Inside Tunisia's Power Struggle

How Islamists and Secularists Worked Together in an Arab Spring Success Story

By David B. Ottaway

After President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali's flight into exile in January 2011 amid a political uprising in Tunisia, an initial struggle for power ensued between secular leftists and moderates that quickly gave way to a far more serious and permanent one between all secularists and Islamists. Moderate secularists won the first round, and the defeat of the leftists proved critical in shaping the character and aims of the Tunisian revolution, limited to changing the system of governance and leaving intact the social and economic order of the ancien regime. Of far more enduring consequence, however, was the emergence of the Islamic Ennahda Movement as a major political force. Ennahda and the even more fundamentalist Salafis were destined to replace Tunisia's socialists and communists in the unfolding revolution, at least according to the secular narrative.

The first indication of the extremely moderate course the revolution was to take came over the question of who would serve as interim president and prime minister. Protesters rose up against an attempt by Ben Ali's prime minister, Mohamed Ghannouchi, to remain in office. Caravans of youth coming from Sidi Bouzid and other towns of the interior invaded the capital and occupied the Place de la Kasbah outside the government's offices twice. A protest of one hundred thousand people—the largest demonstration of the revolution after Ben Ali's departure—took place on February 25 to demand that Ghannouchi leave, and two days later he resigned. But then revolutionaries readily accepted another stalwart of the old ruling elite, Beji Caid Essebsi, to take Ghannouchi's place. Then 84-year-old Essebsi had served since independence in various high-ranking positions, first under independence leader President Habib Bourguiba and then under Ben Ali. He had been head of national security and alternatively the minister of the interior, defense, and foreign affairs as well as member of parliament. His

◁ Tunisians rallying for Nidaa Tounes party, Tunis, Dec. 21, 2014. *Anis Mili/Reuters*

saving grace in the eyes of the country's young revolutionaries was that he had retired from politics altogether and worked as a lawyer for seventeen years before resurfacing after Ben Ali's exile. This had given him at least the appearance of clean hands. More surprising was the lack of serious protest over Fouad Mebazaa becoming interim president for he, too, had been a stalwart of the ancien regime—president of the Chamber of Deputies (a house of parliament) and a politburo member of Ben Ali's ruling Constitutional Democratic Rally.

The group that emerged as the first main interim decision-making body carried the awkward title of the High Authority for the Achievement of the Revolution's Objectives, Democratic Transition, and Political Reform. It was established February 18, 2011, and became Tunisia's de facto parliament for the following nine months. During that period, Tunisians of all political shades took to the street by the thousands almost daily to make known their demands and grievances. More than once, the country appeared on the brink of chaos. That prospect was frightening enough to convince twenty-eight political parties, a collation of youth groups, and the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) to agree on the formation of the High Authority with the intent of countering and neutralizing the distrusted interim government led by ancien regime figures. Had Tunisia's power-hungry leftists had their way, the course of events might have taken on a far more radical and secular character.

A week after Ben Ali fled, a coterie of these leftists formed the 14th of January Front and called for an alternative interim government under its authority, according to Yadh Ben Achour, the law professor drafted to lead the High Authority. The front's bid for power was blocked by Prime Minister Ghannouchi just before he was forced to resign on February 27. Fearing a leftist coup, Ghannouchi had convinced these revolutionaries to merge with a group of more moderate lawyers and other activists he had appointed to draft political reforms in the immediate wake of Ben Ali's ouster. Ben Achour, a highly respected university constitutional law professor, agreed to chair the High Authority, which soon grew to 155 members. The radicals thus found themselves in the minority, sharing power with a coalition that included representatives from twelve Islamist and secular political parties; the country's twenty-four governorates; and sixteen human rights, women's rights, and prodemocracy groups, plus UGTT delegates. Added to the mix were seventy-two leading national political figures, the Union of Jobless University Graduates, two members of the family of Mohamed Bouazizi, whose self-immolation triggered the uprising, and a number of relatives from protesters killed by police during the uprising.

This unelected High Authority, its legitimacy repeatedly challenged by Islamists, had to make some difficult decisions to steer Tunisia safely through very turbulent political waters prior to elections for a Constituent Assembly in late October. Ben

Achour, who had had no previous experience in politics, found the task to be a jarring experience. The revolution had set loose "all kinds of irrational behavior." Tunisians had gone from "nothing to an excess of everything" in their ways of thinking, acting, and speaking out. He found his office flooded with proposals for a new constitution, including several from "mentally unstable" people urging everything from "technological politics" to rule by three co-presidents. Ben Achour said he was quickly reminded that "often revolutions fail."

The first issue the High Authority resolved was an election law, published on April 11. It included an unusual requirement, namely that half the candidates on each party's electoral list had to be women. No other Arab country before or since has had anything remotely resembling such an electoral provision, but all parties, including Ennahda, endorsed it. Tunisian commentators were quick to note that men were likely to be placed at the top of the list, ensuring many more male than female deputies. (This indeed turned out to be the case with only forty-nine women finally winning seats among the National Constituent Assembly's 217 deputies.)

The second issue before the High Authority proved far more controversial and almost upended the whole transitional process: whether to postpone elections for the assembly, initially scheduled for July. The debate immediately created battle lines between Islamists and secularists on some issues and between leftists and both Islamists and remnants of the ancien regime on others. Ennahda had been banned from Tunisian politics since the early 1990s. Even so, secularists immediately assumed it to be the best organized and financed party, and they wanted more time to organize, hoping to level the playing field. The High Authority found a pretext to postpone elections, namely that the government could not recruit the twenty-four thousand officials needed to oversee them by the original date of July 24. So they were postponed until October 23. The interim government, which had been left in the dark, at first rejected any postponement but then reversed itself. Ennahda was so disgruntled that it suspended its participation in the High Authority at the end of May, complaining that it had been excluded from the decision-making process and that the body had no legitimacy because it had not been elected.

By June 2011, an atmosphere of fear, suspicion, and deep distrust among contending factions had already settled across the political landscape. The interim government's first interior minister, Farhat Rajhi, who had been sacked in late March, warned on his Facebook page on May 4 that elements of the ancien regime were plotting a military coup should Ennahda win the elections. The military immediately made clear that it had no such intention, but by then suspicion of conspiracies led by either former regime figures or Ennahda supporters were rife. Secularists conjured up dire scenarios for Tunisia should the Islamists prevail at the polls, as was generally

expected. Few seemed reassured by Ennahda's Secretary-General Hamadi Jebali that his movement was committed to a "civil state" in which state and mosque would be kept strictly separated.

The Rise of Ennahda

Tunisia's Islamists had played no role in the uprising because Ennahda's leadership and most of its cadre were still in jail or exile. Only on January 30 did its leader, Rachid Ghannouchi, return from twenty-two years of living abroad, most of the time in London. He had been cofounder in 1981 of the Islamic Tendency, which had been renamed the Ennahda Movement eight years later. He had gained stature among Tunisia's Islamists similar to what Hassan Al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, held among those in Egypt. During his long years in exile, Ghannouchi had established himself as one of the Islamic world's most thoughtful moderate religious scholars. His movement had been tainted, however, by the August 1987 bombing of four hotels in Sousse and Monastir, which Ben Ali had used as a pretext to ban Ennahda from politics two years later.

Ghannouchi, then 69, received a tumultuous welcome from his followers upon his return, stirring fears among secularists that Ennahda was mostly likely to win Tunisia's first authentic democratic elections. A general amnesty of the three thousand political prisoners from the Ben Ali era, at least one-third of them Islamists, only came on February 19, more than a month after the president's exit. Ben Ali had allowed the even more conservative Salafis to organize and preach on the condition they stay out of politics. So they did, even during the uprising that overthrew their benefactor.

I had attended Ghannouchi's press conference on June 6, 2011, marking the thirtieth anniversary of Ennahda's founding, during which he said everything he could to assuage secularists' fears. "Tunisians on every street are breathing freedom and we intend to preserve that," he said. "We do not intend to be the only party and will not accept a one-party system ever again." Ennahda would "refuse to allow our mosques to be taken over by political parties to give political messages as the old regime did." There would be no going back, either, on the gains Tunisian women had made since independence. "Equal rights for women are guaranteed in the current constitution and we do not wish to change it. . . . You [women] have nothing to fear from us." Furthermore, Ennahda intended to form a coalition with secular parties for the October elections and afterward if it won, in forming a government.

Even in Ghannouchi's assessment at that point, the revolution was not going altogether in the right direction. The formation of political parties was out of hand, with eighty-three officially registered as of early June. The High Authority had lost its credibility and succumbed to "authoritarianism." Unidentified elements were working

to derail the revolution by postponing elections "perhaps indefinitely." Ghannouchi was referring to a proposal that had been put forth by seventeen secular parties, some associated with the ancien regime, suggesting that instead of electing a constituent assembly Tunisians should hold a referendum approving the existing 1959 constitution with a few amendments.

Ghannouchi was also worried about plots from abroad seeking to block Ennahda's march to power, mainly coming from France, whose government (then under President Nicolas Sarkozy) had been Ben Ali's major foreign supporter. His foreign minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, had offered to send French paratroopers to help put down the uprising just before he fled the country. She resigned February 27 over her controversial remarks and the disclosure she had flown on a private jet owned by a Ben Ali business associate in the midst of the uprising. Early on Ghannouchi adopted a strategy to counter possible French machinations by seeking the support of the Barack Obama administration in the United States. To succeed, he had to convince Washington that he and his Islamist followers were committed to multiparty democracy based on the separation of religion and state.

So it was that Secretary-General Jebali went to Washington in May 2011, the first of many Ennahda delegations that were to lobby the administration, Congress, and various think tanks over the next three years. Jebali's message was that the United States had nothing to fear from his party. Ennahda firmly believed religion was "the affair of society, not the affair of the state." He decried the "paranoia" among secular Tunisians over the prospect of Ennahda winning a plurality (if not a majority) of votes in the October elections. His party had every intention of forming a coalition government because "frankly, Ennahda is not ready to govern alone. It makes us fearful." He foresaw a long period of "cohabitation" between his and various secular parties. Ennahda had accepted all the basic principles spelled out in the "Republican Pact" the High Authority had approved in June 2011, mainly to assuage the fears of secularist Tunisians.

The pact turned out to be an important document that eventually shaped the writing of the new constitution. It contained a bill of rights and guarantees for various freedoms, including explicitly the "freedom of conscience," which all parties agreed meant the right to practice the religion of one's choosing. The document endorsed the separation of religion and state. It stated explicitly: "We are convinced that the Tunisian people aspire to build a civil society" as well as a republican form of government that preserves "the civil character of the Tunisian state." Equality between men and women "without any discrimination" was also affirmed. There was no mention of making the sharia, the Muslim body of religious laws, the source for legislation. All parties agreed to preservation of the existing Personal Status Code of 1958, championed by secularist women in particular. "We accept the Republican Pact," said Jebali

explicitly. Ennahda's only reservation was that the pact could not stand "above the constitution." The political course his party intended to follow, he said, was the same taken by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey. It had gained power in 2002 by moderating its Islamic principles and winning the support of many secularists mainly because of its successful capitalist economic policies.

Like secularist parties, Ennahda had its own fears for the future. Jebali singled out a repeat of what had happened to the movement in 1991, when the Ben Ali regime had aborted its bid to compete in elections that year by arresting five to six thousand Ennahda members and officials and discrediting it as a "terrorist organization." "We had a big setback," he said, adding, "we have fear of another setback again." With remarkable prescience, he included among his other concerns that Tunisians would come to identify Ennahda with the more militant Islamist Salafis and turn against both of them. He predicted that public pressure would push his party toward moderation and force the Salafis in the same direction or risk isolation.

Farida Labidi, who headed Ennahda's women's organization in 2011, sought to dispel secularist fears of a reversal in the Tunisia family code, which was widely heralded as the most progressive of any Arab country other than the one Morocco had adopted in 2004. She believed fear of Ennahda in the minds of women secularists had been deliberately instilled by the former Ben Ali regime to gain support for its crackdown on Islamists. Yet her spirited defense of women's right to wear the hijab seemed certain to complicate Ennahda's efforts to reassure secularist women. She recalled the long struggle by Islamic feminists under the regimes of both Bourguiba and Ben Ali, whose secularist policies seemed reminiscent of those adopted by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the republic of Turkey on the ashes of the Ottoman caliphate after World War I.

Since 1981, Tunisian women had been forbidden to wear veils in the workplace and were discouraged from donning them in public. She herself had begun wearing the hijab in 1983 only to find herself "at war" with the police. She recounted that she had been issued a fine and her hijab torn from around her face while she was attending university in pursuit of a law degree. (At the time of my interview with her, she wore a bright red ankle-length robe and a black head scarf bearing a flower print but no face veil.) The authorities had strictly forbidden women from entering a police station or any government building while wearing a veil. Those who wore them while taking oral examinations at the university were automatically flunked. In reaction to these restrictions, she insisted, many women had decided in the post-Ben Ali era to wear a hijab, and not all were Ennahda members. Labidi, a lawyer, also argued that Tunisian women, Islamist or secularist, faced many of the same problems. Tunisia's newfound freedoms had not changed the mentality of men even inside Ennahda. "We've got to push the parties to take women in and the government to give them top jobs."

Labidi also considered the Salafis a challenge not only for Ennahda but for all Tunisian women. The Salafis had fallen under the influence of Saudi Arabia's Wahhabis, followers of one of the most puritanical Salafi sects. Ben Ali had allowed them free rein to multiply and spread the intolerant Wahhabi creed to compensate for his crackdown on Ennahda and show he was still a good Muslim. In the aftermath of Ben Ali's downfall, they had found themselves free to press their fundamentalist beliefs and campaign against Western cultural influence in the country. These were themes all Ennahda leaders were to echo in an effort to separate the party from Salafi extremism. The Salafis indeed seemed to go out of their way to alienate secularists by holding prayer sessions along Avenue Bourguiba, the central boulevard of the capital. Labidi noted that although the Essebsi interim government had refused to allow the Salafis to form a political party, it had made no attempt to suppress their demonstrations of piety and attacks on Western-style music concerts, art shows, or bars serving alcohol.

Labidi's secular counterpart was Sonia Ben Achour, a fashionably Western-dressed woman and university professor who in June 2011 had just stepped down as head of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women. She immediately bristled at the mere mention of Ennahda, which for her was part of the Islamic fundamentalist current with the same goals as the Salafis. She compared the party's spiritual leader, Rachid Ghannouchi, to a two-tongued devil, preaching tolerance to the secularists and a revival of Islamic fundamentalist practices to his own followers. "Islamists have no vision for Tunisian women other than the veil and their going back to the house," she declared. She agreed with Labidi on one point, however. Former President Ben Ali had deliberately "played the religious card" in the last years of his rule by allowing a Salafi renaissance in a bid to bolster his sagging popularity. He had restored the religious radio, Zitouna, and prodded the Sufi orders to become more active. "It was the political manipulation of Islam."

So how serious was the "Islamic challenge," in her view? Ben Achour revealed herself to be of two minds. On one hand, she estimated only 15 percent of Tunisians could be counted as followers of either Ennahda or the Salafis. Women of her education and values were not about to let Islamists "push us around." On the other hand, she anticipated "a lot of work ahead" to defend women's acquired rights against the Islamists. It was also important that Tunisia recognize international declarations on women's rights "because Islam can be used to restore discrimination against women."

Secularist Bulwark against Islamists

In mid-2011, the largest political party defending Tunisia's secular order was the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), which had been allowed to function during the Ben Ali regime, though its co-president, Ahmed Chebbi, had been blocked from running

for president. The PDP's other co-president was Maya Jribi, making it the only party with a woman standard bearer. Its spokesman, Maher Hanin, a philosophy professor, was bullish about the party's prospects at the polls. In his view, the PDP reflected the country's main "democratic centralist tendency," comparable to European social democratic parties. The PDP, he boasted, was growing by leaps and bounds with two hundred branches across the country and "hundreds" of requests to join. It was attracting youth, professionals, women, business owners, and the middle class generally. "We don't understand why everybody [abroad is] interested in Islamists here rather than the secularists," he said. He confidently predicted the two main contestants in the first post-Ben Ali elections would be the PDP and Ennahda. A public opinion poll published in May 2011, carried out by the U.S. International Republican Institute, seemed to confirm this prediction. It showed PDP President Chebbi with a 32 percent approval rating compared with 44 percent for Ennahda leader Ghannouchi, though the vast majority of respondents (72 percent) said they had not yet decided whom they would vote for in the elections.

The UGTT quickly emerged as the main civil society group defending the secular order Tunisia had inherited from Bourguiba and Ben Ali. After playing such a prominent role in the uprising, it seemed conceivable the organization might spawn its own political party to challenge the PDP and Ennahda. There was an initial attempt to do just that with the creation of the short-lived Party of Work, led by Abdeljelil Bedoui, a veteran union activist and one of three UGTT officials named to the first interim government under Prime Minister Ghannouchi. (All three had resigned one day after being appointed.) In the 1980s, Bedoui had drawn up a platform for a UGTT-based political party that had never materialized. Bourguiba had immediately quashed any movement toward the creation of a separate labor party by putting the UGTT under the wing of his own Destour Party. However, a new political era was dawning after Ben Ali's departure, and this seemed to offer the very popular UGTT the occasion to form a workers' party. Even Bedoui no longer saw the wisdom of such a move, and the failure of his effort illustrated the problems Tunisia's leftists, including socialists and communists, faced in seeking to establish themselves as a political force in the post-Ben Ali era. Bedoui tried to broaden his party's support by appealing to small entrepreneurs, lawyers, human rights activists, teachers, and doctors as well as UGTT activists. He deliberately named his organization the Party of Work rather than the Workers' Party. Its ideology was not socialist, either, but what he called "Scandinavian-style social democracy."

Bedoui's attempt to launch a new leftist party on the momentum of the uprising failed for a number of reasons. One of the biggest obstacles was the varied composition of the UGTT. Its five hundred thousand members belonged to many different parties

and political currents; they included communists, socialists, and Arab nationalists on the left and many Islamists on the right. Bedoui conceded that had the UGTT itself sought to launch a party, it would probably have fragmented into separate unions attached to different parties. But his gambit to form a new party did not work, either. The Party of Work was destined to become just one more of a number of leftist groups that sought a foothold on the crowded political landscape. By the fall of 2011, the government had authorized more than one hundred parties to compete for delegates to the National Constituent Assembly. The UGTT did not back any of them, which would help explain why it was able to play an indispensable role of arbitrator and mediator between secularist parties and Ennahda later.

The Revolution's Ephemeral Honeymoon

Another salient characteristic of Tunisia's revolution was the near nonexistence of what historian Crane Brinton called the honeymoon period among revolutionaries immediately following the overthrow of the ancien regime. The visceral distrust between secularists and Islamists surfaced immediately and grew more public and bitter with each passing day. All sense of a common endeavor came to an abrupt halt June 27, 2011, when Ennahda announced it was pulling out of the High Authority. Ghannouchi challenged its claim to "popular legitimacy" or to proceed like an elected parliament when it was not. "Who are you to want to decide the essential laws for the people?" he asked. Ennahda's complaints included the High Authority's decision to postpone elections from July to October, which it had opposed, and the nonconsensual way the law on political parties had been approved. Then, too, its own proposal to allow outside financing of party activities had been rejected without debate in favor of a total ban on any foreign funding. Secularists, on the other hand, were alarmed by the onset of Salafi attacks on liberal artists, their shows, and their supporters. They targeted Western-influenced filmmakers like Nouri Bouzid, the trendy Afric'Art Hall in Tunis, and films considered disrespectful of Islam like *Neither God nor Master* and *Persepolis*. Over the weekend of July 16–17, a spate of violent incidents involving Salafis erupted across the country, mostly notably in Sidi Bouzid, where one 14-year-old youth was killed and four policemen were seriously injured. Secularists and Islamists blamed each other for the violence, the former charging that the Salafis were seeking to incite enough trouble to call off elections.

The May public opinion poll conducted by the U.S. International Republican Institute reflected the confused mixture of great hope and uncertainty Tunisians harbored about their unfolding revolution. Nearly 80 percent of Tunisians thought things were going in the right direction, though a growing number—28 percent in May versus 32 percent in March—said they were having trouble feeding themselves

and their families. A lack of security was at the top of concerns, followed by unemployment. Excitement about elections was at a height, with 92 percent reporting they were either very or somewhat likely to vote in the upcoming elections. Over half of respondents said they favored a secular government, though 40 percent indicated the opposite, and 63 percent said they wanted Islam to serve as the underlying cultural base of society. They did agree on one point—whether Tunisia had a secular or non-secular government was either "very important" or "important" to over three-quarters of them. Clearly Islam's place in the identity of the new Tunisia was already at the forefront of concerns just four months into the search for a new president.

After two delays, the first truly free and fair multiparty elections in Tunisia since independence in 1956 took place on October 23, 2011. They were also the first in any of the five Arab countries that witnessed an uprising that year. Tunisians were called on to elect 217 delegates to the National Constituent Assembly, whose main task would be to hammer out a new constitution. Its mandate was supposed to last just one year, when new elections for a parliament and president were to be held. Tunisians faced a veritable cacophony of voices and choices: one hundred parties, thirty-four coalitions, 1,500 electoral lists collectively offering nearly 11,700 candidates to choose from. Only the Constitutional Democratic Rally of Ben Ali had been formally excluded from running, together with its senior officials. Perhaps the biggest anomaly, given the historic nature of the occasion, was that only 52 percent of the 8.2 million eligible voters went to the polls.

All pre-election polls had predicted Ennahda the likely winner, and indeed it was. But of great importance to shaping the future course of events, Ennahda fell far short of capturing an outright majority, winning only 37 percent of the vote. In the end, the Islamists held eighty-nine seats, forty short of an absolute majority. This meant that although Ennahda would be in charge of forming a government, it could not accomplish this on its own and would need partners. Since no other Islamic faction had participated in the elections, Ennahda had no choice but to turn to one or more of the secularist parties. The question became which party, or parties, would agree to work with Ennahda in what was certain to be a contentious process of deciding the place of Islam in the new constitution and whether the legislature or the presidency would be the center of power.

The elections produced some other major surprises. The PDP had been the leading secular party in pre-election opinion polls but fared extremely poorly, coming in fifth with less than 4 percent of the vote, giving it only sixteen seats. Another surprise was the emergence in third place of the hastily assembled and awkwardly named Popular Petition for Freedom, Justice and Development Party led by Mohamed Hechmi Hamdi, a media tycoon living in London, where he owned a satellite television station. He, too, proved to be a popular son of Sidi Bouzid, where he was born. Though

sympathetic to the Islamist cause, Hamdi had been associated with Ben Ali. But he had cast himself as a populist, using his TV station to reach the general public and propose demagogic reforms, such as financial support for the country's half a million jobless and free healthcare. His strategy had worked. Hamdi's party managed to capture almost 7 percent of the vote and secure twenty-six seats in the constituent assembly.

The left, meanwhile, had splintered into a dozen parties and coalitions, the strongest of which, the Democratic Modernist Pole, won only five seats with less than 3 percent of the votes. The Communist Party won less than 2 percent, giving it just three delegates. As for Party of Work, it failed to gain a single seat, and Bedoui was even defeated in his home district. The results of these first elections of the post–Ben Ali era explained why the left would have to resort to extra-parliamentary means, like street protests and UGTT-sponsored strikes, to gain any leverage at all in its dealings with Ennahda.

Meanwhile, Ennahda proved extremely pragmatic and politically astute upon finding itself the country's new leading party. It successfully convinced two center-left secular parties that had come in second and fourth to join it in forming a government—the Congress for the Republic (CPR) (9 percent of the vote and twenty-nine delegates) and the Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties known as Ettakatol (7 percent of the vote and twenty delegates). Both CPR and Ettakatol had existed as tiny opposition parties during the Ben Ali era and were led by well-known figures. The founder and secretary-general of Ettakatol, Mustapha Ben Jafar, a radiologist, had tried unsuccessfully to run against Ben Ali in the 2009 presidential election, while the CPR was led by a human rights activist, Moncef Marzouki, who had lived in exile in Paris since 2002 after Ben Ali had banned his party.

Thus it was that Tunisia came to be ruled for three years by a "troika coalition" of one Islamic and two secular parties, which found themselves again and again forced to cooperate and compromise. Ennahda immediately made manifest its intention to share power: the constituent assembly elected Marzouki as interim president and chose Ben Jafar as its own leader. Marzouki then appointed Ennahda Secretary-General Jebali as prime minister to form a government that was officially installed on December 24, 2011—a year and seven days after the uprising began. Its cabinet of ministers reflected the new spirit and practice of power sharing: only twelve of twenty-five came from Ennahda and included seven independents, most importantly the ministers of defense and religious affairs. It seemed an ideal formula for launching Tunisia's pioneering experience in power sharing between Islamists and secularists.