, through the restoration of public accounts and the balance of payments, thus promoting confidence in the economy, ensuring the stability of the exchange rate, and increasing investment and direct foreign investment. In the long term, the economic competitiveness would be improved, which, as a result, will boost job creation (especially in the private sector). But the questions to be asked today are: will Tunisians be ready for the sacrifices in the short term? Will they accept wage decreases? In addition, the expectations of the economic operators are focused rather on the recovery that must occur as soon as possible and the resumption of activities which must be perceptible in the first half 2014. Finally, problems of governance in Tunisia are to be dealt with also in relation to some institutions that are considered inevitable in terms of public governance.

Subsection 1: The Role of the Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT)

The Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT), whose functions include issuing money and regulating the banking system and the economic and financial life, suffers from a few problems of governance. These are seen not only in the conflicts of interest which characterize its board of directors, but also in its communication and its relations with the governmental authorities. Arguably, the BCT should strengthen its autonomy to ensure more impartiality and competence in its decisions. Yet, it is not certain if it has enough levers today to be able to reframe the economic policies of the government.

There is an urgent need, in our opinion, to reform the BCT toward better economic and financial governance, giving it all the favorable conditions in order to properly exercise its missions. Thus, we suggest first that those in charge of the BCT, the governor and the deputy governor, be elected by a college of directors representing all the stakeholders having interests and deep links with the BCT. These same administrators must be appointed in an elected General Assembly which would be the supreme body of the BCT. In addition, it is important that the board of directors of the BCT be independent so that they can plan
the monetary policies of the State in conformity with the objectives and obligations in view of preserving the fundamental and vital balance of the nation. The governor would be responsible for ensuring the adoption and implementation of this monetary policy under the supervision of the board of directors. It is also recommended that the BCT be involved in the design of economic policies and in accompanying policy makers while giving them the additional required information and the necessary expertise in monetary policies. Finally, the BCT must strengthen its watch on the running of the banking sector, while leaving room to different institutions so that they can evolve with confidence following well-structured strategic development plans in time.

Subsection 2: The Issue of Expropriated Companies

At the heart of governance in Tunisia is the question of expropriated companies and confiscated property belonging to the former ruling families. This issue indicates the extent of bad governance practices in Tunisia, even after a revolution. To this day, it is difficult to have access to clear transparent information related to the management of the expropriated companies.

Out of 118 expropriated companies, more than a hundred are still managed by the State. According to evidence identified by our experts and our collaborators in the field, irregularities were noted in the management of these companies. Worse still, a holding company was launched and grafted onto another expropriated company and the whole forming today Al Karama Holding Company. This company, the largest and most important in the country, brings together all of the other expropriated companies and their assets. Al Karama Holding is responsible for managing, and selling these companies for the benefit of the State. However, several signs of abuse of power and mismanagement of public funds appeared.

First, we notice an evident lack of transparency in this company’s accounts, its recruitment process, its management style, and the wage scale applied to its CEOs. Since it handles a huge heritage it will be unable to continue to grow in this climate of suspicion. It is therefore recommended that, among other things, the company’s operations and salary scale it applies to its officers be clarified and published.

Moreover, full transparency in the management of the expropriated companies with monitoring and supervision mechanisms for recovering these entities is in order. A more appropriate structure, equipped with a system of governance performance would be more capable and qualified to continue to manage the business and maximize sales for the good of the Tunisian State.

Finally, still on the economic front, we noted a lack of skills and experience, including young people in positions of administration and management of state affairs. This lack of skills is evident at all levels and hinders the smooth running of the country. Competence, integrity, independence and diligence must be the hallmarks of the next phase of transition and construction of the new economy.
CONCLUSION

Although this publication represents only a preliminary report, evidence of non-compliance with the parameters of good governance in the management of Tunisia’s public affairs is clear. Certainly, a government in transition cannot be expected to adopt an approach to governing for which it is not prepared. However, in Tunisia, at the origin of the problem is an absence of both genuine desire and a clear vision for the adoption of the principles of good governance. A substantial effort must be made by current officials to secure a better future for Tunisia. A new culture of good governance will have to be a primary objective as Tunisia transitions to a functioning democracy. Significant improvements in the system of governance remain to be undertaken at the political, economic, financial and cultural levels.

In our opinion, the criterion of participation may constitute a guarantee for the process of public decision-making to be effective. That is to say, broad-based participation of all stakeholders in economic, social and cultural activities underpins any real legitimacy of Tunisia’s rulers. We therefore recommend that the Tunisian government and public work together to:

1 - Organize an annual forum on good governance with the participation of all parties concerned, where future iterations of this annual report on good governance would be presented and elaborated upon;

2 - Create regional governance observatories with the mission of monitoring public decision-making at the regional and local levels. The monitors in those observatories should receive adequate training in evaluating the criteria of good governance;

3 - Establish an ethics committee for political appointments to key positions. It should be a non-partisan committee that will submit its report and recommendations to a parliamentary committee on good governance, who in turn should decide to act upon these recommendations within a period of 15 days;

4 - Empower the administrative bodies of inspection in order to become an instrument for the performance evaluation of public decision-makers;

5 - Put in place a system of economic and financial governance that guarantees an optimal management of state funds and ensures the implementation of efficient economic policies;

6 - Strengthen the mechanisms of economic and financial control by reforming the current legal framework and mobilizing independent skills;

7 - Revise the Central Bank statute in order to adapt it to the requirements of the new national and international economic and financial regulations;

8 - Revive the economy by ensuring sustainable growth rates which will mobilize investments from resources brought in through a fiscal reform adapted to the new challenges of the national economy.
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