

LITERARY REPORT OF THE SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY

Annual conferences

Description : csidtunisia Annual Conference



Under the framework of further shedding light on the transformations the Arab World is witnessing, while taking into great consideration the international experiences of other nations in democratic transitions, the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (CSID) organized its Second Annual Conference on 29-30 March 2013 under the title « *Democratic Transformations in the Arab World: Tunisia as a Model* ».

The Conference was opened by **Dr. Radwan Masmoudi**, who started by welcoming the esteemed guests who came from all corners of the globe, and insisted upon the importance of such meetings in facilitating and enriching the on-going dialogue between all concerned parties in the country.

The Conference gathered more than four hundred national and international personalities and experts from more than twenty five neighboring and friendly states. The

Description : Radwen-Masmoudi



goal was to present and discuss top priority issues and concerns that can contribute to the success of the process of democratic transition in Tunisia and in all the Arab Spring countries.

Radwan Masmoudi Video

Ali Larayedh



The Conference began with **Tunisian Prime Minister Ali Laarayedh**'s opening remarks. In his address, Mr. Laarayedh called for cooperation for the sake of making the democratic transition successful and consolidating the national dialogue as all eyes are directed towards Tunisia. Indeed, he said, if this experience succeeds, it will become a positive model for the entire region. The Head of the Government regards examining the problems entailed by freedom as much easier than examining those caused by dictatorship. According to him, what is required is to firmly establish the values of justice and coexistence among all political forces

while categorically rejecting exclusionist practices. « The Tunisian people are determined to succeed and are confident that they will reach their set objectives, particularly that of consolidating democracy and achieving development and social equality ». Mr. Laarayedh added that « the revolution contributed to putting back equilibrium in the relation of the state to the society, widening the scope of freedom and working under the umbrella of collective conscience so as to consolidate the principles of the alternation of positions and the supremacy of law.

Prime Minister Ali Laarayedh Video

Rached-ghanouchi



Next to speak was **Mr. Rached Ghannouchi**, President of Nahdha Party. He began by noting that Tunisians are faced with one main difficult and complicated challenge, which is the coexistence between the moderate secular wing and the moderate Islamist wing of the country. He enumerated the phases of democratic transformation in Tunisia and the role that Nahdha party had played in this process. He said, « the democratic transition that led to the first democratic elections in Tunisia constitutes an important model at the level of reshaping power. The series of events that occurred and the cooperation that happened between

various Tunisian forces prove that Nahdha party does not seek to establish an 'Islamic state,' that it does not want to impose a specific model on the population, and that the conflict between secularists and Islamists is in fact political rather than ideological. » Since the revolution, and in spite of the countless trials and tribulations faced, Mr. Ghannouchi displayed a confidence and pride in the work that has already been done, and emphasized his party's commitment to fulfilling its promise of enacting a Constitution through consensus and moving toward elections before the end of the year. « This, » he said, « would bring us to the completion of the process of democratic transition. » Mr. Ghannouchi also dispatched strong letters of assurance to European and American friends and allies. He affirmed that what his party ultimately and truly seeks is to assert that Islam is entirely compatible with democracy, that the values of modernity are not at all inconsistent with Islamic teachings, and that the drafting of the Constitution should and will be agreed upon.

Rached Ghannouchi Video

Concluding the opening remarks session of the Conference was Dr. Taieb Baccouche, Secretary General of the Nidaa Tunis Party. He began by explaining that fundamental disagreement regarding such critical topics as Transitional Justice, Political Islam, Extremism versus Moderation, and the disagreements between Secularists and Islamists, is the main reason behind the confusion and misunderstanding that so far have characterized the Tunisian political sphere. One key point that must begin to

Taieb Baccouche



permeate the Tunisian political establishment is that the only legitimacy to rule is that of the ballot box, emphasized Mr. Baccouche; however, during this transitional period, « we must move from the thinking of ‘electoral legitimacy’ to a legitimacy of national consensus... for it is only through national consensus that democratic transitions succeed. » Mr. Baccouche expressed his opinion that the notion of a ruling majority faced with a vocal opposition can only work in ordinary circumstances, something that both parts of the equation do not seem to comprehend. He called, in his turn, to reject the notion of a ‘clash’ between Islamists and Secularists and to adopt the necessary procedure to implement a real and lasting transitional justice and to benefit from other

nations’ experiences in this regard, such as the Turkish AK party’s ability to wed the ideals of Islam and secular democracy. « There must be a reinterpretation of many of our traditions and phenomena so that we may better build a united nation, » concluded Mr. Baccouche, as he once again stressed the need to reject all extremism so that Tunisia’s transition can move forward peacefully.

Taieb Baccouche Video

csidtunisia Annual Conference



Drafting a New Constitution and Building Harmony

The first session was moderated by Dr. Mahmoud Dhaouadi Sociology Professor at Tunis University. He presented an introduction of the session topic and introduced the lecturers.

Marina Ottaway



The first paper was introduced by Marina Ottaway, a Senior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center and a long-time analyst of political transformations in Africa, the Balkans, and the Middle East. Her paper was about Completing Democratic Transitions: Lessons from History. Ms. Ottaway believes the transition in Tunisia to be so fascinating and telling due in part to the fact that it has brought to the forefront deep divisions and mutual suspicions between an old, mostly secular political elite that has governed since independence and a new rising Islamist elite. The two differ, she believes, in terms of ideological convictions, social background, education and political experience. She noted that much of the population is discontented since it expected positive changes which failed to materialize quickly. Dissatisfied, resentful people can easily be maneuvered by rival parties. It is important to keep in mind, she insists, that in most transitions things get worse before they get better. Compared to other Arab countries in transition, Tunisia is suffering less strife and less disruption, but it still faces considerable problems. Tensions in times of transition are inevitable and can be overcome, but she cautioned that the experience of many countries show that, if mishandled, the problems can also halt transitions, leading a country back into authoritarianism and sometimes a worse situation than what existed earlier. It is these two factors, she concluded, that appear particularly important in sidetracking change toward democracy.

[Marina Ottaway Video](#) | [Bio & Abstract](#)

Joelle Fiss



The second paper was about Blasphemy, Freedom of Speech and Democratic Transition, introduced by Joelle Fiss, currently Senior Associate at the U.S.-based organisation Human Rights First, where she is working on issues linked to freedom of expression worldwide, in particular human rights violations caused by blasphemy laws. Joelle mentioned in her paper that Tunisia's new constitution and legislation relevant to rights protections will set a precedent for democratic transition in the Arab world. One important indicator of democracy is respect for the right to free speech. Unlike in Egypt, outlawing blasphemy or defamation or insult of religion or religious symbols has not been included in Tunisia's draft constitution, but the way that the issue of blasphemy is dealt with in legislation will have a bearing on how freedom of expression is protected in law and in

practice. Human Rights First, she noted, has researched the implementation of blasphemy laws in many countries and has found them to have a negative impact on freedom of expression as well as facilitating other serious violations of human rights. Governments and individuals frequently abuse national blasphemy laws to stifle dissent and debate, to harass rivals, settle petty disputes and to legitimize violence. Religious minorities in many countries suffer persecution through the misuse of blasphemy laws. Allegations of blasphemy or insulting religious symbols are inflammatory and tend to empower violent extremists, as was seen in the most recent example of the Innocence of Muslims film.

[Joelle Fiss Video](#) | [Bio & Abstract](#) | [Paper](#)

Duncan Pickard



The third presentation was made by Duncan Pickard, Country Director in Libya for Democracy Reporting International (DRI), a Berlin-based NGO that promotes international democracy standards in the greater Middle East. His paper was about Lessons Learned from the Constitution-Making Process in Tunisia. Mr. Pickard began by drawing our attention back to October 2011, when the National Constituent Assembly began negotiating and drafting the republic's new constitution, which is intended to institutionalize a new democratic system in the aftermath of the revolution that toppled the dictatorship in January. While the experience of each transitioning country will be unique, he said, there are some common elements and lessons learned –

particularly in countries where decades of autocracy discouraged public participation – that can be gleaned from Tunisia. Most importantly, he said, the constitution-making process should have a clear legal framework to give the process a foothold of procedural legitimacy and so that it can set a precedent for clarity and transparency; the legal body that drafts the constitution should not serve simultaneously as a legislative body on it. Ending with a list of recommendations for the Constituent Assembly, Mr. Pickard insisted on the importance of adopting a clear intention and design for the Constitutional ratification process and of including a diverse set of attorneys and legal specialists in order to ensure a diversity of perspectives. Inviting citizen input is important, he conceded, but the messaging and release of drafts should be controlled so that the process as a whole can move forward as quickly as possible.

Duncan Pickard Bio & Abstract – Full Paper

CSID Tunisia Annual Conf 92



The fourth paper on this panel was titled « The Arab Springs and the Constitutional law:

Comparing Constituent powers in Tunisia and Egypt, » introduced by Pietro Longo, a Doctoral Candidate in Middle East Studies at Naples Eastern University. In his paper, Mr. Longo elaborates on the phenomenon that the countries of the Arab Spring, particularly Tunisia and Egypt, seem to have an understood fixation on the election of a constituent power in the shape of a Constituent Assembly, albeit each with its own path. Based on the theoretical framework settled by A. Arato, who tried to explain the origin of the Constituent power, Mr. Longo explained how Tunisia and Egypt managed to rewrite their Constitutions with a particular focus on the role of religion in state. Inspired by A. Arato's theories, Mr. Longo explained that constituent powers can be activated in two main ways:

1. with the adoption of an interim Constitution
2. by the direct election of a Constituent Assembly. Egypt, he noted, has followed the first model, Tunisia the second. Though both models certainly come with a set of obstacles along the way, he conceded, the results remain to be seen and much work remains to be done.

Pietro Longo Bio & Abstract – Paper

Luncheon Session

Tarek Ramadan



The first presentation in this session was by Prof. Tariq Ramadan, Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies at the Oxford University (Oriental Institute, St Antony's College) and also teaches at the Oxford Faculty of Theology. His talk was centered on the subject of « Islam and Governance After the Arab Spring: Ethical References or Alternative Project? » The relationship between Islam and governance, began Dr. Ramadan, marks « the first problem that we have when it comes to governance and the way [in Muslim societies] we deal with managing power. » According to him, this problem comes down to the way in which governance and power and authority are conceived. The goal, then, is to introduce multiple counterexamples to the public discussion of both religion and governance so that a deeper and more nuanced understanding of both can begin to take form.

The second critical point, says Dr. Ramadan, 'is when we speak about good governance, it is not conclusive enough a discussion,' by which he refers to the confusion between legal points of reference and points of derivation, especially when it comes to Islamic Law, or Sharia. This point in particular is one he stressed is a huge cause of contention, one that can only be resolved with a reinterpretation of both the natures and functions of state as well as that of Islamic law. It is imperative, according to Dr. Ramadan, that « we [begin to] question ethical objectives, and the ends and the goals of state » as part and parcel of the project of democratic consolidation.

Tarek Ramadan Video part 1 – part 2 – Bio & Abstract – Full paper



Jacob Wals



German Ambassador to Tunisia Jens Plötner followed Mr. Ramadan with the second presentation of this luncheon session.

Ambassador Plötner talked about the « European Perspective on the Cradle of the Arab Spring, » opening with the opinion that « if I try to answer the question of ‘what is our view of Tunisia today,’ my very short answer would be that the situation is better than the mood. » Ambassador Plötner noted well that, indeed, ‘perceptions are realities’ in this post-revolutionary Tunisia where citizens are constantly bombarded with all sorts of information from various media outlets. He pointed to three main reasons that he sees as the source of the ‘morose mood’ as witnessed, which are 1) the lack of ‘socio-economic dividends paid by the revolution,’ 2) the

difficult security situation of the country, and 3) notable social polarization. It is the political establishment, said the Ambassador, that exacerbates the morose mood of the country by enhancing political divides instead of working to diffuse them. As a fascinating and telling comparison, Ambassador Plötner discussed the resonances between Tunisia today and the situation in his native Germany following the fall of the Berlin Wall. « I looked at a few newspapers from Germany in 1991, and I couldn’t believe my eyes at how morose the atmosphere was in reunified Germany, how much people were speaking about all the negative aspects and how little the freedom they had just conquered in a peaceful way was appreciated. » In looking to the past, Ambassador Plötner sought to placate anxieties of Tunisians and help to offer some perspective on the difficulties of transitional periods. In the end, he affirmed the commitment of Germany and of all European nations to support the Tunisian democratic transition as a cause of paramount importance not only to the region, but to the entire world.

Rafik Abdessalem



Jacob Walles, Ambassador of the United States to Tunisia, was the third speaker of the panel, and he spoke about « The American perspective on the the cradle of the Arab Spring. » Amb. Walles started back with the fall of the Ben Ali regime, when « President Obama [...] said that we stand with the people of Tunisia in their aspirations for democratic future, » recalling the U.S. President’s remark made during the 2011 State of the Union address. Not only did the Ambassador strongly emphasize the need for Tunisia’s affairs to be handled uniquely by Tunisians, but stressed that no single democratic model can or ought to

be imposed on the country. « Our focus, » said Ambassador Walles, « as outsiders, is on the upcoming process [...] We seek a democracy that is based on a broad consensus of Tunisian society. » Furthermore, the Ambassador stressed that the United States is committed to cooperating with all viable political parties, regardless of their political orientations, in its bid to strengthen ties with post-revolutionary countries in the Middle East and North Africa. In addition to offering diplomatic support to the Tunisian political establishment, « we see our role as meant to support the development of the Tunisian economy, » said Ambassador Walles, to which end the United States has provided roughly 350 million dollars in assistance. This is seen as imperative to the success of the democratic transition in the country, for if the economic situations turns sour, it could prove to be a serious, perhaps insurmountable, obstacle.

Jacob Walles Video

Jens Plotner



The final presentation was delivered by former Tunisian Foreign Minister Rafik Abdessalem. In his address, Mr. Abdessalem talked about the coexistence between Islamists and secularists in Tunisia. He stated that the dialogue between secularists and Islamists has become a need that is dictated by the political reality and the necessities of life if there is a real inclination to live collectively and to guarantee a stable civil life. Viable nations are those in which the different social and political forces effectively communicate and get along instead of detesting and tricking each other. Islamists have become an integral part of both the society and the political equation and can no longer be excluded. Simultaneously, secularists constitute a firmly established element that cannot be eliminated. The

general circumstances could not be settled down neither by Islamists without secularists nor by secularists without Islamists. Our societies are in dire need of pursuing the option of political and social compromise while avoiding the ideological demands of both Islamists and secularists. Societies’ movements should be stiffer and stronger than all the ideological aspirations and the political dreams of some individuals and groups. Then, our society will not be purely Islamic as radical religious groups envisage, yet it will not be absolutely secular as radical secularists suppose. Moderation, he says, is the means and the end.

Rafik Abdessalem Video |



Session #2

Democratic Transitions and Security Sector Reforms

The session was headed by Abdelwahab Hfaiedh, Professor of Political Sociology at Tunis University. He introduced the lecturers, welcomed the guests and introduced the first speaker of the session.

The first presentation of this panel was entitled « Who did Vote and Why? Analyzing New and Old Voters in Tunisia and Egypt, » and was presented by Dhafer Mallouch, Assistant Professor at the Higher Institute of Statistics and Data Analysis at Carthage University. Professor Maalouch stated that the success of Al Nahdha Party and the Muslim Brotherhood Party, both formerly suppressed, was granted great consideration in the first elections in the aftermath of the revolutions in both Tunisia and Egypt. However, only limited studies were oriented to those who voted in the 2011 elections, to when and why did they decide to vote for their candidates and if the electoral process differ from the elections that were held during Ben Ali's and Mubarak's regimes. He concluded his speech by saying that he believes that Al Nahdha is capable of raising popular support more than the other major parties of the country, and the opinion polls he presented showed strong indicators that the results will be no different in future elections.

Dhafer Mallouch Bio & Abstract



Following Mr. Maalouch was Philip S. Hoffman, a third year undergraduate at Tufts University, pursuing a B.A. in Arabic Language Studies and Middle Eastern Studies, whose presentation was centered on the subject of « A Quiet Counterrevolutionary: The Tunisian Political Police, Before and After the Ben ‘Ali Regime ». Mr. Hoffman mentioned in his research that security sector reform, and reform of the so-called « political police » in particular, will play a vital role in determining the final outcome of Tunisia’s democratic transition. « Slightly over a year after President Zine el Abedine Ben Ali’s departure, many of the political police’s structures remain obfuscated and information regarding the full extent of its reach, and the efforts that have supposedly been taken to disband it, remains protected. » Unfortunately, it seems that few veterans of this unit have been publicly identified, said Mr. Hoffman, and police officers have vocally resisted attempts to do so by new ministers. Attempts to institute effective institutional changes have been too slow and few, according to Mr. Hoffman. « In short, » he said, « much about the political police remains unknown. » It is by examining the precise nature of these informational gaps, concluded Mr. Hoffman, that one can get an illuminative outline of an understandably opaque institution and the challenges that will future reformers will undoubtedly face.

omar achour



Omar Ashour, Senior Lecturer in the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter and a Non-Resident Fellow at the Brookings Doha Center, spoke on « Arab Awakening and the Security Sector. In his address, Dr. Ashour talked about dynamisms for creating security forces while comparing Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. He provided an inside look into the operational work of the security apparatus from before the revolution and with particular focus on the current reform initiatives.

Dr. Ashour spoke, also, about the transitional experiences that the Arab World is witnessing. Ultimately, he specified the broad lines for the proposal of instituting a security sector led by civilian efforts. In his paper, Dr. Ashour discussed the political dynamics of transforming Arab security establishment, with a comparative focus on Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, all based on months of interviews with former and current officers and generals in the police, army, and intelligence services.

Omar Ashour Bio & Abstract

Kamal Abdallah Harouni, Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations and specialized in the International Strategy, was the last speaker of the panel and focused his address on the subject of « The Security establishments Reform in Tunisia: Reality and Ambition. » Dr. Harouni began his talk by discussing the parties who think of turning the Tunisian people back to the dictatorship and domination of past. He stated that the only party that has interest in spreading anarchy and maintaining a corrupted regime is the party that fears the appearance of the truth and strives for, by all means, misleading anyone who seeks it. In addition, there is a competition among external forces to be present and to change the direction of events as to serve their interests. This is what happened really in Tunisia directly after the revolution and was materialized by many cases of killing, robbing, looting, burning and collision between wide factions of protesters and security forces. Dr. Harouni believes that with the great number of positive changes spurred about by the Arab Spring came chaos and insecurity as a result to the breakdown of the security and defense establishments. Therefore, he concluded, the state of security instability prevented other governmental organizations from doing their job and applying the law in the service of the citizen and the society after the success of the revolution.



Session #3

What can we learn from the Turkish or Korean Models?

Salah Eddin Jourchi



The third session was chaired by Slaheddine Jourchi, renowned political analyst and Vice President of csidtunisia.

The first presentation was made by Ahmet Kuru, Associate Professor of Political Science at San Diego State University and a visiting fellow at Brookings Doha Center, on the question of « Can Turkey's Justice and Development Party Be a Model for

Arab Islamists? » In his research, Professor Kuru noted as a central premise that one of the Arab Spring's major consequences is the rise of Islamist parties. His focal question, then, regards what type of regime these parties will support, what sort of relationship to power and authority they will champion. On the one hand, the Iranian-type regime with the « tutelage of religious institutions over elected bodies, with the authority to strike down laws regarding a strict interpretation of the Sharia, » is one pre-existing model but which Dr. Kuru says is the wrong one. Turkey's Justice and Development (AK) Party model, in contrast, is based on « a pragmatic understanding of Muslim politics in a passive secular state, » believed Dr. Kuru. Whereas others disagree, Dr. Kuru posits that even with its defense of secularism, Turkey's AK party can and ought to serve as the goal for Islamists in the Arab Spring countries. He sees two main tenets of the ruling Turkish party that are also of utmost importance in Arab societies: the first being passive secularism, by which he means that the state passively allows for a « public visibility of religion, » and the second being coalescing

with secular political actors.

Ahmet Kuru Video – Bio & Abstract

The second presentation was about « The Tunisian Democratic Experience from Turkish Eyes, » and was introduced by Mohamed Zahed Gul, Author and Political Analyst of Turkish Political Affairs. Through his research, Mr. Gul said that it is too optimistic to say that the contemporary Turkish political experience and the Tunisian Arab Spring are « two sides of the same coin. » What he has noted through his readings and analyses is that the Arab Spring has thus far been quite successful at least in unearthing the inherent fears and weakness of Arab dictators and of their systems. The ousted presidents, including Tunisia's Ben Ali, consolidated their power by uniting the « authority of the security and the public wealth, » and took comfort in the fallacy that their dormant citizens would remain permanently so. « The Arab Spring revolutions have revealed the inherent capabilities of the Arab citizen to boldly offer his soul for a decent living and life promoting brotherhood, equality and justice in all rights and duties the state presents through a constitutional body and not through a Sultan's charity or favors to subjects who kneeled before him or were enslaved by his authority. » It was clear from Mr. Gul's discussion that, although he noted the many difficulties Tunisia presently faces, he believed the democratic transition to have started on the right foot.

Mohamed Zahed Gul Video – Bio & Abstract

Following Mr. Gul with the third presentation, on « Presidential Regimes and the Korean Model of Democratic Transition, » was Jeong-Min Seo, Head of the Middle East & African Studies Department at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, South Korea. Professor Seo began his talk by prefacing with the notion in political science of a 'third wave of democratization', of which his native South Korea is heralded as being a prime success story. Having successfully traversed numerous free and fair elections for all levels of government and built a strong presidential, multiparty system, South Korea was able to emerge from its war-torn past as a regional economic power. Dr. Seo sees many parallels between South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s and Tunisia today, and therefore believes a similar political system – a presidential one – to be best suited for Tunisia as it is « more effective in stabilizing political and ideological chaos and promoting a favorable environment for economic development. » He further elaborated on the concept of 'liberal democracy' in the functions and culture of a presidential system, particularly when it comes to accountability and transparency.

Jeong-Min Seo – Bio & Abstract – Full paper – Presentation



Session #4

Visions for a New Tunisia: Challenges and Proposals for Building a New Democratic Order

The fourth session of this year's annual conference brought together representatives of the major political parties in Tunisia to shed some light on each party's vision and plan for the future.

Abdelaziz Messaoudi



The first to speak and present on behalf of his party was Abdelaziz Messaoudi, leader in the Al-Massar party. Messaoudi focused his remarks on the state of the debates surrounding the constitution, particularly as it pertains to consensus-building around it. « The main points of political contention that remain include the system of government, electoral laws, the appointment of constitutional and legal committees, etc, » and in those proceedings, he urged politicians not to get carried away and forget the ordinary Tunisian. While these sorts of political disagreements are being addressed, Messaoudi stressed the importance of establishing a more secure state not just to avoid an array of crimes but also to reassure the public that the country is not falling short of fulfilling its most basic functions. His final point was on the issue of Islam and democracy, about which he said that there is much confusion and anxiety regarding the recorded rhetoric of the Nahdha party and its actions, both present and future. « In order for political Islam in general to have a future in the country, » said Mr. Messaoudi, « Nahdha leaders must be more clear and firm in adhering to their own rhetoric » on issues of justice and freedom, about which many lessons can be

learned from the AK party and even the various conservative Christian parties in numerous European countries.

Abdelaziz Messaoudi Video

Mouldi Riahi



Following Mr. Messaoudi was Mouldi Riahi, leader of the Ettakattol party bloc in the National Constituent Assembly. Mr. Riahi prefaced his address by congratulating the Center on the work it has done to promote deeper understandings between all political factions and to cement the values of democracy into the general society, and asked for these sorts of initiatives to continue. Because there has been no democratic order in the history of Tunisia, the institution of a real and lasting democratic state hinges upon the institution of a democratic culture and a general unity among the people toward these goals, said Mr. Riahi. These desires to establish a democratic began back in the 1980s, where we began building consensus between all opposition leaders, he explained, a consensus whose infrastructure is now finally bearing fruit. He recalled the plea made by Ettakattol and other notable political parties in the aftermath of the October 2011 elections to create a government of national unity, and said that it was not possible because of the divided ‘scenario we found before us, that of a majority coalition and an opposition bloc. » It is remarkable, and is something of which Riahi was quite proud, that so much work has been done and so much remains to be done, particularly and especially in the realm of the security apparatus. Moving forward, said Mr. Riahi, an electoral commission will be created and will thereafter set the stage for a second round of elections in the very near future.

Abdelwahab elHani



Abdelwahab el-Hani, President of the Al-Majd party, was next to address the audience and began by insisting upon his firm belief that ‘failure is not an option’ when it comes to the success of the Tunisian revolution and its transition into a lasting and genuine democracy; « too many countries around the world have failed in their transitions to democracy, which is more a national task and not one for political parties alone, » said Mr. el-Hani. The second concern facing Tunisia, besides that of securing the foundations for a democracy, is the struggling economy, the inequalities of which led to the corruption and injustice suffered under the Ben Ali regime, explained el-Hani. In his opinion, the most critical issues that need to be addressed

urgently in order for the more complex and long-term issues to follow suit are « stability, security, and the new appearance of terrorist groups, whether foreign or domestic. » The dream of democracy, « that was the dream of all our forefathers, » is now the call of our generation that must be answered, and is a call that must be answered by Tunisians of all backgrounds, he continued, and must begin within the political establishment in order for it to be proliferated into the greater society. Mr. el-Hani’s final point was to impress upon all within the political establishment to learn to accept suggestions and criticisms in the best light and for the betterment of the country.

Abdelwahab el-Hani Video

Closing this session was the final speaker, Zied Laadhari, member of the National Constituent Assembly and representative of the Nahdha party. Mr. Laadhari began by outlining three key issues to keep in mind in trying to assess the strengths and weakness of the Tunisian democratic experiment, which is to say that it is very important to

Zied Laadhari



keep in mind that this is indeed a phase and is not the end goal, that this is a transition to democracy and not to anything else, and that this transitional phase itself is intended to be democratic so that the culture of democracy itself is established while the institutions of democracy are being constituted. « We are now living with the heritage of dictatorship and must overcome it and replace it with genuine democratic principles whilst enduring a transitional phase, » said Mr. Laadhari, and this is something that must be widely and actively accepted. Laadhari also rightly noted that this transition will take quite a bit of time and patience, and a struggling economy is an inevitable byproduct of a political shake-up, a revolution, of this magnitude. « The biggest political obstacle we face today, in my opinion, is that we are moving through this transitional period not with the mentality of national unity but rather with the mentality of majority versus opposition, » he continued, which he said is the primary reason for some of the delays in coming to some critical agreements and decisions. Moving forward, Mr. Laadhari

explained that it must be made a priority by the political establishment to both work with the most qualified people regardless of their political leanings and to continue to present solutions and not fall behind on addressing the most pressing national concerns.

Zied Laadhari Video

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Hesham Reda Memorial Lecture & Annual Banquet Dinner

A New Pattern for Democracies (and possibly Tunisia): « Parliamentarized Semi-Presidentialism »



Alfred Stepan, Founding Director of the Center for the Study of Democracy, Toleration, and Religion (CDTR), and the Co-Director of the Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life (IRCPL) at Columbia University, was the first presenter on this panel and discussed his vision for « A New Pattern for Democracies (and Possibly Tunisia). » Dr. Stepan based his talk on the three fundamental models of democratic governance seen in modern times, which are parliamentarism, semi-presidentialism, and presidentialism, and placed particular emphasis in his analyses of these different systems on their relevance to the current Tunisian context. Based on his extensive research, Dr. Stepan believes a parliamentarized model of semi-presidentialism to be the most suited for Tunisia in part because « it entails a dual executive, with the prime minister responsible to Parliament and with a directly elected President, » but also because it would strike a balance of power and cooperation between the President's office and the Parliament such that consensus-building and compromise is always a top priority. Though he understands the historical ties between Tunisia and France, he conveyed deep concern for the French model of governance, which places too much power in the hands of the President to the detriment of the Parliament. Dr. Stepan urged the Tunisian political elite to take a closer look at models of governance found in less-obvious European countries, such as Portugal, as well as in Latin America, in constructing their new state.

Alfred Stepan Video – Bio & Abstract

Pete Wishart, a former Member of the British Parliament and representative of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, gave the second presentation on the subject of « How to build Consensus in the Parliament and within Political Parties. » Mr. Wishart began by applauding a revolution and a movement that began in Tunisia through peaceful and democratic means. « Throughout the rest of the [North African and Middle Eastern] region, » said Mr. Wishart, « there are incredible standoffs between populations and some of the governments that they are still opposing, » and so all eyes are on Tunisia and the choices its politicians will be making in the coming few months and years. He quoted a former British PM, Harold Wilson, who said that « a week is a long time in politics, » and noted the endless difficulties and responses that have made for a political landscape in Tunisia that has been tough to predict, but which he insisted is perfectly normal. « Governments have to make hard choices, difficult decisions, and they are punished for that by the voters who don't like what they're doing, » something he said even a stable government like that of Great Britain suffers from. But, he insisted, « governments have to govern, » and must learn to strike a balance between listening to public opinion and acting swiftly in the best way possible. It is especially in the realm of consensus- and capacity-building that the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, as well as the British Parliament as a whole, are

prepared to assist Tunisia moving forward.

[Pete Wishart Video](#) – [Bio & Abstract](#) – [Full paper](#)

Second Annual conference Tunisia(4)



Sean Farren, a former Member of the British Parliament, gave the final presentation of this panel, and of the first day of the conference, on the subject of « Northern Ireland and the Belfast Agreement. » Being from Northern Ireland, which has only recently emerged from a long period of civil unrest, Mr. Farren offered insights on mistrust between different segments of a population and the great possibility for their future cooperation and mutual respect. In his case, the concept of ‘majority rule’ simply did not work because of the real demographics, so the political order came to an agreement – known as the Belfast Agreement – back in 1988 which made it imperative that in order « to achieve sufficient consensus from the population from any agreement, it would have to include provisions for a government representing both sections of the community. » In other words, Mr. Farren explained that the current system in place in Northern Ireland prioritized consensus-building over the principle of majority rule, and thus is intended to « to cement the peace in a society that hitherto has been deeply and violently divided, » much as Tunisian appears today. The current

political prosperity with which Northern Ireland has been blessed could not have been possible, said Mr. Farren, had those who had previously been opposed to a partnership, coalition government been convinced that there was no viable alternative to governance. Once pragmatism and a genuine desire to move forward instead of to stall enters into the equation, Mr. Farren sees the same future as possible for Tunisians.

Sean Farren – Bio & Abstract – Full paper

csid tunisia



Saturday, March 30, 2013

Session #5

The Role of Religion in Politics and Public Life (session I)

Beginning on the second day of the CSID Second Annual Conference was the fifth panel headed by Mr. Skander Rekik, a political activist and expert in economics and strategic planning. Mr. Rekik prefaced the panel discussion by professing that « in Tunisia, we can prove that Islam is the solution. » « All emerging democracies, » he suggested, « live the conflicts of the role of religion in politics and there is no country immune to the conflict even in Western countries that we consider a source of inspiration for democracy. »

Nader Hashemi



The first paper of the panel was introduced by Dr. Nader Hashemi, Director of the Center for Middle East Studies and an Assistant Professor of Middle East and Islamic Politics at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver. The question raised in this paper was « Why Islam (properly understood) is the Solution: Reflections on the Role of Religion in Tunisia's Democratic Transition? » Dr. Hashemi prefaced by saying that what is happening in Tunisia today is both « natural and normal ». He further explained that « the public debate on the role of religion in politics is part of the growing pains of building a mature and stable democracy ». He explained that rather than sounding the alarm and decrying this state of affairs, from the perspective of democratization, this aspect of Tunisia politics should be both encouraged and celebrated. Those hardline secularists, both in Tunisia and in Europe, who think differently on this topic « need to overcome their historical amnesia about the long history and development of democracy ». He argued that in the Muslim world the « road to democracy, whatever twists and turns it makes along the way, cannot avoid passing through the gates of religious politics. » He meant several things by this claim, and focused on the critical point that « religious-based parties and religious intellectuals/activists could play a critically important role in the democratization of their societies, as they reconciled their political theologies with universal standards of human rights, and the modern demands of democracy. »

Nader Hashemi Video – Bio & Abstract – Paper

Description : Juan Cole(1)



The second paper in this fifth session was introduced by Dr. Juan Cole, Richard P. Mitchell Professor of History at the University of Michigan and Director of its Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies, on the subject of « Can the Muslim political movements of Tunisia Accept Popular Sovereignty? » One of the key conflicts between traditional Muslim political thought and Enlightenment ideas that govern the contemporary nation-state, according to Dr. Cole, is the conception of popular sovereignty. He went on to explain that the anxiety in this regard is linked to the fear inherent to law-making that if the process is left to representatives of the people, who have full legal authority to act as they see fit, it might be pursued in

ways that contradict Muslim values or sharia legal principles has complicated political Islam's attitudes to democracy. He emphasized that « many nineteenth- and twentieth-century Muslim movements either supported authoritarian forms of governance or sidestepped the issue of what a Muslim state would look like, » with the two prime cases of Kemalist Turkey, which imposed secularism, and Khomeinist Iran, which « enshrined rule by a religious official ». On that note, he said that « the emergence of the al-Nahdha and the Salafi strands of political Islam as important to Tunisian state-making have made it crucial to contemporary Tunisian political debate, » in the sense that the public anxieties with regards to their rule are infusing all aspects of political discourse, especially when questions of their positions on popular sovereignty come to light. He stressed several key questions that must be contemplated and addressed in order for Tunisia to move forward, including the fundamental issue of « can a public moral vision coexist with democracy or must religion be private for liberty to thrive? »

Rihab Abderrahman Sherif



The Third Paper was presented by Dr. Rihab Abderrahman Sherif, Head of the Department of Political Sciences and International Relations in the College of Economics, the University of Aljazeera, on the theme of « Islamists and the Civil State: The Controversy about the Relationship between Religion and Politics: « A Look into the Experiences of some Islamist Movements. » According to Dr Rihab, one of the main characteristics of Islamic law is the jurists' goal of emphasizing its « usefulness, everywhere and anywhere ». She elaborated on this statement by stressing that « Islam does not give governors the right to rule by the name of God... [but that] Islamic law calls upon monotheism, the loyalty to the nation and acknowledging citizenship based on satisfaction, acceptance and unity within the framework of pluralism ». Dr. Rihab explored

many political issues through the Islamic point of view, foremost among them that « the controversy about the concept of the 'civil state' to deal with the source of the problem between religion and politics. » To this end, she added, « evaluating the experience of Islamists' rule continues to be a focal point not only for those who belong to it but also to the new comers to power since the revolutions witnessed in many Arab states ». What is important to underscore here, she continued, is to benefit from the advantages and to overcome the obstacles concerning what is related to the administration of the internal and external political processes such that a balance is struck between centuries of Islamic jurisprudence and contemporary social concerns.

Rihab Abderrahman Sherif Video – Bio & Abstract

The Fourth Paper of this panel was presented by Mr. David Warren, a Doctoral candidate at the University of Manchester, was entitled « Democratic Transition in Tunisia and the Experience of the Nahdha Party – Is Compromise Possible without Ideological Transformations. » Mr. Warren began his talk on the note that « in a society with such pluralistic attitudes towards the relationship between religion and the state such as Tunisia, exemplified perhaps by liberals and secularists on the one hand, conservative « Salafists » on the other, and the Nahdha party in the centre, it becomes all too easy to draw upon negative stereotypes during periods of tension and distrust, as has been seen during Tunisia's democratic transition ». Though this is natural, Mr. Warren believes that the key to addressing the concerns of all political parties is to explore and focus on an important concept in contemporary Islamic political thought, that of maqasid, or 'unarticulated purposes and intents'. He explained that the understanding that, « alongside the Sharia's « explicit rulings » (ahkam), there exist higher, unarticulated purposes and « intents » (maqasid), that are understood today in abstract terms such as the achievement of equality and justice ». His studies have shown the common ground between both liberal and conservative critics emphasizing the Sharia's « rulings » without consideration of its « purposes », or to see these two concepts as being understood to be in a state of tension. Mr. Warren traced the original emergence of the idea that there were parts of the Qur'an and Sunna that appeared at odds with contemporary reality, and an understanding of purposes was required, from classical scholars such as Ibn Ishaq al-Shatibi and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, to the twentieth century reformers like the Egyptian Muhammad Abduh and Tunisian Muhammad Ibn Ashur.

David Warren Video – Bio & Abstract**Session #6****The Role of Religion in Politics and Public Life (session II)**

This session, a parallel session, was moderated by Mr. Zied Laadhari, Tunisian lawyer and a Nahdha Member in the National Constituent Assembly. He mentioned that it is highly important to take into account the requirements of this transitional path in order to judge the security, economic or social situation in Tunisia. According to Mr. Laadhari, « managing the transitional period is harder than managing the situation of democracy. » He stressed that « what we need today as politicians is to find a political process that will be able to absorb the energies of society and to get out of this political polarization and to open space for dialogue and debate. »

achfak sayed



The first paper was introduced by Ashfaque Syed, a former chief editor of a leading Islamic monthly paper; he made several media presentations on Islam. Currently, he is an IT Management Consultant in Canada. Mr. Syed's presentation was on the topic of « Universal Dimensions of the Qur'an and Historic Specificity of Islam's Theological Sciences. » According to him, « the Arab Spring is the voice of Arab people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. In its collective voice against an all-powerful establishment, Tunisia can proudly claim to be the 'mother of the Arab Spring.' Their only cry was for the removal of despotism thereby harkening for the natural and innate demand for liberty, freedom, and justice for all, irrespective of race, religion, or sect ». He

believed that these natural human demands were robbed by decadent kings and dictators for many years and that the Tunisian people could not endure such a situation any longer. He further stressed that in the process of their revolution, Tunisians never mentioned any demand for an Islamic government led by Islamists. It is a key point to be noted. According to him, the very day of the revolution laid the foundation for democracy. What is intended from such meetings and conferences is to discuss the kind of democracy that needs to be established and implemented in these societies. He acknowledged that « as a geo-political entity, the Arab world is far from being homogenous. Social, political, economic, and ideological differences not only mark its component countries but also affect each of them within their own borders. These differences have blocked any social and political integration of the Arab world into a cohesive region as observed in the West. »

Ashfaque Syed Video – Bio & Abstract – Paper

Karima El Ouazghari



The second paper was presented by Karima El Ouazghari, Research Associate at the Peace Research Institute (PRIF) since 2009 and a PhD Candidate at Goethe University, Frankfurt. The topic of her paper was about « Islamist Movements from a Social Movement Theory Perspective: The Tunisian Nahdha within Changing Opportunity Structures. » In her research, Ms. El Ouazghari says that the recent electoral success and growing influence of Nahdha and other Islamist parties have provoked a highly controversial debate about their potential role and characteristics. The recent controversial discussions touch the core of an ongoing academic debate between the so-called « essentialists » and « contextualists », which analyzes Islamists from a different

perspective. While the former focus on the religious character of Islamist movements as the central explanatory factor, she said, the latter emphasize the way in which the social-political context shapes the behavior as well as the religious-political narratives of Islamist movements. Assuming that neither a pure essentialist nor an exclusively contextualist approach can explain Islamist behavior sufficiently, Ms. El Ouazghari sought out to answer the following two questions: 'What are the ideas about a just political and social order of Nahdha?' and 'To what extent are these ideas a result of the different experiences they made with the respective political context?'

The third paper presented on this panel was entitled « Identity and Modernity are Complementary and Democracy is the Protector of Both, » and was introduced by Mr. Belgacem Hassen, the Secretary General of Labor and Culture Party and the President of the Tunisian Association of Civic Education. Mr. Hassen began by stressing that there is no contradiction between the reconsideration of the components of identity and the process of modernization. He emphasized that democracy constitutes a security valve so as to realize « reconciliation with identity, to achieve a modernization process and to incarnate the bases of a democratic state » built upon the principles of sovereignty of people, pluralism, human rights and social justice. In his research paper, Mr. Hassan calls also for the necessity to reconcile between the Islamist and Nationalist currents that dominate the contemporary Tunisian landscape for the sake of enhancing and strengthening its burgeoning democracy.

Belgacem Hassen Video – Bio & Abstract

The fourth and final presentation was made by Mr. Moujib Al-Hamidi, renowned scholar and activist in Yemen, on the historical trajectory of Yemen's political landscape leading up to the 2011 uprising. He began his analysis back in 1948 with what is known as the 'Constitutional Uprising' against the monarchy, which failed not only because of the superior power of the monarchic establishment itself, but due to the lack of support from its Arab neighbors, who were mostly still monarchies themselves. It was not until the famous 'September-October Uprising' of 1960 that Yemeni protesters were able to topple the monarchy and establish a constitutional republic, though this success was short-lived, as Islamist and leftist Yemeni forces began fighting amongst themselves intermittently until 1983, even though they briefly joined forces to fight the resurgence of the monarchists in 1967. In the early 1990s, Yemen's first Islamist party – the Yemeni Coalition for Reform – was founded and went on to compete in the 1993 parliamentary elections, coming in third place. Having witnessed the beginning of the Algerian civil war, fears of similar government crackdown and mass killings led to the Coalition's decision to retreat and not assume the number of seats actually gained in the elections. In the period of talks that followed, Mr. Al-Hamidi explained how the Islamist, nationalist, and leftist political forces decided to enter the 2003 elections as a united front, and remained united for years. Al-Hamidi concluded that it is because of this united coalition that the Yemeni revolution succeeded with unanimous domestic, regional, and international support, and without any bloodshed.



Session #7

The Experience of Democratic Transition in other Arab Countries

This session was chaired by Mr. Zouhair Makhlouf, a member of Amnesty International in Tunisia. Mr. Makhlouf said that « the path of democratic transition in Tunisia is slow, because of the difficulties that the transitional stage witnesses. » Mr. Makhlouf then stressed that the success of the transition stage is « a bridge to the success of the entire track » and the Civil Society should play an important role to contribute to the democratic transition because it is one of the most important driving forces for achieving the goals of the revolution and for securing the foundations for a strong democracy.

Boutayeb ben naceur



The first paper was introduced by Mr. Omar Arbaoui, a researcher with the National Project for Research (NPR), on the subject of « The Experience of Algeria's Islamist Parties: A Reading in the Phenomenon of Splitting. » Mr. Arbaoui said that the partisan Islamist phenomenon in Algeria, despite its democratic experience, raises several issues, the most important of which are those related to the reasons of its creation, development, experience in the political participation and their relationship to political power through its opposition and participation in authority, in addition to the opinion of

Islamist political parties about democracy and its practices within the partisan frameworks. In this context, attitudes and opinions about the fact of the Islamist movement formation in Algeria differed wildly, as seen in his research. While some considered it an imported phenomenon from abroad, and specifically from the Arab East, others instead believed it to be a purely Algerian phenomenon born from the internal crisis the country had witnessed.

Omar Arbaoui – Bio & Abstract

The second paper of this panel was introduced by Dr. Maria Holt, Senior Lecturer on the Democracy & Islam Program at the University of Westminster in London, on the topic of « Yemeni Women: A Revolutionary Voice in the Public Sphere. » In her research, Dr. Holt mentioned that « as waves of popular protest swept through the Arab Middle East in 2011, many observers were surprised to see large numbers of women taking to the streets in the conservative state of Yemen. Not only were women demonstrating, often at great personal cost, to express their discontent with the ruling regime, some of them were assuming key roles. Far from the restricted beings of western imagination, Yemeni women, like women in other Arab states, have been raising their voices in the public sphere and calling for reform. Women's participation in the Yemeni revolution of 2011 raises pertinent questions within the debate on nation making in the Arab world. » She added that the role of women in the Arab revolutions is a key indicator of change and, as she explained through her own research, the particular experiences of Yemeni women show an effort to demonstrate that 'democracy' needs to be redefined in order to accommodate the complex negotiations of women with Patriarchy, Political Islam, Feminism and Violent Revolution. » She claimed that Yemeni women have been able to utilize Islamist conceptions of democracy in order to make a more effective contribution to the struggles for reform currently underway in their country.

Maria Holt – Bio & Abstract – Paper

Boutayeb Ben Naceur



The third paper was dually presented by Dr. Boutaib Ben Nasser, Assistant Professor at the Department of Law and Political Sciences at Wergla University, and Dr. Qawi Bouhania, Dean of the Department of Law and Political Sciences at Wergla University in Algeria. Their paper was about « The Arab Spring & the Democratic Transition in Algeria: A Critical Reading of Political Reform Laws. » Both researchers said that after the Arab Spring and the change that appeared after the sudden fall of some regimes such as Ben Ali's regime in Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak's regime in Egypt and Maamar Gadhafi's regime in Libya, the political ruling regime in Algeria adopted reforms. To avoid this wave from reaching his country, the Algerian President delivered a speech in April 15, 2011 in which he adopted the Political Reforms Initiative, the Representation of Women in the Electoral Councils, The Law of Media, the Law of Associations and the Incompatibility of the Parliamentary Protection. All these laws were preceded by the legislative elections. The research paper stressed the point that the extrapolation of the legal texts issued after the Arab Spring makes clear the fact that the political system has no firm will in adopting reforms that would effectively reinforce the paths of the democratic transition in Algeria, which turned these reforms into detour from the real reforms.

Boutaib Ben Nasser – Bio & Abstract

Qawi Bouhania – Bio & Abstract

The fourth paper was introduced by Mr. Baqer Darwish, Director of Media Relations at the Bahrain Human Rights Forum, who presented on the topic of « Bahrain and

the Crisis of the Democratic Transition. » In his paper, Mr. Darwish began by noting that Bahrain is governed by Al Khalifa's royal family, which moved from the Arab Island ruled by a hereditary regime two hundred years ago. The Bahraini population has cultural and political elements that enabled it to continuously struggle for a Democratic Transformation, yet, the tyrannical autocratic authority deal with it with suppression and more violations. He added that « the new rule of Hammed Ben Isa Al Khalifa adopted the establishment of a Constitutional Monarchy... However, he did not fulfill his promises through a distorted social contract. » This situation resulted in a new political crisis. In response to Arab Spring movement in the country, Mr. Darwish detailed how the state suppressed the popular movement, arrested its men, committed serious violations and sought the help of the Saudi forces to intensify suppression. New ways spread in the country mainly escaping sanctions and suspending law. The democratic transformation, which was called upon by the Bahraini people, was acknowledged by the texts of the national constitution, international conventions, and Basyouni's report, and yet security forces continued to prohibit and target the uprising, which, according to Mr. Darwish, is in no small part due to the presence and actions of American and British political and military forces in the Gulf countries.

Baqer Darwish – Bio & Abstract

Luncheon & Roundtable Discussion

Electoral Formula and the Tunisian Constituent Assembly

John Kerry



Now halfway through the second day of the CSID Annual Conference, Dr. John Carey, Professor in the Social Sciences and Chair of the Department of Government at Dartmouth College, spoke to the auditorium on the subject of « Electoral Formula and the Tunisian Constituent Assembly (NCA). » In his research, Mr. John Carey stated that in 2011, Tunisia held the first post-Arab Spring election for 217 members of a Constituent Assembly by what is known as a 'closed-list proportional representation'. The electoral formula used – known as the Hare Quota System – had enormous and deliberate consequences for the outcome of the vote, which, as Dr. Carey explained, resulted in the largest party attaining less than a

majority of seats, which in turn obliged it to negotiate with other groups in carrying out the Assembly mandate: drafting a national constitution. Dr. Carey used district-level data to demonstrate that, had the other most commonly used electoral formula been employed, the largest party would have been awarded a super-majority in the Assembly and been in a position to impose its will on the new constitution. Whether by design or not, Dr. Carey believes that the dispersal of power among alliances in the Assembly may well have been fortuitous for Tunisia at this « constitutional moment. » Going forward, he cautioned that the incentives for party system fragmentation generated by the Hare Quota System could impede the development of Tunisian democracy, and reformers in that country should consider replacing that formula with a divisor system.

John Carey Video – Bio & Abstract – Full paper



Session #8

The Difficulties and Challenges for the Democratic Transition in Tunisia

The session was chaired by Dr. Hamouda Ben Salama, a former Tunisian Minister of Health, and one of the original founders of the Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights.

The first presentation of this panel was delivered by Mr. Riadh Chaibi, Head of the Executive Committee in charge of the Ninth Conference of the Nahdha party and a founding member of the Maghreb Center for Strategic foreseeing, who spoke on the subject of « The Tunisian Governing Experience and the Challenges of Democratic Transitions. » Mr. Chaibi focused his talk on assessments of progress made by the time the second anniversary of the Tunisian revolution came around. He noted that a set of political norms are starting to develop, most importantly of which is a « stop in the end of the first year of this experience to ask some basic questions about the

Riadh chiibi



performance of this government, the soundness of its choices, the extent of its commitment to these choices and its chances to improve its governmental performance. » This one-year mandate has emerged as a symbolic benchmark by which progress is charted and assessed domestically, and which Mr. Chaibi believes to be a good indicator of political maturation and progression. At the top of this type of assessment is Nahdha, said Mr. Chaibi, the largest and most conservative party in the governing coalition. At the very least, he concluded, the emergence of this level of accountability and follow-up is a sign that the post-revolutionary political scene is being closely watched and monitored by Tunisians themselves.

Riadh Chaibi Video – Bio & Abstract

Sabina Henneberg



Mr. Chaibi was immediately followed by Sabina Henneberg, Doctoral candidate in the Africa Studies program of the Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and the second presentation on the subject of « Governing Uncertainty: The Provisional Administrations in Tunisia and Libya in 2011-2012. » Through her research findings, Ms. Henneberg explained that the revolutions that spread across the Arab world are forging vastly different paths, though it appears that none of the overthrown regimes show signs of return. In trying to both tackle the enormous difficulties brought

about by the political void and working to construct a new political order, Ms. Henneberg expressed great faith in the work undertaken by the transitional bodies in both Tunisia and Egypt, though caution must continue to be afforded. At the center of the current political turmoil are forces of political Islam, which, according to Ms. Henneberg, have « constituted a central issue in the literature on politics of the Arab world and particularly on the persistence of authoritarianism in the region. » It is this particular issue that Ms. Henneberg foresees will remain the focal point of politics, though it remains to be seen just what shape Islamic forces will take in both countries.

Sabina Henneberg Video – Bio & Abstract

The third presentation was made by Elizabeth Kassab, a scholar of contemporary Arab philosophy based in Beirut, on the topic of « Tunisian Intellectuals and the Struggle for Democracy in the Current Uprisings. » Dr. Kassab's research shed light on the « place and role of intellectuals » in the post-revolutionary political and social arenas. According to her analyses, their influence and credibility has been called into question once the social movements of the last two years manifested in ways much different to those predicted. More than that, Dr. Kassab sees that « the collaboration of some of them with the contested regimes have cast a serious shadow on their moral integrity and the courageous struggle of some others under the most adverse conditions has attracted more recognition, » leading to a re-evaluation of contemporary Arab intellectuals vis-a-vis the shifting political landscape. Their role remains pivotal, and so many of them have become actively involved in the shaping of « crucial junctures and political choices, warning against ethical and political dangers, addressing common fears, frustrations and hopes, putting the events in broader national and universal historical contexts. » It is her hope and prediction that Arab intellectuals will continue to play an integral role in Arab societies, though it will undoubtedly be different from years past.

Elizabeth Kassab Video – Bio & Abstract

The fourth talk was delivered by Dr. Rawdha Ben Othman, a Linguistics and Technology Lecturer at Tunis University, on the subject of « You can revolt but You can't rule: Views about Democracy and Political Participation from Tunisian Young Activists after the Revolution. » Dr. Ben Othman's presentation was on the findings of

Description : rawdha-ben-othman



research she and her team had done regarding the perceptions and attitudes of young Tunisian activists, and how they have changed from the revolution until today. It is young activists who comprise a large percentage of the disillusioned, who believe that they have been cast aside by current politicians, feeling as though Tunisia were « a new home that they had built but that other people occupy, » said Dr. Ben Othman. Their feelings of disillusionment run deep, explained Dr. Ben Othman, with many of the interviewed youth expressing a strong mistrust of politicians, of the actions and positions of political parties, and of the

current government. Not only did a large number of the interviewed youth express a belief that the ‘old guard’ was still in control, but they felt bitter about « the slow rate of change.. and keep threatening that they will go back to the streets as often as it takes. » Indeed, as Dr. Ben Othman concluded, the signs of optimism are high among these youth, but the real challenge is to find a way to turn their interest and passion into engagement.

Rawdha Ben Othman Video – Bio & Abstract

Session #9

The Relationship between Islamists and Secularists and How to Build a Common Ground Between Them (session I)

Moderating this parallel session panel was Mr. Kamal Ben Younes, who is President of Averroes Maghreb Europe Forum, Editor-in-chief of Assabah newspaper in Tunisia, and a MENA regional correspondent for BBC News.

Odil Moreau



The first paper was presented by Dr. Odil Moreau, Historian specializing in the Muslim-Mediterranean World, with a particular focus on Tunisia and Turkey, and was centered on the topic of « Relations between Islamists and Secularist in Tunisia: Turkey’s Influence as a Model? » In her research, Dr. Moreau began with the belief that the comparison to Turkey, a democratic state with a strong secular tradition, to Tunisia is quite an apt one. Tunisia’s Nahdha Party is being compared by many people to the Turkish AK Party because of the Islamic roots they share, their ties to conservative constituencies, and their vast popularity. Like the AK Party, Nahdha won a seat in every district of the country in the October 2011 elections, and therefore earned a seat in the coalition to establish an interim government and the Constituent Assembly to write a new constitution. But these are all

the more explicit similarities, said Dr. Moreau, whereas the two parties have more in common in less obvious ways. From a political standpoint, Nahdha and AKP champion democratic and pro-business messages, and enjoy great support throughout the country from people of all ideological and demographic backgrounds. In essence, said Dr. Moreau, these are two parties that effectively cross-cut the secularist-Islamist divide and offer an alternative to the polarized model of their recent histories.

Odil Moreau Bio & Abstract – Paper

The second presentation in this afternoon panel was delivered by Ms. Valeria Resta, who holds a Master’s degree in International Relations from LUISS University in Rome. The subject of her research paper was « Democracy as the only way ahead building a common ground between Islamists and Secularists in Post Revolution-Tunisia. » Through her research, Valeria found that the most pressing issue at the moment is « how to strengthen and enlarge the [coalition] existing within the Tunisian

Valeria Resta



National Constituent Assembly (ANC), encompassing the entire social life in order to create the premises for a shared Tunisian identity and to establish democracy as « the only game in town ». » Ms. Resta sees the stress between Islamist and secularist parties as a sort of false problem, especially as « both joined their forces in order to deconstruct authoritarianism... [dating back to] the 2005 '18th October Coalition for Rights and Freedom in Tunisia'. » Secularist and Islamist parties both agree that the extreme form of secularism found in French laïcité was « an inherited despotic project » and they also cite Islam and religious teachings as an « axiological horizon, aimed at reintroducing in public life what was removed by the Bourguibian process of nation-building. » With this in mind, concluded Ms. Resta, « the prerogatives of Islamists and secularists inside the ANC are not as irreconcilable or far apart as it may appear at face value. Thus, the distance between apparently opposite sides of the civil

society might shorten insofar as democracy is further entrenched and consolidated and the economic environment restored. »

Valeria Resta Bio & Abstract

Alexander Martin



The third paper in this panel was presented by Mr. Alexander Martin, Doctoral candidate at Durham University in the UK, and was titled « Relations between Islamists and Secularists, and how to build a common ground between them through the development of civil society. » Alexander stated he began his research with the discernible fact that the post-revolution era has shown that Tunisia is not a homogenous society of people with the same political beliefs. To protect against divisiveness and polarization in this transitional period, Mr. Martin emphasized the need to actively promote a Civil Political Culture, or CPC, of respect and tolerance, most easily and seamlessly through an active and independent civil society. Through his research, he found that the Tunisian civil society is indeed vibrant, but is ineffectual because of deep fragmentation. « I have spoken with

youth groups who have the same overall aim: to improve the lives and create opportunities for the Tunisian youth... Importantly, these groups consist of Islamists and secularists, who co-operate harmoniously, [and] yet the separate groups themselves, fail to work together, » he said; differing political beliefs on women's rights, entrepreneurial opportunities, or sports groups should not be an obstacle for society, but rather ought to be catalysts for cooperation. An example of a strong force in the Tunisian political and civil landscape is the UGTT, believes Mr. Martin, which was greatly influential throughout the revolution, and where membership is not based on political persuasion.

Alexander Martin Bio & Abstract

The fourth and final paper of this panel discussion was introduced by Mr. Abdullah Ali Sabry, Member of the Yemeni Journalists' Syndicate and a Member of the Arab Journalists' Union, which was about « The National Islamic Congress and the Experience of the Joint Front in Yemen. » Mr. Abdullah began with the fact that, during the last two decades, « the trend of political Islam had extended and spread at the expense of national and leftist parties and movements that were opposing the Arab autocratic regimes. » These regimes' inclination to suppression and domination hampered Islamists just as all other forces, and prevented all from reaching power, explained Mr. Sabry. « Such autocratic regimes benefited from the contradictions and conflicts among the opposition forces to direct the general affair and to monopolize

Abdullah Ali Sabry



wealth and power, » especially where the hereditary system was given great importance. Meanwhile, he said, the nationalistic Islamic Conference in Yemen emerged as a framework of dialogue between the Arab political elites, mainly those belonging to the opposition. The Conference was able to approximate the main two political trends in the Arab region, namely the nationalist, secularist trend and the Islamist one. The Conference's activity was expanded to include a number of Arab arenas that interacted with the Conference's ideas and theses despite some variations, and thus served as at least the beginning of a cooperative tradition to combat the hostilities and anxieties of the past.

Abdullah Ali Sabry Bio & Abstract

Session #10

The Relationship between Islamists and Secularists and How to Build a Common Ground Between Them (session II)

kacem kassir



The first paper of this panel was presented by Mr. Kassim Kassir, Lebanese journalist and political writer in the Lebanese « Al Safir » newspaper, and was titled « Relations between Islamists and Secularists – The Experience of the Nationalist Islamist Congress as a Model. » Mr. Qassem began with the premise that despite the intensity of conflict that is witnessed in Arab countries, it is possible to find out common areas « through bringing the conflict back to its nature as a political conflict rather than an intellectual, religious or ideological one. » « What is really crucial, » believed Mr. Kassir, « is to enhance the competitiveness to serve people and to realize the best model of ruling and administration... such an orientation requires

removing the characteristic of sacredness from the conflict and placing it in its natural position. » There are two options that Mr. Kassir sees as possible in moving forward to this goal: the first is to continue to the previous precedent in which « each side insulates and uproots the other, » but the second, more desirable option, is the one in which all political and social sides sit « around a dialogue table and find the shared points between them while keeping the conflicts in the intellectual and democratic spheres. »

Kassim Kassir Video — Bio & Abstract

salem rached



The second paper was about « The Status of Popular Reform Movement in the Gulf Countries Following the Arab Spring, » and was introduced by Mr. Mohamed Errashid, Assistant Managing Editor at The Kuwaiti Society Magazine and the Chair of the Board of Directors for Diryan Consulting & Oil Company. Mr. Errashid lauded the Arab Spring uprisings as starting a wave of democratic change not limited merely to the countries who experienced these uprisings, but to the whole region and indeed the world. He spoke of the necessary but difficult 'clash of values' that have been brought about, where the dormant individual of the past is being countered by a new, active community and nation. « New agreements and relationships

between our nations and all others nations » are being constructed, he said, and are also helping to ferment the democratic culture needed to manifest the aspirations of the Arab people.

Mohamed Errashid Video – Bio & Abstract

rawen malhiss



The third presentation on the panel was presented by Ms. Rawan Melhiss, who holds a Master's degree in General Politics in Islam from the University of Islamic Studies in Qatar. Her paper shed light on « The Democratic Transition in Tunisia and the role of the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT). » Ms. Melhiss says in her research that organized actors such as the UGTT should keep its dynamic and vivid role and to « revive its resurgence to book a place on the round-table for policy making process. » She hinted also at the point that labor unions might be a victim of political abuse by different political

actors, which might use it as a façade for their political agendas and interests. Therefore, labor unions should always keep in mind what they have been created for: serving the labor constituencies of the country. Furthermore, Ms. Melhiss noted how the UGTT has also been made as an umbrella organization, under which many social forces have put pressure on the state to make certain demands. This, according to Ms. Melhiss, has helped the base of the UGTT keep an eye on the performance of its own leadership and to rectify their acts whenever they become manipulated by the state. Moreover, the dynamic actions of the UGTT has given them quite a bit of political weight, which the state considers highly before stepping any step forward. All in all, Ms. Melhiss was quite favorable of the path forged by the UGTT, which she believes has proved itself to be a powerful social and political actor that participates significantly in the process of policy making.

Rawan Melhiss Video – Bio & Abstract

mahmoud charf edin



The fourth paper on this panel was presented by Mr. Mahmoud Sherf Eddine, political analyst, writer, and contributor to numerous Arab and international newspapers, and was entitled « Relations Between Islamists and Secularists and How to build Common Ground between Them. » Building upon the insightful historical picture provided earlier in the panel discussion, Mr. Sherf Eddine focused his address on the ramifications and lessons learned from them as Yemen moves forward with its vast array of political and social changes. The country's dark past of indiscriminate government repression and the negotiated and

long-lasting coalition between Islamist, leftist, and nationalist forces meant that the Yemeni revolution was one that bridges all gaps and produced a united front against a weakened government, he explained. It is only until very recently, with planned elections forthcoming, that Mr. Sherf Eddine fears a potentially difficult breakdown of the political opposition, though it does not appear to have begun taking root. In spite of this fear, however, he does not foresee any social fragmentation or hostility thanks to the long and entrenched culture of understanding and common interest.

Mahmoud Sherf Eddine – Bio & Abstract

Session #11

The Role of the International Community in Strengthening Democracy in the Arab World

The final session before the concluding session of the conference was moderated by Dr. Alaya Allani, Associate Professor at Tunis University and renowned political analyst.

Abdelhamid Abdeljaber



The first paper of this panel discussion was introduced by Dr. Abdelhamid Abdeljaber, Professor at Rutgers University, on the topic of « Social Media and the Arab Spring – The Vehicle that made the Revolution Possible. » Mr. Abdeljaber noted with pride and respect the incredible chain of events now known as the Arab Spring that finally gave voice to the long-list of grievances against oppressive Arab regimes. Those grievances kept piling up over the years because, according to Dr. Abdeljaber, of the lack of communication between dissident forces in Arab countries. Renowned news broadcasting channel, Al-Jazeera, also aided in the quick circulation of news coverage on the progress, content, and nature of the Arab Spring protests, giving it the credibility and legitimacy it needed to succeed, he continued. Once new technologies in the form of social media started

proliferating, it became possible for « a single flame to explode » into mass protest, concluded Dr. Abdeljaber, so much of the credit is due to the increased number and ease of communications technologies.

Abdelhamid Abdeljaber – Bio

Edmund Ratka



The second presentation was delivered by Mr. Edmund Ratka, Associate Researcher at the Center for Applied Policy Research at the University of Munich and Research Fellow at the Chair of International Politics at the University of Passau, on the topic of « The German-Tunisian Transformation Partnership – A Model for Supporting Democracy in the Arab World? » Mr. Ratka's goal was to elucidate the guiding vision of the German government and civil society partners in assisting Tunisia's transition to democracy, and to provide an assessment of the progress made and the challenges that remain. According to him, Germany has made it a top priority to assist the Tunisian democratic project because it sees Tunisia as an optimal future model for the rest of the Arab world. In addition to setting the groundwork for the opening of a German-Tunisian University Institution, noted Mr.

Ratka, Germany has set aside over 60 million euros of its Federal Foreign Office budget for direct assistance in 2012 alone, and intends on continuing this level of assistance in the foreseeable future. Proud of the positions his government has taken, Mr. Ratka conveyed the explicit desire of Germany to continue to stand beside Tunisia in support of its democratic transition.

Edmund Ratka – Bio & Abstract

Neil Hicks



The third paper presented covered the subject of « The Role of the United States in Supporting Democratic Transition in the Arab World » and was delivered by Mr. Neil Hicks, policy advisor of non-profit advocacy group, Human Rights First. Speaking on the rhetoric and actions of U.S. President Obama's administration, Mr. Hicks noted the United States' unequivocal support for the Tunisian revolution as part of a reconfiguration of its relationships with Arab regimes and the Arab people. He said that the American political establishment is quite aware of the misguided relationship it maintained for decades with corrupt Arab rulers, and is working on repairing the damage done to its image and reputation within Arab and Muslim societies. In particular, Mr.

Hicks conveyed the fact that the United States is working on providing financial and technical assistance to the Tunisian economy, upon which the success of the democratic transition hinges. The U.S. has expressed its commitment to supporting the Tunisian democratic experiment as part and parcel of its support for freedom and human rights in the Arab world, concluded Hicks, and will continue on its multi-pronged approach to do so.

Neil Hicks Video – Bio & Abstract

Kamal Abdallah Harouni, Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations and specialized in the International Strategy, was the last speaker of the panel and focused his address on the subject of « The Security establishments Reform in Tunisia: Reality and Ambition. » Dr. Harouni began his talk by discussing the parties who think of turning the Tunisian people back to the dictatorship and domination of past. He stated that the only party that has interest in spreading anarchy and maintaining a corrupted regime is the party that fears the appearance of the truth and strives for, by all means, misleading anyone who seeks it. In addition, there is a competition among external forces to be present and to change the direction of events as to serve their interests. This is what happened really in Tunisia directly after the revolution and was materialized by many cases of killing, robbing, looting, burning and collision between wide factions of protesters and security forces. Dr. Harouni believed that with the great number of positive changes spurred about by the Arab Spring came chaos and insecurity as a result to the breakdown of the security and defense establishments. Therefore, he concluded, the state of security instability prevented other governmental organizations from doing their job and applying the law in the service of the citizen and the society after the success of the revolution.

Concluding Remarks

As the 2nd Annual CSID Conference draws to an end, Dr. Radwan Masmoudi, thanked all for their active participation and patience in what was a charged and timely two-day event. The concluding session of the conference brought together Tunisian politicians and international policy analysts to provide a vision for the future and assessment of the progress already made.

First to address the audience was Dr. Mustapha Ben Jaafar, President of the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly. Dr. Ben Jaafar expressed pride in the progress made since the Tunisian revolution of 2011, but warned against deviating from the goals of the revolution by « failing to institute real political and economic changes that would guarantee freedom and dignity for all. » One discernible fact uncovered by the Arab Spring protests, said Mr. Ben Jaafar, is the magnitude of the quiet suffering endured by the people when they are overpowered by oppressive regimes. Ben Jaafar went on to identify political violence as a growing problem, as a « cancer in the political

Mustapha Ben Jaafar



sphere; » « political assassination is not in our tradition, » he said, speaking about the recent assassination of opposition figure Chokri Belaid, and is something that all politicians must unite against to denounce and defeat. Hopeful, Ben Jaafar concluded his address by insisting that Tunisia has always been a country that promotes dialogue and understanding between all, and, especially at this critical juncture in its history, must gather all « creative visions to contribute to building the future Tunisia. »

Mustapha Ben Jaafar Video

Layla Bahria



Following Mr. Ben Jaafar's address was the second presentation of the panel, Mrs. Laila Bahria, newly-appointed State Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the coalition government. She began with the assessment that, due to the economic inequalities and oppressions of the past, it is quite understandable and normal that expectations post-revolution are running quite high in the country. To address the many problems faced by the population, the political establishment and the burgeoning civil society must engage in « the culture of dialogue, » and realize that there is a difference between « the needs of institutionalization and the

needs of reform, » both of which must be addressed simultaneously. « The revolution was itself a phase, and the time to manifest its goals is another altogether, » continued Bahria, citing the importance of clarity and decisiveness in politics. She went on to discuss the long and difficult process of drafting a new constitution, which involved specialists and civil society representatives at every turn, something she noted with admiration. Although the constitution will soon be passed, Mrs. Bahria sought to remind Tunisians that the road ahead remains long and arduous, and that their success will not only be their own, but will be a success for the region and indeed the world.

Larry Diamond



The third concluding address was made by Dr. Larry Diamond, Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Founding Co-Editor of the Journal of Democracy, and Professor of Sociology and Political Science at Stanford University. For many reasons, Tunisia is seen in the West as the model to emulate in the Arab world, said Diamond; it has, however, « come as somewhat of a shock to me, and I know many of my colleagues who come to Tunisia, to encounter the very high level of political polarization and distrust between Islamist and secular political forces. » Quoting political theorist Robert Dahl, Dr. Diamond called for the deliberate and immediate incorporation of « a system of mutual security » in both Tunisia and Egypt in order for their democratic transitions to have any chance of succeeding, because « democracies cannot wait for long periods of incremental progress. » Although Diamond believes there is no one constitutional formula that is right for all countries – or even right for all time within one country – he warned against ‘a majoritarian political system, which deliberately empowers an electoral majority or even a plurality with decisive power to govern unilaterally,’ which he noted seems to be well understood in Tunisia.

Speaking on the issue of transitional justice, he also warned against pursuing « too wide a purge creates a broad class of ‘losers’ with a stake in sabotaging the new political order. » In conclusion, Dr. Diamond laid out a number of specific yet comprehensive recommendations to the Constituent Assembly and the coalition government, and ended with the caution that building broad national consensus must remain a priority in order for Tunisia's transitional period to stand a chance at flourishing.

Larry Diamond Video – Paper

The final address of this concluding session was made by Tunisia's current Minister of Education, Mr. Salem Labyadh. « Political violence, cases of rape, and other

Salem Labyedh



despicable crimes are embarrassments and a burden of us all, » began Mr. Labyadh, and all fall back on the importance of education and « the urgent need to increase literacy and reinvigorate the education system in the country ». In spite of the fact that the Tunisian revolution, and indeed the revolutions in neighboring Arab countries, were staged in the streets by people of all walks of life, the current political order has been rushing along and has forgotten to prioritize the re-education of the masses. If this level of negligence continues, effectively creating deep rifts in the society between those more and less educated and literate, Tunisia's democratic transition is doomed to failure. « It is not possible for democracy to rise out of poverty or

destitution so long as the political elite does not pursue real social democratic equality [through education], » believed Mr. Labyadh. While this is a difficult and long-term process, and one that ought to also include civil society organizations, Mr. Labyadh expressed confidence in the work that has already been undertaken in all regions of the country.

Salem Labyadh Video

After over forty presentations and poignant analyses from speakers from all across the world, addressing the cases of established and transitioning democracies the world over and offering examples and recommendations to Tunisia, the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy in Tunisia (csidtunisia) proudly concluded its second annual conference. While none of the presenters, politicians, conference participants, or journalists in attendance were under any illusions of an easy transition, all were able to benefit greatly not only from the thoughtful insights of each and every address, but from the invigorating conversations and debates that took place over lunch and in coffee breaks. Since its foundation as an active and unrelenting civil society organization, CSID has proven to be a key bridge and facilitator in the political establishment of Tunisia, bridging the gaps between academics and theoreticians, activists and politicians to formulate comprehensive solutions to the country's many challenges. As evidenced in this wildly successful conference, CSID has enjoyed great and lasting credibility with all major Tunisian political parties and civil society organizations, as well as with international specialists and political figures, and fully intends on continuing in this line of work to build a genuine and vibrant democratic order in Tunisia.



