

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN TUNISIA:
THE ENNAHDHA MOVEMENT 2011-2015**

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the subject

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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January 2019

Declaration

I, Graeme Bradley, student number 57648859, declare that '**A Critical Analysis of Political Islam in Tunisia: The Ennahdha Movement 2011-2015**' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Acknowledgements

When starting on this journey I was convinced that it would be a straightforward process. I was convinced that my personal experiences in Tunisia as a diplomat from 2012-2016 would write themselves. However the journey has been long, and along the way I have learnt that the academic world is filled with theories which very rarely actually correspond to the real world experiences of people who are on the ground and living experiences which cannot be theorised and which do not consider whether there is a gap in research or not, what the research question may be or how they are going to reference the work of others. I am grateful to the guidance provided by my supervisor to turn this into an academic paper. I am however most grateful to my wife Annalize and my son James, without whom I would not have gotten to the end of this journey. Their support, patience and motivation are deserving of degrees on their own.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AKP	Justice and Development Party
ARP	Assembly of Representatives of the People
CPR	Congress for the Republic
FJP	Freedom and Justice Party
FSN	National Salvation Front
IS	Islamic State
ISIE	Higher Independent Electoral Commission
LTDH	Tunisian Human Rights League
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East North Africa
MTI	Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique
NCA	National Constituent Assembly
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
RCD	Rassemblement du Courant Democratique
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UGTT	Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
UTICA	Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat

Abstract

This study delves into the post-Arab Spring period when political Islam was at the forefront of the drive for democratisation in the MENA region. The theories of political Islam and liberal democracy are used as the theoretical framework for the study. A qualitative approach was undertaken with a focused textual analysis of a variety of academic papers and opinion pieces on the theory of political Islam in order to discuss the compatibility of political Islam and democracy. The study makes use of Tunisia and the Ennahdha Movement as a case study to assess the practical application of political Islam. The research is limited to the 2011-2015 period in Tunisia in order to specifically make use of the electoral periods to determine the political Islam credentials of the Ennahdha Movement. What the study has determined is that there is sufficient evidence of the symbiotic relationship between political Islam and liberal democracy, making political Islam a viable approach for political movements in Muslim majority countries.

This study contributes to the literature on political Islam as well as analysis of the post-Arab Spring developments in Tunisia. It provides a more in-depth focus on what makes Ennahdha a political Islam movement and uncovers its liberal democratic character.

Keywords: Political Islam, liberal democracy, Ennahdha Movement, Tunisia, Arab Spring, elections, Rached Ghannouchi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Introduction

Political Islam, broadly defined by (Fuller, 2002, p. 48) as, "the belief that the Koran and the Hadith have something important to say about the way society and governance are organised", emerged as the viable political path following years of authoritarianism in the countries of the Arab Spring in 2011. As a political theory, political Islam developed over several centuries through the political experiences of Islamist leaders starting with the Prophet Muhammed and his successors. According to Campbell (2008, p. 436) the Prophet Muhammed did not view politics as a part of the divine, but rather as a human creation built through deliberation and utility. As Islam developed its worldview of politics, majority Muslim states from North Africa to Asia experienced their own challenges with finding approaches to political governance that were in sync with or complimentary to their beliefs. Countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Senegal, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E) and Morocco have adopted varying roles of religion in their socio-political make-up and have proven stable and economically successful. In North Africa especially, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, followed the route of autocratic secular leadership which dominated the independence years of the 1950s until the advent of the Arab Spring. Despite being home to majority Muslim populations these countries were not able to reconcile religion and politics, resulting in conflict between government and Islamist movements.

With the increasingly Islamist tendencies (Taspinar, 2015) of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) as inspiration and Qatar as funder (Bryant, 2014), Islamist parties rose to prominence in North Africa between 2011 and 2013 following the Arab spring. These movements took advantage of their superior organisation and grass-roots reach developed within the context of their religious based outreach (Disler, 2013) and strong sense of community and social work to initially rise to power in constituent assembly elections in Tunisia (2011), Egypt (2012) and Libya (2014)¹. The fractured non-Islamist, and mostly

¹ While many differences do exist between the experiences of Islamist political movements in the three countries, the number of similarities is overwhelming. At the core lies the common relationship with the MB and its international movement which has united proponents of political Islam from the three countries.

secular, oppositions were in most instances unable to organise themselves in the initial period after the 2010 and 2011 uprisings in North Africa. In Egypt alone, 36 new political parties emerged, of which a third were Islamist and a further third were secular. These secular parties were mostly centre-left parties such as the Social Democratic Party and the Equality & Development Party. In total 41 parties took part in the elections (Teti, 2011). In Tunisia 81 parties and numerous independent candidates took part in the elections in October 2011. Parties such as Afek Tounes, The Free Patriotic Union (UPL), Al-Moubedra and the Tunisian Pirate party emerged as new secular parties. Due to years of effective single party statehood both in Tunisia and Egypt political prowess and true party politics were eroded (Schäfer, 2014). Political participation and activism were not popular during the years leading up to 2011 as critical voices were either imprisoned, tortured or even murdered. Opposition movements chose the safety of exile to raise awareness and strengthen their base in the hope that with international backing they would be able to participate in free and fair elections. With the ruling parties being disbanded or made illegal both countries experienced the emergence of opposition parties consisting of members of the former ruling parties resulting in the parties being viewed as too close ideologically to the freshly deposed rulers and therefore less attractive to the electorate.

The Islamist movement in Tunisia predated the independence from France, however as French culture and political bureaucracy became entrenched into the political DNA of Tunisia, its politicians drifted further away from Islam and even sought to undermine and suppress the Islamists. Islam remained the main religion in Tunisia, but its political role was made redundant by the post-independence political leadership. Instead Islamists focussed on socio-economic efforts, especially with the increasingly marginalised population groups who did not benefit from a growing culture of corruption and nepotism (Esposito et al., 2016, p. 181). During the late 1990s and early 2000s the Ennahdha Movement emerged as a consolidated home of Islamists in Tunisia. Despite government pressures, the Ennahdha Movement started to show signs of growth and became more and more politically motivated as it tried to stand up to the deterioration of rights experienced by its supporter base. With a politically astute and active leadership developing support in exile, Ennahdha was becoming an unofficial opposition in Tunisian politics although doing so from exile. As public discontent grew in Tunisia in late 2010 and resulted in the President fleeing the country, Ennahdha's leadership was allowed to

return to the country and formally take up political activities, eventually winning most of the support in the 2011 elections and forming the country's first Islamist government.

However, the defeat of Islamist parties aligned to the Egypt based Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist movements in the Libyan elections of 2014, and a military coup in July 2013 that deposed the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice party in Egypt, threatened to end the popularity of governance by political Islam, only two years after its rise to prominence following the Arab Spring. According to the populations and secular politicians in these countries, Islamist parties rising to power (Jamaoui, 2014) were a causal factor for the increase in terrorism and extremism experienced in the region which had an impact on the decline in popularity of Islamist parties. However, the aforementioned causal linkage is difficult to prove given that there were several other causal factors which led to an increase in terrorism and extremism in the second decade of the 21st century. Amongst these rising youth unemployment, increased Islamophobia, radicalisation through social media and the emergence of radical Islamist groups who previously enjoyed the support of Western nations in regional conflicts were likely more influential.

The initial lack of organisation, resources and political base exhibited by secular parties in 2011 and 2012 was replaced by an improvement in the organisation of secular political movements such as Nidaa Tounes in Tunisia and the parties making up the House of Representatives (HoR) in Libya. These parties often have links to the deposed regimes and with strong desires to separate politics and the State from religion. In Tunisia and Egypt secular political movements, with the support of youths organised through social media, were behind the uprisings which sparked the Arab Spring, Islamist parties and forces only entered the political arena after the uprisings as many of the leadership of Islamist parties were imprisoned or exiled. As secular parties became more organised, and better funded they were able to appeal to a larger political base which preferred to leave religion out of politics. Islamists could no longer simply rely on a moral approach to politics and principled positions related to their faith, they had to appeal to the wider audience in order to retain their support levels and as such were forced to reconsider some of their more conservative positions. In the case of Tunisia, the Islamist Ennahdha Movement, which was thrust into power following elections in 2011, was left with no option but to voluntarily cede power to a technocratic government in the face of weeks of popular protests. The latter outcome came about as the result of a negotiated roadmap proposed

by a powerful "Quartet" comprising the Tunisian Lawyers Guild, the *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT) Trade Union, the *Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat* (UTICA) union of business leaders and the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights (Schäfer, 2014). Ultimately, Ennahdha was relegated to second position in parliamentary and presidential elections in 2014².

1.2 Background to the research

Tunisia gained its independence from France in 1956. Its first President, Habib Bourguiba, was viewed by the Tunisian people as an enlightened man who sought to take Tunisia out of the bonds of colonialism and into the world as a respected member of the community of nations. Bourguiba "abolished polygamy, legalised abortion, allowed women to contract their own marriages, sue for divorce, and marry non-Muslims, a liberation of women that today remains unmatched in the Arab world" ("Habib Bourguiba", 2000). These decisions and rights led to the formation of a modern secular state which was the trademark of Tunisia under Bourguiba. While remaining a Muslim state, Tunisia showed very little of the characteristics of Islamism in daily life. The changes were quite remarkable and included attempts to liberalise fasting during Ramadan ("Habib Bourguiba", 2000).

President Bourguiba was the first Tunisian leader to challenge traditional Islamist views in the late 1950s and in 1960 when he proposed breaking the fast in order to fulfil the development project (McCarthy, 2014). This challenge eventually led to a crackdown by the government and security forces on Islamists and Islamist movements by 1981 (McCarthy, 2014). This trend was continued by his successor, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali (1987-2010), who carried out a medical Palace Coup³ in 1987 to oust Bourguiba. Ben Ali never attempted to align himself with the Islamist movements in Tunisia. Instead he continued the oppression of Islamist

² Legislative elections 26 October 2014. Nida Tounes: 1,279,941 votes, 37.56%, 86 seats; Ennahda Movement: 947,014 votes, 27.79%, 69 seats (loss of 20 seats); Free Patriotic Union: 140,873 votes, 4.13%, 16 seats; Popular Front: 124,046 votes, 3.64%, 15 seats. (Source: <http://www.isie.tn/documents/Décision-Instance-supérieure-indépendante-pour-les-élections-relatives-proclamation-des-résultats-définitifs.pdf>)

³ On 7 November 1987, a panel of medical doctors provided Ben Ali with a medical report declaring Bourguiba incompetent. Ben Ali enacted Article 57 of the Constitution and removed Bourguiba from office. Bourguiba had been declared President for life by the Tunisian Assembly in 1975.

movements through arrests, trials and exile (Koplow, 2011). The success of consecutive regimes in undermining the Islamist movement, both in terms of religious practice and political activity, became evident in the almost total absence of the Islamists in the protests that rocked Tunisia in 2010 and 2011. Islamist movements were unable to organise themselves effectively and therefore could not meaningfully participate in the “Jasmine Revolution” (AFP, 2011) of Tunisia.

Under the rule of Ben Ali, a system of patronage and corruption evolved and became entrenched in all levels of the Tunisian state (Churchill, Nucifora, & Rijkers, 2014). Bribery, extortion and corruption became common place and led to many Tunisian families and politicians to become very wealthy, thanks to their proximity and pliability towards President Ben Ali and his family (Freund, Nucifora, & Rijkers, 2014). Tunisia was viewed as a democracy in the sense that elections were held regularly, and some political opposition was tolerated (Sadiki, 2002). In addition, the Ben Ali regime’s ability to maintain stability and suppress radical elements was viewed favourably by the West. Tunisia was even one of the first country’s to be on track to meet several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (ECA, 2012). Political events in 2010 however uncovered an elaborate propaganda façade which covered many underlying issues of underdevelopment and unemployment which the outside world was oblivious to (Cavatorta & Haugbølle, 2012).

Events in Tunisia are widely credited as the spark which ignited what has been coined by the western media as the Arab Spring (Alhassen, 2012) in much of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The Jasmine Revolution referred specifically to the uprisings in Tunisia and was the name given to the uprising by Tunisians⁴. The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a fruit vendor in the central Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid in December 2010 was the tipping point which spread the growing unrest of under-developed central Tunisia to the rest of the country. Self-immolation was becoming a more frequent form of suicide in

⁴ The Tunisian blogger Zied El Hani is a renowned journalist in Tunisia and was also the President of the Tunisian Journalists Union and a Presidential Candidate in 2014. His reference to the Jasmine Revolution was picked up by Western Media as well as the activists on Facebook who were organising the protests in Tunisia. As an activist prior to the fall of Ben Ali he was a dissenting voice in the Tunisian media against the crackdown on media freedoms in the country.

the region and amongst a mostly Islamist population whose religion did not condone suicide or self-desecration (Kimball, 2011). However, desperation gave way to extreme measures and despite these acts of self-immolation not being politically motivated, they became a focal point around which opposition groups saw an opportunity for political gain (Kimball, 2011). The police state fortified under the Ben Ali regime was the ‘stick’ used to ensure that the volatile sectors of the Tunisian populace who were not privy to advantages of proximity and corruption, was not able to rise against Ben Ali (Lutterbeck, 2015). With Mohamed Bouazizi’s public act of desperation, the oppressed population defied their oppressors and took to the streets at great personal danger to take a stand. The protests which followed in Tunisia led to not only the downfall of the Ben Ali regime, but also inspired similar protest movements across the MENA region with varying degrees of success. The desire by the Tunisian people for a true democracy was captured in the slogans of the revolution.

Secularism and nationalism had become so enshrined in the Tunisian psyche that the slogans of the revolution had nothing to do with religion, but rather focussed on the principles of freedom, dignity and human rights. Similar slogans appeared in Egypt, both examples pointing to the successful oppression of Islamists by the secular regimes in the two countries. These slogans called for “karama, tharwa and haqooq (dignity, revolution and rights)” (Alhassen, 2012) and became popular in the graffiti which became an accepted art form in the MENA region during this time.

Despite this entrenched secularism, years of dictatorial rule left a strong sense of suspicion against anyone with links to the former regimes. Into this environment stepped the Islamist movements of Ennahdha and the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia and Egypt respectively, both parties were opportunistic in their decision to enter into the political race. In Tunisia, the youths that took to the streets disappeared, mostly behind their computers and social media, leaving a vacuum which needed to be filled if the gains of the revolution were to be consolidated. Ennahdha’s exiled leader, Rached Ghannouchi, returned to Tunisia and immediately started laying the groundwork for Ennahdha’s rise to power. This emergence of a new political force was not well received by the established political elite who had survived the post Ben Ali political purge and saw a push-back from secular parties with strong ties to the former regime (Jamaoui, 2014). On the ground in Tunisia many of the middle class were yearning for a return to the way things were before the revolution, however without a dictator at the helm.

The deficiency of trust in the Islamist Ennahdha Movement and its ability to effectively govern a democratic Tunisia without the imposition of strict Islamic laws emerged as a central debate within Tunisia and garnered the interest of the international community. This gave rise to the primary objective and research question of the study, whether Political Islam and democracy are compatible?

1.3 Problem Statement

After decades of dictatorship Tunisia, Egypt and Libya needed to find a new political way as demanded by protestors. The initial problem in Tunisia was what political approach would be acceptable to the people. Through analysis of the protests and the demands of the protestors it has been shown that the demands of the protestors aligned with democratic principles and it was assumed therefore that a democracy was to be pursued. Western democracies such as the United States of America (USA), France and the United Kingdom (UK) raced to provide support by seeking to entrench democratic principles in Tunisia as a country and in its new crop of politicians. However, in doing so Western nations failed to anticipate the popularity of Islamism and by extension Political Islam amongst the Tunisian electorate. Political Islam was immediately viewed sceptically due to its relationship with conservative application of Islam in the Middle East as well as its links to extremism in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Iraq. As such its potential as a new form of democracy was ignored and not thoroughly researched. What this study proposes to do is to analyse both Political Islam and democracy, assess their compatibility and by using the case study of Tunisia answer the question whether Political Islam is a viable option for democratic governance in majority Muslim countries seeking to reconcile the desires for democracy with the moral and ethical tenets of the Islam religion.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the research will be;

1. To discuss the compatibility of the theories of Political Islam and democracy
2. To historicise the evolution of Ennahdha from a social movement into a political party practising Political Islam.
3. To evaluate Ennahdha's campaigning and performance during the 2011 elections, critically evaluating the objectives, statements and policies of the Ennahdha movement.

4. To trace the changes to Ennahdha's approach during the 2013 to 2014 electoral period and identify the factors which influenced Ennahdha's approach to the electoral period, including venturing into coalition politics.

1.5 Key Concepts

1.5.1 Political Islam

The concept of organising people and laws, and how leaders should approach this has always formed part of Islamic rule, particularly during the Ottoman Empire as Muslim leaders were faced with governing over non-believers as well as believers. As a result of the changing nature of world politics during this period as well as the emergence of westernised approaches to government and ultimately politics which started to influence Islamic leaders of the time, this period allowed for the most development in the theory of political Islam. Political Islam developed as a political theory based upon the principles of Islam. Mandaville (2010) provides what many scholars of political Islam view as the most comprehensive overview of the historical roots of political Islam and its development through religious political and legal debate amongst the Muslim communities of the world over several centuries, starting with the Prophet Muhammed. In tracing the historical development of political Islam, he also shed light on the role of globalisation in influencing the Shia and Sunni branches of Islam as Western political practice met traditional Islamic governance. Those that analyse political Islam from a Marxist perspective, such as (Meyer, 2002, para.1) argue that it can be defined as "a developing world ideology of mobilisation and legitimacy". In the case of Ennahdha, a more moderate Islamic school of thought is pursued, where an emphasis is placed on governance through application of the broad principles of Islam rather than a strict interpretation of the Koran and Hadith and adoption of Sharia.

1.5.2 Democracy (or non-authoritarian governance) and its application in Tunisia

The theory of democracy and its generally accepted definition are critical in establishing the baseline against which to measure the application of political Islam in the case of Ennahdha. Liberal democracy has been the standard against which democracy in practice has been judged, especially by the West. The following 14 tenets of liberal democracy (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2011) are widely accepted, citizen participation; equality; political tolerance;

accountability; transparency; regular free and fair elections; economic freedom; control over the abuse of power; bill of rights; acceptance of the outcome of elections; Human Rights; multi-party system; neutrality of state institutions; rule of law.

Several authors are pointing out that the assumptions upon which democracy itself is based no longer hold as firm (Triffit, 2014; Chellaney, 2016; Freeland, 2012). The globalised world takes liberal democracy outside of its comfortable assumptions of elections and elected representatives dictating the course of action of States (Bellini, 2014). In fact, the tools of social media and public opinion precipitated the outcomes of the Arab Spring. The concept of people driven democracy has taken on a new avenue through the often-anonymous medium of social media. Attempts to steer post-conflict situations towards the adoption of liberal democratic values and approaches have had mixed results and bring to question whether liberal democracy is a suitable fit for post conflict States or even the Arab world.

Democracy in the Tunisian context needs to be understood to explain the approach to political Islam followed by Ennahdha. Post-Revolutionary Tunisia has a rich history of consensus-based governance coupled with a strong desire for multi-party elections and a decentralisation of power. The hybrid parliamentary and presidential system was adopted in the belief that it would prevent a return to the "presidency for life" tendencies shown by Bourguiba and Ben Ali since 1956. Joffé (2011:512) points to the argument made by Daniel Brumberg that regimes such as that of Ben Ali had adopted and "illiberal democracy" leading to liberalised autocracies. The premise being that certain freedoms and rights were conferred upon the citizens, however never in sufficient quantities to threaten the autocratic hold of the regime. With the citizen revolt displayed in 2010 and 2011 this illusion of a liberal democracy in Tunisia crumbled. Joffé (2011:518) highlighting the constitutional tradition in Tunisia since the fight against French colonialism, offers the perspective that despite repression from the Ben Ali regime, independent movements remained active and were able to resurrect the democratic ideals which were initially espoused by both Bourguiba and Ben Ali when they first came to power, and which the Tunisian population managed to uphold. The constituent assembly, interim technocratic government and the constitution were all adopted based on consensus and broad-based political dialogue (Chayes, 2014). Ennahdha's behaviour within the democratic transition period is critiqued by Theodorakis (2013), with specific reference to transgressions

of freedoms widely associated with democracy, namely freedom of expression, the press and women.

1.6 Study Rationale

Domestic and international opposition to Islamist parties rising to power in North African states requires further study to better understand why in Muslim majority countries political Islam is viewed as an opposition to democracy. The use of Tunisia as a case study will provide an opportunity to unpack the performance of an Islamist movement through two election cycles using the elections results as the data set. The study of the practical application of political Islam can only be done if there is an understanding of the theoretical principles of both political Islam and democracy. The study will therefore examine the Ennahdha Movement's adherence to political Islam and the principles of democracy.

Mr Rached Ghannouchi, the leader of the Ennahdha Movement, is widely viewed as one of the main defenders of political Islam. The links between his Ennahdha Movement and the Egypt based Muslim Brotherhood are strong. The Muslim Brotherhood is considered as the spiritual home of political Islam, therefore its influence on the brand of political Islam exercised by Ennahdha and its leader is uncontested and will be analysed in the theoretical understanding of political Islam. While Turkey is well studied, researched, and often cited as an example for political Islam, especially when looking at its gradual Islamisation over the past decade, the ruling party under its leader Erdogan, has always shied away from being labelled as a party following the principles of political Islam. In addition to the practical study of Tunisia's Ennahdha Movement, the Turkish AKP will be used to provide additional context to the theoretical understanding of the principles of political Islam. In the case of Turkey, the initial drive to maintain secularism and remove elements of Islamic teaching in schooling went against these principles. It is my opinion that Turkey and its ruling party do not provide as pure an example of political Islam as Ennahdha in Tunisia. Nevertheless, Turkey warrants some discussion around its brand of political Islam. Finally, my proximity and experience of events in Tunisia during the study period and to the Ennahdha Movement have given me greater insight into the Tunisian case than that of other countries. This will allow me to enrich the field of study in this regard and on this topic.

1.7 Literature review

Political Islam

Political Islam as a political science theory has been developing for centuries. March (2015, p.17) correctly points to the fact that an organised political Islam is largely attributed to the Muslim Brotherhood movement founded by Hasan al-Banna in Egypt, however since the 1970s it has gained a more prominent place within scholarly research, policy discussions and the media (Crowder, Griffiths, & Hasan, 2014, p. 120). Political Islam could be considered appropriate for the Arab world given the cultural links it has with the region and the ease with which it appeals to the masses rather than making use of hard approaches such as police oppression (Meyer, 2002). This focus on the cultural appropriateness of political Islam is problematic as it dismisses the potential for political Islam to exist out of a necessity to merge Islamic principles and values with those of democracy, instead the literature assumes that as a result of their belonging to the Muslim faith, majority Muslim countries automatically adopt a form of political Islam. This assumption does not account for the differences within the religion itself, just as there exist differences within the Christian faith, as well as the possibility that many Muslims would prefer to leave politics out of their religion or vice versa. What Crowder et. Al, March and Meyer have in common is the view that political Islam is not a new concept and that its development can be traced back to the days of the Caliphates. In providing balanced views on the fact that political Islam cannot be judged by the extremist approach of groups such as the Taliban or Boko Haram, they instead look at the religiously motivated governance practiced in Iran, Saudi Arabia and more recently Turkey. What they fail to do is recognise the role and presence of political Islam in North Africa even prior to the Arab Spring.

Much of the current literature on political Islam outlines the linkages between the emergence of political Islam in response to the imposition of Western values and secularism. (Meyer, 2002) (March, 2015) (Crowder, Griffiths, & Hasan, 2014). This literature is however based in the pre-Arab Spring era and mostly does not provide a solid argument based upon the practical implementation of political Islam in government. It is perhaps for this reason that the USA and the European Union, with the UK in particular, have been supportive of engagement with Islamist groups. While seeking to avoid radicalisation and extremism (Wolff, 2015) by directly consulting Islamist groups, these Western powers were also not sure what to make of the rise in Islamist support. What emerges is that there is a certain expectation by the West that Islamist parties should conform to a specific democratic approach regardless of their country context.

This approach however has not met expectations of those who have tried to “understand political Islam through a Western socioeconomic lens” (Meyer, 2002). The aforementioned was even more relevant post the Arab Spring as Islamist movements came to power.

A common thread that emerges from recent research on Islamism and political Islam is the use of Huntington’s “clash of civilisations” theory to focus on an inherent clash between democracy and Islam. This reliance on Huntington and a 20th century construct does not take into account the rapid progression and development of existing political theory and the significant geopolitical developments of the early 21st century. Esposito is a proponent of the view that Islam and democracy are in fact compatible. In his 1996 book co-authored with John Voll, they examine and refute the western notion of incompatibility with a focus on Huntington’s “clash of civilisations” theory. Equally referenced is Huntington’s “waves of democratisation” and his assertion that this was not applicable to Arab countries (Esposito, Sonn, & Voll, 2016).

Until the Arab Spring, only a small number of practical examples of political Islam actively being applied outside of the Middle East could be cited, such as Pakistan and Indonesia, where political Islam was reflective of the State and its power. In Esposito et al. (2016) the authors examine amongst others Turkey, Iran, Tunisia and Egypt. What they conclude in all cases is that there is an inherent democratic deficit in these countries, but not for the failure of Islamist parties to overcome these deficits. Bridging the divide between Europe and Asia, Turkey is often grouped as part of the Middle East, especially due to its Ottoman history and Islamic history. However, Turkey has also until more recent times been very keen to join the European Union. Due to the secular constitution developed under Kamal Atatürk, the governing AKP in Turkey is often cited as an example of political Islam, despite its own rejections of such labels (Taspinar, 2015) (Crowder, Griffiths, & Hasan, 2014, p. 123). Political developments in Turkey since 2012 have however raised questions about more hegemonic tendencies from the AKP (March, 2015) and the emergence of a disconnect between democracy and political Islam. With a clear public mandate for the pursuit of democracy, and the presence of significant support for Islamist political movements the example of Tunisia provides a more relevant study when seeking to find out whether liberal democracy and political Islam can coexist.

In a region dominated by dictators, the Arab Spring unleashed political pluralism upon expectant populations (Gumuscu & Fuat Keyman, 2014). Out of this pluralism, unsurprisingly

Islamist parties were the first to take the lead on the back of decades of social investment in Arab countries under authoritarian rule (Bokhari & Senzai, 2013) and the popularity and name recognition which accompanied their social interaction. While Islamists rose to power across North Africa in 2011 and 2012 on the back of mass protests, there is a tendency within the research to imply that Islamist movements were behind the initial protests, however the evidence has emerged that the protests were coordinated through social media platforms (Ramadan, 2012) and led by non-political movements. While not being an instigating force in the Arab Spring the importance of lobbying in exile is understated and required further exploration through a case study which could provide insight into Islamist movements and their linkages to politics. The degree of political work which accompanied the social interactions of Islamists meant that Islamist parties were able to capitalise on the political plurality which emerged.

There remains a certain degree of disconnect between democracy and political Islam in the literature, in particular in the first years after the Arab Spring, which requires research into the potential compatibility between the two theories. In a global context, there is a trend within the literature that the West will remain suspicious and confrontational towards political Islam, and that as a result of a desire for democracy from the people that political Islam will have to make too many concessions to survive. This study will seek to test whether in fact political Islam is under threat as a theory using the Ennahdha Movement in Tunisia as a case study.

Islamisation of Tunisia

The literature on Islamism in Tunisia, and in particular the main Islamist movement of Ennahdha, has focussed mainly on the historicising of the Islamic movements of Tunisia and their activities during the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes. The first main study was conducted by Waltz in the middle 1980s and sufficiently explores the difficulties faced by the Islamist movements in Tunisia during the Bourguiba era. The main critique of Waltz's work lies in her often-confusing reference to radical Islamism amongst the leadership of the then Islamist movements while also praising the commitment to democracy shown by the very same leaders. Bourguiba embarked on an initial attempt to modernise the Tunisian state, including the practice of Islam (Amine Tais, 2015) through a process of adopting more secular practices and making the many Islamic rituals and traditions fall outside of the ambit of state control. Under increasing domestic socioeconomic pressures by the 1980s, Bourguiba felt threatened by the

popular emergence of the precursor to the Ennahdha Movement, the Mouvement de la Tendence Islamique (MTI), founded by Rached Ghannouchi (Waltz, 1986). What Waltz does however show with conviction is the commitment of the MTI to integrating religion and politics into a form of political Islam in Tunisia. With effective appeal to the youth and women, the MTI was able to develop a growing base.

With the abrupt transition into the Ben Ali era in 1987 imprisonment of Islamists, including Ghannouchi in the early 80s gave way to a *détente* under the Ben Ali regime's early years and saw the release of Islamic prisoners. Islamism even took on a more central role in government and everyday life (Amine Tais, 2015). Elections in Tunisia in 1989 saw the Ennahdha movement come second in the polls, threatening the hold on power of Ben Ali and his party and leading him to proclaim that religion and politics required a safe distance of separation (King, 2012). The crackdown in the early 90s on the Islamist movements led to hundreds of imprisoned and tortured Islamists filling the Tunisian jails, while leaders such as Ghannouchi escaped to exile.

Since 2011 the focus of literature has changed to analysing Ennahdha's return to Tunisia, its electoral success and its performance in government. King (2012) provides one of the only papers looking at the potential rise to power of Ennahdha and what may have influenced the results of the 2011 elections. Most other literature just prior to the 2011 elections did not provide the focus needed to understand the Ennahdha Movement and its popularity. The post 2011 literature tries to develop a better understanding of Ennahdha, however remains very limited with respect to the political Islam aspects. It takes the approach of placing Tunisia amongst a wider study of Islamism and political Islam in the global context and does not study at a more intricate level what has informed political Islam in Tunisia and how being in power developed that understanding. The work of Amine Tais (2015) takes on an interesting approach by offering a critique of prominent Tunisian academic, Olfa Yousef, and her interpretation of Islam in Tunisia. The work however fails to provide must understanding into the theory of political Islam and its application in Tunisia.

Only a few authors have been able to write about the Ennahdha Movement to any great degree of depth and most of the literature pre-dates the Ennahdha Movement's time in power. Through the use of Ennahdha as the case study, the events and individuals which moulded political Islam in Tunisia can be used to answer the research question on the viability of political Islam as a

democratic theory, but also to add to the empirical evidence that there exists a close relationship between political Islam and democracy.

Tunisia remains a divided society, as election results from 2014 have shown. Clear divisions exist between the more “secular” North and the poorer Southern regions. Many in Tunisia’s more affluent Northern cities such as Tunis and Sousse steadfastly cherish the “degree of tolerance and secularism” (Dworkin, 2013) considered to be their main resource and which they have felt was threatened by Ennahdha and an increase in the visible expressions of Islam amongst many of their fellow countrymen. Marks (2015) notes how sentiments were strongly expressed about Ennahdha’s identity as being “obscure and its democratic commitments suspect”. Marks does however not delve any deeper into the entity which Ennahdha became. How Ennahdha traversed the transitional period in Tunisia will be studied, with focus on the leader of the Ennahdha Movement, Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi. Under his leadership, Ennahdha was able to capitalise on the mass movements which deposed the previous President of Tunisia and essentially controlled much of the transitional period to eventually gain power (Mecham, 2014). This power however came with many dangers, not least of which was losing popular support, something which Sheikh Ghannouchi warned against (Hamid S. , 2014). While this did eventually happen in Tunisia, Ennahdha and its leadership have stayed the course of seeking to develop a moderate Islamist party that can meet the expectations of both a secular and Islamist supporter base. Ennahdha has maintained the need for strong multi-party politics in Tunisia and has always been a supporter of the consensus-based approach to governance.

Bayat (2013) argues that Tunisia has entered into a phase of what he describes as “post-Islamism” a concept which looks at a more plural definition of Islam and Politics rather than a narrow view and which has a greater focus on individual liberties. Bayat does an excellent job of developing the understanding we have of Ennahdha, especially in the early years. Marks (2015) concurs with this positing that “Ennahdha itself is “rethinking Islamism” as a local and long-term project”. The evidence of long-term thinking will be seen in the policies of Ennahdha with a distinct lack of urgency under pressure. Ennahdha in 2011 presented itself as an Islam inspired movement seeking to reform Tunisia and modernise it while keeping in mind the basic principles and values of Islam (Ennahdha, 2011), thereby creating an Islamic democracy. While the term Islamism is put forward and needs to be strongly considered rather than political Islam,

it still remains too tied to negative perceptions of radicalism and terrorism. By using political Islam throughout the study, it creates a clear delineation between the radical interpretations of Islam and the practical political use of Islam.

1.8 Methodology

The research will be mostly qualitative with a focused textual analysis of a variety of academic papers and opinion pieces on the theory of political Islam in order to discuss the compatibility of political Islam and democracy. A further textual analysis of literature on the Ennahdha Movement was undertaken in order to provide a historical context of its evolution into a political party. The positions, statements and decisions taken by the Ennahdha movement during the 2011 electoral campaign, as leader of the coalition government in 2012 and 2013 and during the electoral period of 2014 have been studied in order to evaluate Ennahdha's campaigning and electoral performance. In addition, this approach allowed the study to trace the changes to Ennahdha's approach during the 2013 to 2014 electoral period and identify the factors which influenced Ennahdha's approach to the electoral period, including venturing into coalition politics. Throughout the study an evaluation of whether the presence of the main tenets of the theory of political Islam was evident within the Ennahdha Movement was undertaken.

This qualitative approach allowed for the formulation of a definition of political Islam against which the political approach of the Ennahdha movement could be measured. There will however also be a limited quantitative aspect as the electoral results of the Ennahdha movement will be compared to contextualise the position of the movement in the political landscape of Tunisia and to gauge its performance as a proponent of political Islam in an electoral context. The statements, policies, manifesto and positions taken by the Ennahdha movement will be utilised as source material to determine whether the Ennahdha Movement and its leader, Rached Ghannouchi, do in fact fit within the theoretical understanding of political Islam and the application thereof. The outcome of this critical analysis will assist in answering the research question.

The theoretical conceptualisation of political Islam is the central theme around which this research will be conducted. How political Islam is understood by Ennahdha and put into practice will be unpacked through a textual analysis of print and online media as well as books

quoting Rached Ghannouchi on the topic of political Islam and Ennahdha. A comparison of the electoral periods 2010/2011 and 2014 will be conducted to show the evolution of Rached Ghannouchi's discourse as well as that of the party in the study period identified as related to the practice of political Islam.

1.9 Limitations and delimitations

Significant parts of the research will be based upon the speeches, print and online media interviews carried out with the leader of Ennahdha, Rached Ghannouchi by various sources. The accuracy and consistency of the aforementioned can therefore not be guaranteed and could create inaccurate outcomes and may limit the accuracy of the study. It is common knowledge that many politicians can modify their positions or speeches dependent on the audience and the objective of their encounter with such audience. This cannot be ruled out in the case of Mr Ghannouchi. A second limitation is my perspective as a non-Muslim on a topic that deals with the teachings, thinking and developments within Islam. This could influence my view of how politics in Islam is considered and viewed as I will have to rely on existing research and perspectives on Islam to inform my understanding. I may also be susceptible to developing an image of political Islam and its practice based upon the biases of the authors which have been consulted during the research. The study will also be limited by a focus on only one case study to develop an answer to the question on the viability of political Islam as a democratic political approach. This limitation is however justified by the insight offered through personal experience of the period under question in Tunisia.

The research delimitation will be to the electoral periods, 2011 and 2014, and the immediate post electoral periods, 2012-2014 and 2015. This delimitation is pursued in order to restrict the period of study into manageable periods, thereby allowing comparisons of distinct events and Ennahdha's progression through those periods against the definition of political Islam. By delimiting the views of Ennahdha to focus mainly on its leader Rached Ghannouchi, it is assumed that as leader of the party he gives direction to its policy and heavily influences its Shura council through key placement of lieutenants within this body. The decision to include other interviews from party leaders will only serve to support the position of Mr Ghannouchi and also adds value to the worth of the study by providing valuable first-hand insight into the Ennahdha Movement.

The theory of political Islam as discussed in the literature review will ensure that the concept and theory is not lost in a multitude of views. The comparison of political Islam used by the Muslim Brotherhood and the AKP in Turkey will be dealt with in a limited scope to ensure that the key aspects are retained, without diluting the study's focus on Tunisia.

1.10 Chapter Outline

1.10.1 Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter will set out the introductory, including the background to the research and the development of political Islam in Tunisia. It will also look at the problem statement, namely that political Islam is not compatible with democratic principles. It will also outline the research objectives and questions and discuss the current literature on the subject of political Islam as well as Islamism in Tunisia.

1.10.2 Chapter Two: Mapping (theoretically) political Islam and democracy

The chapter explores scholarship on political Islam and democracy based upon the premise that current literature does not sufficiently weigh political Islam and democracy up against each other, particularly within the context of democratic expectations versus the principles of Islam. A discussion of the theory of political Islam, from its historical roots to the current understanding of the theory will be conducted. This discussion will then be extended to the application of political Islam within the context of a democratic state system. In order to do this two of the main proponents of political Islam namely the Muslim Brotherhood as well as the Turkish AKP will be briefly reviewed. This will provide some context to the case study of the Ennahdha Movement in Tunisia as the most successful proponent of political Islam within a liberal democracy.

1.10.3 Chapter Three: Historicising the Ennahdha Movement

The chapter will take a more focussed look at the evolution of the Ennahdha movement in Tunisia from a social movement to a fully-fledged political party. Public statements and speeches by the leadership of Ennahdha will serve as the basis for the analysis of this chapter. This chapter will look specifically at the increase in political rhetoric and the preparations towards participation in elections.

1.10.4 Chapter Four: Is the Ennahdha Movement practising political Islam: Analysis using the 2010-2011 Tunisian Elections

An examination of the 2010-2011 electoral period in Tunisia and the approach and performance of Ennahdha during this period in comparison to the other political parties participating in the elections. The campaign promises made by Ennahdha will be examined to establish whether they adhere to the principles within the definition of political Islam.

1.10.5 Chapter Five: Ennahdha Movement reinventing itself? Analysis using the 2014 Tunisian Elections

A comparison of the Ennahdha movement's strategy and approach utilised during the 2014 elections compared to the 2010/2011 electoral period will be conducted. This chapter will show that the Ennahdha movement had taken stock of the failings during its time in power and sought to adapt to a changing political landscape which was increasingly hostile towards Islamist movements. These adaptations sought to maintain a fine balance between the political Islam principles adhered to by Ennahdha and the push back of secular forces.

1.10.6 Chapter Six: Conclusion – political Islam a viable approach?

Consolidates the conclusions of the preceding chapters with the aim of answering the question of whether the approach to political Islam adopted by Ennahdha in the period 2011 to 2015 can serve as a viable model for political Islam in a democratic state.

CHAPTER TWO: MAPPING THEORETICALLY POLITICAL ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY

2.1 Introduction

The chapter will discuss the theories of political Islam and democracy both separately and concurrently with a view to securing a working definition for both theories which will be applied throughout the study, but also to develop an understanding of what informs current conceptualisations of both theories. Current literature is explored and does not pair these two theories. within this chapter as Islamist parties do not consider them separate theories, but rather view a dependent or symbiotic relationship with political Islam unable to exist without the foundations of a Liberal democracy. Once the definitions have been developed, an overview of two main proponents of political Islam, namely the Muslim Brotherhood and the Turkish AKP will be offered to exhibit the links between political Islam and democracy in a practical application of both theories, given that both parties have vocalised their application of political Islam. The chapter will conclude with an explanation of the Islamisation of Tunisia alongside the entrenchment of democracy, with a focus on the post-revolutionary period between 2011 and 2015.

As political theories, political Islam and democracy, have been widely studied to enhance the understanding of both theories as well as their application. The works of Benhenda (2011), Achilov (2010), Kubicek (2015) Tamimi (2013) and Islam (2017) to name but a few, provide more insight into the relationship between these two theories. When evaluating the aforementioned works, a conclusion can be reached that there exists a symbiotic relationship between political Islam and liberal democracy, particularly in the eyes of Islamist parties⁵. The

⁵ Islamist parties are political movements which consider Islam central to their political approach. They are likely to call for greater inclusion of Islamic laws within the country,

MENA region as a result of similarities in culture, history, and in particular religion enjoys a greater concentration of Islamist political movements. A differentiation in the application of Islam to politics does however occur across the region. The Middle East itself is mostly made up of Islamist monarchies, whereby the monarchy is seen as the defender of the faith and acts in the interest of the faith. These monarchies seek to suppress a more populist political Islam approach such as that of the Muslim Brotherhood. In North Africa, with the exception of Morocco, the countries had for many years followed forms of autocratic democracy whereby elements of democracy were present but limited to favour the ruling regime. Prior to the Arab Spring the MENA region saw a suppression of political Islam in favour of secularism or monarchy, however since 2011 Islamist parties and movements in the MENA region have been calling for the application of political Islam within a framework of liberal democracy and the values and freedoms that are inherent to democracy, including the respect of religion and its place in society.

Liberal democracy has become embedded in the politics of the European Union, Canada, India and South Africa amongst many others. All these countries subscribe to the main tenets (see section on liberal democracy) of liberal democracy and strive to maintain such status. In these countries cultural and religious practices are often more diverse which leads to a greater separation of religion and politics. Political movements are generally more diverse and cover a wider spectrum of ideologies. Some parties or movements are influenced by religion and may seek to find legitimacy in their connection to religion however this tends not to be the norm.

Very few states can successfully claim to be applying the theory of political Islam as defined in chapter one. As an academic field it has been more narrowly limited to centres for Middle Eastern studies in Western nations or to the academic institutions in mostly Muslim majority countries. It is also a field of religious study which can weaken the conceptual linkages to democracy. With the terrorist attacks carried out by radical Islamists in the USA on 11 September 2001, the worldwide academic interest in political Islam has increased exponentially. Analysts, the media, politicians and political scientists took a much keener

defer to religious authorities and contain religious teachings within their manifestos and policy documents.

interest in the field and helped propel the theory to a more mainstream element in the political sciences.

Following the uprisings of the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North African region, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt saw their authoritarian regimes deposed. The expectation that democracy should replace these regimes was pushed by the West (Anderson, 2014; Smith, 2011; Maddy-Weitzman, *Tunisia's Morning After*, 2011). However, when Islamist movements entered the political space through Constituent assembly elections in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya domestic and foreign observers raised questions about the motives of these Islamists and cautioned against a radicalisation and Islamisation of the countries which would eventually lead to the application of Shari 'a in defiance of the calls for democracy. Islamist parties however embraced the need for universal suffrage and gaining power through the ballot box.

2.2 Conceptualising political Islam

Before defining political Islam, it is necessary to look at Islam in general and the two main sects of Islam, namely Sunni and Shiite. Most literature when studying Islam provides its origins in the 7th century during the time of the Prophet Muhammed (Mandaville, 2010, p. 28). The religion and its teachings are generally developed from that period onward through the Qu'ran which was delivered by Mohammed as the messenger of God's word, and through the Sunnah which is based upon the Prophets thinking and behaviour (Mandaville, 2010, p. 30).

It is important to make the distinction between the Sunni and Shiite sects of Islam as the approach to political Islam is heavily influenced by the teachings of the scholars belonging to the sects. All Muslims agree on the authenticity of the Holy Qu'ran as the source document of their faith (Kabbani, n.d), however divergences have emerged over time in the interpretation of the Sunnah or traditions of the Prophet. Of particular interest are the two main sects as mentioned earlier. The first sect of Islam is the Sunni current which is adhered to by the majority of the world's Muslims, also the majority of Muslims in the MENA region are Sunni. (Pew Research Center, 2012). As traditionalist followers of the word of the Prophet Muhammad, Sunnis believe that the four Caliphs that succeeded the Prophet are the rightful leaders of the Muslim faith as it is their belief that Caliphs may be appointed and are also more politically minded in their approach that leadership in the Muslim world is not divinely determined (Mandaville, 2010, p. 52). The Shiite branch stems from the followers of Ali, the

Prophet's brother, who they believe was the rightful successor as Caliph. Shiites place a greater emphasis on the divine determination of the leadership of the Muslim people. The majority of the world's Shiite population live in Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and India (Pew Research Center, 2012). The distinction between the two schools of Islam is important as it offers insight into the mindset of those Islamist movements who seek to participate politically in their countries.

In his study of Islamism in the Middle East, Are Knudsen (2003), attempts to clarify and quantify the phenomenon of political Islam while looking at the region specifically. He notes that there is a general struggle within academia on capturing a definition for political Islam, often foregoing a definition or over simplifying the concept. (Knudsen, 2003). Interestingly Knudsen and others such as Olivier Roy (1994) prefer to use the term Islamism rather than political Islam, as they believe the term political Islam is loaded with preconceptions and that Islamism is closer to the Arabic definition of the term political Islam (Knudsen, 2003). The approach of these two tends towards a merger between Islamic fundamentalism and Islamism in general which contrasts with the brand of political Islam practiced by moderate Islamist movements such as the Ennahdha Movement in Tunisia. Since 9/11 the general worldview towards Islamist movements has been one which does not distinguish between moderation and extremism. At the same time, Islamist groups are enlisted in war zones by Western powers such as the USA in Syria or by Gulf States such as Qatar in Libya. Their role was to counter the leadership in power in order to create the political space for leaders who would take guidance and assistance from these backers (Meiloud, 2014). While these attempts at regime change render mixed results, the image of Islamists almost always suffers. The motives behind these Islamist movements decision to essentially become mercenaries can be questioned, at the same time moderate movements which seek to pursue political Islam should also be asked why they do not do more to distance themselves from these activities and instead pursue routes to peaceful changes in government. Whether these groups will ever rise to power in those countries is unclear as there is often no clear post conflict plan on the part of countries like the USA or Qatar.

When taking an analytical approach to political theory, Andrew March (2015, p. 17.3) offers a more holistic definition of political Islam in the more recent context post the 2010/11 Arab Spring. He notes that there is something "essentially political about Islam". This is a simple linkage to make, as many majority Muslim countries have seen the principles of Islam

politicised to some extent to increase the legitimacy of a more Islamic approach to laws being applied. Heywood (2002, p. 38) provides a definition around the creation of theocracy which applies religious principles to all elements of society. As a definition for political Islam these approaches and views remain too simple and do not really offer a solid definition. Bokhari and Senzai (2013) extensively looked at the definition of political Islam or Islamism and have drawn on the definition provided by Denoëux in his 2002 article titled: *The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating political Islam*, provides the following definition which will be used as the baseline definition for this study;

Political Islam is a form of instrumentalisation of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives. It provides political responses to today's societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations for which rest on re-appropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from the Islamic tradition. (Denoëux, 2002, p. 61)

In unpacking this definition, the concept of the modernisation of Islam becomes apparent. The first element of the definition referring to instrumentalisation of Islam, speaks to the flexibility of the religion, in that its elements can be taken, moulded and applied to specific circumstances in order to give effect to Islamic teachings. Plurality is also implied through the reference to individuals, groups and organisations. Islam does not only focus on the individual, the importance of the Umma is central to the faith and therefore politics cannot be only for individuals or focused on individuals. This is one of the important elements of political Islam as it provides the space for the organisational approach of political parties in pursuing political Islam objectives. Denoëux's reference to societal challenges and the response of political Islam to these challenges is very important. The importance of societal outreach and community involvement within Islamic communities is foundational to the ability of political movements to have a strong supporter base which in turn informs their policies. This is further enhanced through a process of taking Islamic traditions and applying them to the processes of developing policies and political responses is key. While Islam is often seen as a religion which has not kept pace with modernisation, the definition by Denoëux shows that political Islam is proactive rather than reactive, as it seeks to imagine a political future whereby Islamic morals and principals become central to governance.

What can be stated about political Islam is that it is an attempt to take Islamic traditions, thinking and morals and apply them to the modern-day context within which they are being applied. March (2015) points out that a rise in populism and democracy in Muslim countries leads to a greater reflection of Islamism in the political space. It can however be argued that Islam was never outside of the political space, it may have worked on the periphery, however political messages and debate can be found in and around any mosque. As an important gathering point for Muslims of all walks of life, the social aspect of communal faith plays an important role in informing the political point of view within Islamic communities.

As the theory of political Islam is developed it derives its qualities from the religion and its practices and finds its roots in an attempt to apply the values and concepts within the religion onto a political approach. Its very existence is borne out of a necessity for many Muslims to recognise their identity within politics, but without necessarily eliminating liberal democratic gains such as women's rights, religious freedom and general human rights. The multitude of influences and difference amongst Muslim populations is the reason that manifestations of political Islam cannot be unified across majority Muslim states. It can be further argued that this inherent flexibility within political Islam is what makes it compatible with the liberal democracy being sought in the countries affected by the Arab Spring. There are however predominantly two sides of a debate in relation to political Islam, the one is that there is no compatibility between Islam and democracy, while the other agrees with the definition accepted above (March, 2015, p. 17.14).

The flexibility for which allowance is made in the definition postulated by Denoëux is important when looking at the prevailing view of Islamist politics advocated for by the United States. The United States almost without fail tends to generalise and group states with their enemies on the grounds of shared ideologies (Meyer, 2002) rather than recognising that political Islam shares many of the goals that it and its allies seek to promote and protect (Meyer, 2002). An objective analysis of the role and impact of political Islam in the post - Arab Spring context cannot be prejudiced by generalisations and needs to be understood from the perspective of its practitioners. Meyer (2002) noted that much of the recent study of political Islam was carried out by those seeking to impose Western ideologies without a thorough understanding of the socioeconomic and cultural conditions in the MENA region. This further

elevates the utility of the definition provided by Denooux as it specifically calls for a relation to Islamic traditions.

2.3 Democracy and political Islam nexus

Democracy has its origins in ancient Greece and the city states of the time such as Athens in the 5th century BC and essentially refers to the concept of rule by the people (Dahl, 1998). When defining democracy certain common elements emerge which are generally linked with the theory and practise of democracy. These common elements include, rule by the people, government for the people, majority rule, minority rights and separation of powers (Heywood, 2002, p. 68). Beyond these common elements, there is a widening of the definition which covers different applications and degrees of complexity depending on the situation in which democracy is being applied. A cursory search of any academic journal will result in a multitude of papers on Democratic theories and the various proponents of such theories, pointing to the popularity of Democratic theories within academic circles, as within practiced politics. Within the classical theories of democracy, one finds three separate types, namely Direct democracy as put forth by Jean Jacques Rousseau in the 1700s who argued in book three of “The Social Contract” that the closer a country could come to direct rule the better, although he did realise the shortcomings of this approach in a large country and admitted that an approach would be required where the people are represented by agents who operate with their consent (Rousseau, 1968). This approach would lead to the development of the Representative or Liberal democracy as elaborated by John Stuart Mill, James Madison and John Locke, all of whom sought to include more individual rights and collective rights for population groups, including freedom of speech and the press as well as minority rights, while also seeking to limit the rights of the sovereigns or rulers (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2011, pp. 16-17). Finally, Pluralist democracy such as promoted by Joseph Schumpeter and Robert Dahl, the latter identified eight criteria for the definition of democracy closely linking democracy to the processes and institutions present in a government which is completely responsive to its citizens (Dahl, 1971, p. 2) . Liberal democracy in particular will be further defined in this section. When looking at the countries involved in the Arab Spring, many of them practices a form of democracy known as totalitarian democracy which is defined as “an absolute dictatorship that masquerades as a democracy, typically based on the leader’s claim to a monopoly of the ideological wisdom” (Heywood, 2002, p. 70). In Tunisia, such totalitarian democracy was applied by both

Bourguiba and Ben Ali, both laying claim to the monopoly of ideological and theological wisdom.

As the Arab Spring gripped the region a desire for greater democracy and freedoms was voiced by protestors throughout the MENA region. This desire for democratisation enjoyed widespread support in Tunisia and was supported by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), particularly from the European Union, who sought to support the suddenly burgeoning civil society movement in Tunisia in order to ensure that democratic gains were maintained (European Commission, 2018). When going to the websites of many civil society organisations in Tunisia the support of European governments was almost always mentioned, in particular the UK, Switzerland, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries. The reason for this support lies within the political priorities of these individual states as well as collectively through the European Union. This long-standing support dates back to the Association Agreement concluded with Tunisia in 1995 which enshrines support for democracy, human rights and economic development (European Commission, 2018). With the fall of the Ben Ali regime in 2010 the newly emerging political movements found a willing hand in the European Union. Through the influence of the West as discussed above Tunisia naturally tended towards becoming a liberal democracy as funding relating to support for democracy put in place the necessary building blocks.

The central features of a liberal democracy include regular elections, political pluralism, and tolerance for rival political parties and a distinction between state and civil society (Heywood, 2002, p. 77). While liberal democracy has variations, there are common features which cut across these interpretations. In addition to the central features, fourteen principles of democratic rule can be applied as the measurement for democracy. The (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2011) lists these principles as follows; citizen participation; equality; political tolerance; accountability; transparency; regular free and fair elections; economic freedom; control over the abuse of power; bill of rights; acceptance of the outcome of elections; Human Rights; multi-party system; neutrality of state institutions; rule of law. In Tunisia prior to the Arab Spring the elements of equality, transparency, free and fair elections, accountability, economic freedom and control over abuse of power were non-existent. Many of these elements were demanded by protestors in Tunisia. Protestors demanded economic freedom, equality, human rights and elections (Dodge, 2012, p. 64). The generally accepted principles of liberal

democracy were therefore widely applicable in the Arab Spring context and will be used henceforth in this study.

2.4 The Muslim Brotherhood and Turkey – models of political Islam?

Practical implementation of the principles of political Islam are seen around the world in majority Muslim countries⁶. Within these examples the variation is noticeable. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is an Islamic state with a Shia majority, political Islam is practised as the framework for governance and reflects a close relationship between religion and politics whereby religious decrees influence the administrative and legislative work of the countries politicians (Bruno, 2008). Far eastern countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia also have a strong political Islam focus and according to Hamid (2016) Shari'a plays a stronger role in the legal framework of these countries and yet both function as recognised democracies. Morocco places the protection of the faith within the hands of the Monarch, yet political plurality exists, and Islamist parties are permitted. However, the strong influence of the monarchy on politics in the country diminishes the powers of the Islamist political movements which results in a divergence from the political Islam definition put forward by Denoëux (2002). Generally, the example of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the AKP in Turkey are cited in most literature as the most relevant examples of political Islam. Both these parties have sought to enshrine greater rights and freedoms into the laws of their countries while also seeking greater respect for the principals and morals of Islam. Similarly, they have also sought to have frequent elections and sought political tolerance, all tenets of liberal democracy within a political Islam environment.

2.4.1 The development of political Islam in Egypt; the Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood originated in Ismailia, Egypt in 1928 where its founder Hasan al-Banna rejected democracy and secular government in favour of a return to an Islamist society based upon Islamic laws, morals and values (Laub, 2014, p. 2). Initially politically active in the fight against British rule the Muslim Brotherhood came into direct opposition with the Egyptian military establishment following the rise to power of Gamal Abdel Nasser (1952-1970), a

⁶ Indonesia, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Morocco are widely viewed as countries with Muslim majorities who apply political Islam to varying degrees.

renowned advocate of pan-Arabism and secularist (Laub, 2014, p. 3). An assassination attempt on Nasser in 1954 by a member of the Muslim Brotherhood led to the imprisonment of the Muslim Brotherhood leadership as well as its banning. The Muslim Brotherhood subsequently renounced violence after being given space to operate its social agenda by President Anwar al-Sadat (1970-1981) in the 1970s. As early as 1984 independent candidates linked to the Muslim Brotherhood were deployed and participated in elections, actively implementing a political Islam aimed at cultivating a political elite which would Islamise society (Laub, 2014, p. 4).

Since its formation, the Muslim Brotherhood developed an extensive network throughout Muslim majority countries such as Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Kuwait, but has maintained its strong core in Egypt, its birthplace. In these countries they have often existed as community based social movements providing support to the community and carrying out outreach programmes. Their involvement in the political activities was however not their main priority and they have often utilised “independent” politicians as a result of crackdowns on religious political parties. Instead since its inception the Muslim Brotherhood preached the comprehensive nature of Islam and its role in both private and public life (Paison, 2008). As political landscapes changed so did a realisation for the need to become more politically active in order to achieve its goals and support its programmes (Laub, 2014). As the Muslim Brotherhood understanding of political Islam developed, it gained prominence as a political force, Paison (2008) recounts the strides made by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1984 under the “Islamic Trend” banner where it entered elections of various associations in order to expand its influence eventually extending to national politics by 1987. The Muslim Brotherhood has however often been relegated to the periphery of the political realm by the autocratic regimes in countries where it has a significant presence such as Egypt under the Mubarak regime (Laub, 2014).

The Muslim Brotherhood attained political prominence in Egypt when it participated in the 2005 parliamentary elections under the banner of Independent candidates and won 20% of seats. In an attempt to contribute to the opening of the political environment and challenging the Mubarak regime through the polls, the Muslim Brotherhood’s parliamentarians suspended open attempts at practicing political Islam (Otterman, 2005). This is however contestable as the participation in the parliamentary democratic processes was in itself a practical implementation of political Islam, as was the focus on political reform through democratic

means. Otterman (2005) expressed caution that while the Muslim Brotherhood at the time embraced democracy, its interpretation of political Islam in many cases went against the tenets of liberal democracy and that its democratic credentials were yet to be tested. This was a true reflection of the political environment at the time, as democracy was preached but poorly implemented.

When the Muslim Brotherhood participated in the protests challenging the regime of Hosni Mubarak during the 2010 Arab Spring (Darrag, 2016), and supported the occupation of Tahrir Square, it made its intentions clear to organise itself as a viable alternative to the autocracy of Mubarak and his family. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhoods' Justice and Freedom Party was the first officially registered Muslim Brotherhood affiliated political party. According to the party's election platform (Freedom and Justice Party, 2011) it campaigned on the fundamental principles representing Shari'a, namely freedom, justice, development and equality. When comparing this platform to the definition of political Islam as well as the tenets of liberal democracy there is a clear overlap relating to freedom and equality as well as justice in the sense of respect for laws. It was however unclear at the time to what extent Shari'a would be implemented as a source of law and whether there would be an infringement of accepted human rights.

The stated objective of the Muslim Brotherhood is a return to Islamic values and the centrality of the Koran (Kull, 2011, p. 167). Politically this objective has hurt Muslim Brotherhood aligned parties as the populace became fearful of the imposition of Islamic law. In the case of Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood proceeded to push through its policies and appointments with little regard to nation building, reconciliation and respect for electoral results bringing into question whether political Islam and liberal democracy were able to coexist in Egypt. The approach by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was also questionable in terms of their credentials as political Islamists. Their lack of flexibility, their inability to focus on societal needs and instead seeking to jump straight to a complete overhaul of the constitution and laws to be more Islamic saw them being likened to more conservative and extremist Islamist groups such as Al-Qaeda by the secular movements in Egypt and the powerful military establishment. Field Marshal al-Sisi, with support of many of the other half of the electorate, eventually took power by a coup and essentially wiped out the Muslim Brotherhood political presence through mass arrests of its leadership (Laub, 2014, p. 6).

2.4.2 The development of political Islam in Turkey

Since the 1930s Turkey has been a strictly secular state with a Muslim majority and has been seen as an interesting case study for the compatibility between Islam and democracy (Toros, 2010 , p. 254). The collapse of the Ottoman Empire spurred on Kamal Atatürk to transform Turkey into a secular state and remove Islam from the state in order to compete with the West (Mason, 2000, p. 59). Atatürk believed that Islam was to be respected and practiced in private with no influence over the state (Osman, 2015). The full separation of religion and state was achieved in 1937 when secularism was enshrined in the constitution. Islamist parties have always formed part of the tapestry of Turkish politics, despite secular reforms in the country, proving that significant portions of the Turkish populace remained connected to their faith (Osman, 2015). In 1996 the Islamist Prosperity Party even succeeded in forming a coalition government, before being forced to resign by the Turkish military, seen as the guardians of secularism in Turkey (Toros, 2010 , p. 254). The continued interference of the military negatively impacted on the democratic credentials of the Turkish state. Respect for electoral results, political plurality, transparency, respect for human rights and basic freedoms were amongst the tenets of liberal democracy frequently ignored and justified by protecting the secular state.

In 2002 the rise of the AKP and its once banned leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, saw a new opening for political Islam, given the AKP's roots within the banned Islamist Prosperity Party. The AKP won the November 2002 elections on a platform promising European Union membership and the rooting out of fraud and corruption in government (Toros, 2010 , p. 254). This platform established the AKP's political Islam credentials as it relied on its Islamic morals and belief system to plot a future course for the Turkish people as well as to address societal problems. At the same time evidence of liberal democratic tendencies were revealed through the push for transparency and respect for laws. By gradually rolling back the stringent respect for secularism and embracing greater involvement of religion in state affairs, political Islam and liberal democracy became more and more intertwined, much to the dismay of the entrenched secular political establishment of the state (Toros, 2010 , p. 255). Initially the AKP

distanced itself from the label of an Islamist party, however by the 2007 elections the party line sought increasingly to directly target the large Muslim voter base, with Erdogan using parliamentary majorities to entrench his position as first Prime Minister (Toros, 2010 , p. 255) and then as President in 2014. While religion played an important role within the AKP and for President Erdogan, he generally viewed democracy only as elections and electoral success (Taspinar, 2015, p. 50). Erdogan's Islamist roots however do not remain out of the political sphere. As Taspinar (2015, p. 51) points out, with successive electoral victories, the rhetoric of Erdogan became more conservative and moralistic, translating into legislative changes regulating public life towards a more Islamist way. Over time, and through shrewd coalitions, the AKP managed to weaken the role and power of the army, reducing its position as the guardians of secularism (Taspinar, 2015, p. 54). A trend can be observed that wherever the military plays a strong role in state, such as Algeria, Turkey and Egypt, it finds itself in opposition to political Islam and Islamist movements and favours a more secularist approach and often also in opposition to democracy. This is an important observation to make as Tunisia is an outlier as the military has never intervened in the political sphere.

Whilst electoral democracy remained a pillar of the political environment in Turkey, liberal democracy continued to be eroded as it became more difficult to identify its tenets. Political Islam reached a point in Turkey where its initial future looking approach and the flexibility and morals of Islam have been replaced by a more conservative interpretation of the Koran and rigid application of elements of Shari'a which started to break down the relationship between political Islam and liberal democracy. The Ennahdha Movement in the initial post-revolution years often cited the AKP as an example of a political Islam party which promoted Islamic values in society whilst also being respectful of the tenets of liberal democracy. As the AKP pursued a more conservative application of Islam in Turkey, Ennahdha entered into government in Tunisia and started conversations about Shari'a, women's role in the family, censorship of art. It becomes understandable that the secular political movements in Tunisia feared that eventually Ennahdha would follow a similar path and start to tend towards a more conservative approach if it were to win an outright majority in future elections. Political Islam in Tunisia was under pressure as it transformed in Turkey and Egypt and brought into question whether political Islam and democracy could coexist in a majority Muslim state.

2.5 The symbiotic relationship between political Islam and democracy

Benhenda (2011) studied the linkage and relationship between political Islam and liberal democracy. He concluded that more often than not the relationship became one where democracy was practiced, but within the limits of Islam, thereby giving the notion of political Islam. His study provides a comprehensive analysis of both political Islam and the practice of democracy in Islamic states. His first observation was that the initial conception of democracy within the Islamic context was focussed more on procedural aspects such as elections (Benhenda, 2011, p. 89). The outcome of his study is a proposed political Islam regime which seeks to incorporate elements of democracy, although reveals the limitations of such an approach (Benhenda, 2011, p. 91). What Benhenda makes clear is that liberal democracy cannot be taken wholesale and merged with Islamic principles. This is also not in fitting with the definition of political Islam adopted by this study. Denoeux's definition which is unpacked earlier in this chapter speaks to a flexibility and borrowing of Islamic principles and applying them to societal situations. This also means that within a democratic environment when political Islam is pursued the tenets of liberal democracy also need to include a degree of flexibility.

In order to develop an understanding of political Islam that accepts some basic tenets of liberal democracy, one needs to untangle the procedural elements from the issue of rights as understood by the liberal democratic theory (Benhenda, 2011, p. 98). While classical liberal democracy offers individual rights to citizens and protects these rights through laws conceived by government, the Islamic understanding recognises the need for individual rights but is more complex as it does not confer such rights upon the individual. Individual rights are limited by Shari'a or the laws of God, taken from the Koran and the practices of the Prophet, known as Sunna, individuals therefore cannot have access to rights which are contradictory to these sources of Islamic law. Rights may also be interpreted differently in a majority Muslim country as compared to countries with more religiously diverse populations. It is assumed that in majority Muslim countries there is absolute respect for the Koran and the Sunna, therefore the focus on individual rights will prioritise rights related to the practice of the faith ahead of generalised rights such as freedom of expression or equality between the sexes. This does not mean that other rights are ignored or refused, however they carry less weight. What we can conclude is that within political Islam, the practice of liberal democracy can be adopted only in so far as it does not go contrary to the laws of God, thereby offering democracy within the limits of Islam (Benhenda, 2011).

In contrast to the study by Benhenda, Solomon provides his argument that the political Islam is currently not compatible with liberal democracy, while indicating that there is an intensified search for a middle ground of compatibility (Solomon, 2015). He describes political Islam as serving narrow interests relating to gaining power and not being recognisable from the tradition in Islam of tolerance. (Solomon, 2015, p. 89). Solomon criticises the Muslim Brotherhood as an authoritarian movement seeking to glorify jihad and seeking to use tactics such as violence and intimidation to achieve its ultimate goal of obtaining power, with naught consideration for any of the principles of liberal democracy and a rejection of pluralism, in this regard he uses the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in Egypt as an example of what he sees as the real objective of political Islam, power based on narrow ideological underpinnings (Solomon, 2015, pp. 91-95). There is a serious oversight on the part of Solomon as in that initial statement he fails to take into account the impact of years of oppression, violence and torture on the psyche of the leadership of the FJP and its followers. The FJP showed their political naïveté by pushing too hard and too fast, blinded by their rise to power and a belief that they had won an overwhelming electoral victory, despite the narrow margin with which they prevailed. In a more balanced tone Solomon goes on to argue that this end game of capturing power without any proper understanding or strategy of the proper function of the bureaucracy of state is at the heart of the failure by parties considered as adherents of political Islam. This argument does however have a flaw in the sense that often parties who practice political Islam have a deep understanding for the need of organisation and therefore bureaucracy, as they have mostly had to operate outside of legal existence in their countries, and can therefore understand the need to maintain a credible and functioning state (Lefèvre, 2016). Solomon does however correctly identify the common thread of a tendency towards centralisation exhibited by Islamists, examples of which could be seen in Egypt and Tunisia (Solomon, 2015, pp. 95-96). This can however be explained by the lack of trust with the existing state and its functionaries, who in both cases had been loyal to the deposed regimes.

Benhenda and Solomon provide solid but not incontestable evidence of an uneasy relationship between political Islam and liberal democracy. Both authors have used Egypt and Tunisia as examples, yet their analysis fails to delve deeper into the electoral periods in both countries in order to understand the influence of political Islam in the democratic practices of both the FJP and Ennahdha. There is however also value in understanding the shortcomings they identified as these offer insight into why Ennahdha in Tunisia has been more successful than other

Islamist parties in the MENA region. Solomon (2015, pp. 101-102) provides us with a basis upon which to potentially measure the performance of a party such as Ennahdha in Tunisia, namely that at the basis of Islamic norms such as freedom, equality, justice and consultation, all slogans of the Arab Spring, we find the building blocks of the liberal democratic theory. When this is coupled to the failures of states in the Muslim world to meet the needs of their people, seen through continued low economic growth, unemployment and security problems, as well as the fact that Islamists in Egypt did not succeed in their first iteration in power following the Arab Spring, there is the distinct opportunity to accept that an approach that in practice allows political Islam and democracy to synergise will result in a positive benefit of the people in majority Muslim states whether they are Islamists or secular.

2.6 Political Islam: Tunisia's salvation or a threat to democracy?

Chapter one (pages 10 and 11) offered a background to the historical development of political Islam in Tunisia following the end of French rule in 1956. What was illustrated is that Islamists have always played an important role in the politics of Tunisia and that Islam had been an influential tool under the administrations of Habib Bourguiba and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali spanning 1956 to 2010 which steered the country in a specific direction and strengthened their own personal stature. The emergence of the precursor to the Ennahdha Movement, MTI, signalled the attempt to bind religion and politics in Tunisia. As the MTI evolved into Ennahdha, it became the only political movement seen as a protector of the principles of Islam and the vehicle for its entrenchment within various levels of society.

Generally, two forms of political Islam were experienced in Tunisia. The first was the moderated approach followed by MTI and subsequently Ennahdha, the second was the more conservative and radicalised approach of the Salafist movements such as Ansar Al-Sharia. Since its official establishment in 1981 the MTI sought to convince the Tunisian people as well as the government of the time that there was a space for Islam and society to coexist within the highly secular state created by Bourguiba. Co-founded by Rached Ghannouchi and Abdelfattah Mourou, the MTI was established with the goal to revive Islamic thought and principles as well as its political identity (Amine Tais, 2015, p. 3). What set this Islamist movement aside from its peers in the Arab world was that it sought to advance their goals within the ambit of a democratic system (Waltz, 1986, p. 658). Through these attempts the early signs of political Islam assimilating democracy were seen, however they were frustrated by the repressive

policies of Bourguiba who, following protest activities in Tunisian universities, threw 61 members of the MTI in prison in 1981 and started serving jail terms. His actions were however miscalculated and resulted in an increase in support for the Islamist movement (Amine Tais, 2015, p. 4). This was not a surprising development as community involvement was already a central philosophy of the MTI and through its involvement a broad support base was developed. As the support for MTI increased the government entered into private discussion with the MTI leadership which eventually led to a presidential amnesty in 1984 for the remaining imprisoned members and what was viewed as recognition by the government of the MTI within the political sphere of Tunisia (Waltz, 1986, p. 654). Three years later in August of 1987 the Islamist movement had become a political force to be reckoned with, however following violence in Tunisia, Bourguiba returned to the oppressive tactics against the Islamists and arrested Ghannouchi and 89 other members of MTI on charges of inciting violence. When the death sentences passed against Ghannouchi and his co-accused were commuted, Bourguiba insisted on a retrial (Tamimi, A, 2013, p. 217). Then Prime Minister Ben Ali read the situation in the country and saw that the President's decision would likely lead to revolt. He instituted a palace or constitutional coup under Article 57 of the constitution and took over as President on 7 November 1987 (King, 2012, p. 6).

The initial years of the Ben Ali presidency provided the Islamists with suitable conditions within which to operate at a political level. Starting in the spring of 1988 Ben Ali introduced measures around health care, education and social assistance aimed at shoring up support for his government and seeking support from the Islamists. The release of Rached Ghannouchi and over 600 members of the MTI were significant first steps in this process (King, 2012, p. 6). The Zeitouna religious school was given independence again and the right to produce Islamic scholars, in addition mosques were given more financial support (Amine Tais, 2015, p. 4). Several concessions were made by the MTI in a show of good faith to the acceptance of Islam within the public societal sphere by government. The most significant of these was the renaming of the MTI to the Ennahdha or "Renaissance" Movement prior to the 1989 elections (Louden, 2015) to seek legitimacy with the government by adhering to precepts that political parties could not have any reference to religion in their names. Here the newly named Ennahdha Movement reinforced their political Islam and liberal democratic credentials by showing flexibility, respecting the rule of law, supporting free and fair democratic elections and looking to the future through its actions in the present. The strong showing of Ennahdha members who

ran as independents in those elections initiated renewed oppression of the Islamist movement by Ben Ali who felt threatened by the rise of Islamists who officially won 14.5 % of the national vote, challenging his policy of placing the State as the sole guarantor of Islam (McCarthy, 2014, p. 743). The Constitution was changed to forbid any political parties based on religion and cementing Ben Ali's views that religion and politics needed to be separated (King, 2012, p. 7). Mass imprisonment ensued as the official clampdown was announced by the Interior Minister in May 1990 following suspected Islamist cells operating in the country and plotting to overthrow the government. This was the official linkage created between Tunisian Islamists and terrorism, and remains a perspective held by many older Tunisians today (Esposito et al., 2016 p. 186). Oppression levels appeared to have surpassed those of the Bourguiba era and by the end of 1991 any proponents political Islam had been wiped out (King, 2012, p. 7).

With the leadership of Ennahdha forced into exile, including Rached Ghannouchi and his family, Ennahdha was forced to operate from exile, and with this forced a moderation in its policies (King, 2012, p. 7) following its first overseas congress held in Belgium in 1996. While an underground movement could not flourish under the repression of the Ben Ali security forces, the movement in exile continued to develop and strengthen its standing as a moderate Islamic movement seeking to operate within the democratic space. The descriptor of moderate specifically refers to the degree of implementation of Shari'a and the veracity with which Islamists pursue the Islamisation of society. In the case of political Islam within a liberal democratic environment, only a moderate approach can reconcile Islam and democracy.

It can be argued that with the application of the general amnesty following the removal of Ben Ali as President in January 2011, Islamism and political Islam took its rightful place within Tunisian society. The crowd of several thousand supporters which welcomed back Rached Ghannouchi to Tunisia on 30 January 2011 provided sufficient evidence, that despite his and Ennahdha's absence from Tunisia, support for a more involved role for Islam in society was evident. Initially, Ghannouchi indicated that the priority for Ennahdha was to rebuild and not to participate in the elections in Tunisia that were due in October 2011 (AFP, 2011).

The second form of political Islam manifested in stark contrast to Ennahdha in the form of the hard-line Salafist movements which worked on more extreme interpretations of Islam and sought to apply these to society. In this respect parties such as Ansar al Sharia and Hizb-ul-

Tahrir were initially provided with a license to operate in Tunisia as political parties following the departure of Ben Ali and with the support and encouragement of Ennahdha.

Salafism only emerged into the mainstream of Tunisian society following the revolution. They started to infiltrate the mosques which had been under strict state control during the Ben Ali regime and radicalised the sermons, especially during Friday Salaat ul Jumma prayers. State control over Mosques was rapidly waning, especially in the less well-off neighbourhoods of the major cities. The Imams approved by Government were moved aside in favour of a more radical and stricter Islamic discourse by the members of the Mosques. Many in the opposition suspected that Ennahdha were behind this gradual infiltration of the Mosques and the emergence of extremism. Ennahdha made attempts to take these more radical elements under its wing to moderate their calls of the application of Shari'a and the rejection of democracy. This was an important effort on the part of Ennahdha as it sought to secure its credentials as a proponent of political Islam seeking to champion liberal democratic principles.

Despite Ennahdha's efforts, a radicalisation of the youth was underway in Tunisia's poorer neighbourhoods and challenging the democracy demanded by the protestors in 2010 and 2011. These pressures on the liberal democratic aspirations of not only Tunisia but also Ennahdha added to the argument against the compatibility of political Islam and democracy. With freedoms, rights, elections, respect for the rule of law all under threat Tunisia was likely to become another example of the failure of Muslim majority countries to adopt liberal democratic principles.

2.7 Conclusion

The debate on the compatibility of political Islam and democracy will inevitably continue for the foreseeable future. The debate is likely to be driven by a lack of willingness to accept that democracy is not the sole property of the West and that there is room for other religions and cultures to adapt the theory in applying it to their own circumstances. As has already been shown, there is an accepted notion that political Islam can be flexible and adaptable, while still seeking to maintain the bedrock of the Islamic faith in its sight. Unfortunately, narrow

interpretations and generalisations of political Islam will persist and continue to negate any progress made by Islamist political parties. To give political Islam an opportunity to take hold in Muslim majority countries, its proponents will need to distance themselves from any linkages to radical and fundamentalist strands within Islam.

When looking at the three broad examples discussed above it is clear that within Muslim majority countries the interpretation and understanding of democracy remains ambiguous at best. In the example of Turkey, the AKP has staunchly fought for the entrenchment of electoral democracy as a counter balance to the military's guardianship of secularism. What the Turkish model has shown is that political Islam when applied as a long-term strategy, such as the one favoured by President Erdogan, can exist alongside democracy. The question that does arise however is whether there is any compatibility with Liberal democracy or does the acceptance by political Islam of democracy only extend to the offer of choice through the ballot. At this stage the continuing developments in Turkey require further study before such a question can be properly answered.

In the case of Egypt, a completely different approach to political Islam was observed. Based upon a short-term strategy of gaining power through the ballot, the FJP, perhaps naively thought that the support they had received had was a mandate to impose their view on the Egyptian population. What they failed to take into account was that 50% of the population were not in favour of religion driving politics and sought to maintain the secular nature of the state, but without the Mubarak family at its head. The FJP had misread the democratic voice of the people and showed very little respect for democracy upon taking power. Through centralisation of power with the President, the FJP did not seek to reconcile democracy with political Islam. Diametrically opposed to the situation in Turkey, the Egyptian military remains the guarantor of secularism and is deeply entrenched in society, their continued strength resulted in the military retaking control of the country following a return to protests against the FJP and President Morsi. With the MB and the FJP weakened and international support for the current Egyptian regime strong, political Islam in Egypt has been returned to its civil society role.

In Tunisia, a sort of hybrid approach to political Islam and democracy was followed. The Ennahdha movement had very little influence over the political environment prior to the events of December 2010. The Tunisian military was also weakened by President Ben Ali in favour of a stronger police and National Guard. The political elite were the guarantors of secularism,

and once they were deposed an open playing field appeared. Ennahdha cautiously moved into that space with a primary objective of forming part of the Constituent Assembly. Through coalition politics it was able to secure power and made several attempts to impose a more religious tone to Tunisian politics. Where it was able to succeed compared to Egypt and Turkey was the placement of Ennahdha members in key bureaucratic positions throughout the Public Service. This allowed them to control developments and to take a slower approach to transforming the government. From their return to Tunisia, the leaders of Ennahdha spoke positively in favour of democracy and rights for Tunisians. Their approach extended beyond simply electoral democracy but sought to entrench a more liberal democratic regime which drew heavily from the morals and values of Islam.

What can be concluded is that for political Islam to succeed as a viable option in Muslim majority states with a strong history of secularism, a new approach will need to be followed. Whether this is the case in Tunisia, will require an examination in the following chapters of the approach followed by the Ennahdha movement during the two elections held in Tunisia, and understanding how the Tunisia population has reacted to the evolution of the Ennahdha movement in that period between 2011 and 2015.

CHAPTER THREE: HISTORICISING THE ENNAHDHA MOVEMENT

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter two the application of political Islam in Tunisia was discussed, including the emergence of the MTI and its initial political activity, followed by the transformation and development of the MTI into the Ennahdha Movement. The background on Ennahdha was covered in order to offer insight into the movement, however more detail is required on the movement's time in exile as it is during this time that the influences of liberal democracy on the leadership in exile of Ennahdha was greatest.

This chapter will take the elements of political Islam which were unpacked in chapter two and by focussing on Ennahdha and its activities in exile leading up to the return of Rached Ghannouchi to Tunisia in January 2011 determine whether Ennahdha can truly be considered a political Islam party. This chapter will also look more closely at the main leadership figures of the Ennahdha movement both in Tunisia and those in exile and determine their adherence to the principles of political Islam and how they influenced the direction of the Ennahdha movement going into 2011. The work of Anne Wolf on the history of Ennahdha will provide the core of this chapter given her extensive study of the movement over a four-year period.

3.2 Ennahdha in Exile and Underground

Much of Ennahdha's leadership, under threat of imprisonment, was forced into exile in the late 1980s following the crackdown by the Ben Ali regime and spent almost 20 years in various countries around the world. The core of the leadership stayed close to home in Europe, with Rached Ghannouchi settling in London. Being in exile offered some advantages according to many Ennahdha leaders as they experienced multi-party politics and democracy (Wolf, 2017). By remaining in proximity of Tunisia the leadership was able to remain informed of developments through visits from supporters. This also allowed them to develop communication networks that could not be monitored by the intelligence services of the Tunisian Interior Ministry. A political bureau under the leadership of Ghannouchi was set up in London in 1989 to oversee the work of Ennahdha internationally. Additional offices were

opened, especially in France and other French speaking countries where large numbers of Ennahdha members were exiled (Wolf, 2017). While in exile these leaders were able to speak freely on conditions in Tunisia as well as criticising the Ben Ali regime. They were able to raise funds to support their efforts through membership fees as well as donations from sympathisers and supporters. Ennahdha's demands towards the Tunisian government was the need for democratic elections as well as independence of the media and press freedom (Elgindy, 1995). These early signs of an appetite for democracy would continue to influence the activities of Ennahdha in exile as they saw benefits in freedom of expression, political plurality and the need for free and fair elections. The movement held its first major party conference outside of Tunisia in 1992 in Germany where a Shura Council was elected to guide the party forward. Many supporters also settled in Germany as the country welcomed those escaping political persecution in the first years after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. While being granted exile in many cities, the Ennahdha members were nonetheless still restricted in their movements for the initial years of their exile. The reasons for these restrictions, included the financial constraints they faced being left without employment opportunities in their new homes.

The movement in exile was cautiously active through the early 90s because of the ability of the Ben Ali regime to extend its reach beyond Tunisia's borders. Ennahdha members recounted stories of being followed or even under surveillance whilst in exile. Furthermore, the exiles needed to create new lives and identities for themselves and their families and needed to focus on this task before they could fully dedicate themselves to the task of ensuring the growth of the Movement abroad and its effective support to supporters still in Tunisia.

Ennahdha members in exile held a party congress in Germany in 1992 and deliberated on the steps needed in order to ensure the Movement would survive the exile period. Amongst the decisions taken, was to set up a commission tasked with re-thinking the movement's strategies, including its views regarding human rights, democracy and multi-party politics. During this congress Ghannouchi, who did not attend, was confirmed as the leader of the Movement (Wolf, 2017, p. 87). In 1996, the party's sixth congress was organised in Belgium where the decision was taken to favour moderation over confrontation (King, 2012, p. 7). The seventh congress was held in London in 2001 and in the *Final Declaration of the Seventh Congress of Ennahdha* (Wolf, 2017, p. 200) noted that the reasons for Ennahdha holding its congresses in secret and

in exile included “rejection of the principles of democracy, human rights, independence of civil society, transparency of governance and rules of accountability by the authorities, and their persistence in dictatorship and wide-spread corruption”. This declaration provides the strongest evidence of the liberal democratic values of the political Islamist Ennahdha Movement and that Ennahdha would continue to pursue its political Islam objectives within a liberal democratic political environment. The commitment to dialogue with the Ben Ali regime resulted in political discussions with other opposition movements and leftist groups in Tunisia, concluding in Ennahdha’s participation in the 18 October Movement⁷, which called on greater political freedom and freedom of the Tunisian press (Allani, 2009, p. 265).

The early exile years (1989-1992) also proved challenging for Rached Ghannouchi. Being restricted to the UK and London as he awaited official asylum status, he was not able to take the message of non-violence directly to the large group of supporters in France. In France, the Movement’s leader, Salah Karker led a group of dogmatic exiles who held a different view from Ghannouchi about non-violence (Wolf, 2017, p. 93). Karker felt strongly that the use of violence could not be completely ruled out and preferred the original approach of the Muslim Brotherhood. His views led him to engage with more radical Islamists in Afghanistan and Algeria, eventually leading to his arrest by the French authorities under suspicion of maintaining contacts with the Algerian Islamists behind a 1995 Paris metro bombing (Wolf, 2017, p. 94). Senior leadership of Ennahdha presented Karker with an ultimatum to come around to their position or risk exclusion. Karker was eventually pushed aside and out of the Movement as a result of his support for the violence in Algeria and Afghanistan, positions which the Ennahdha Executive Bureau could not condone. Karker’s approach did not sit well with the majority of the Ennahdha exiles as it was contrary to their efforts at calls for the restoration of the faith through democratisation of Tunisia, and it also did not fit with the definition of political Islam developed for this study.

Switzerland played host to the Movement’s 1995 congress (Wolf, 2017, p. 94) where internal reflection was the main order of business. There was criticism of the Movement’s efforts at social uprising or revolution, when there appeared to be very little appetite from within the country. The lack of allies amongst opposition parties was also criticised by the participants of

⁷ See 3.3

the Congress. Ghannouchi however continued to encourage non-violence and dialogue, an approach which would eventually lead to the joining of the 18 October Movement.

The mid-2000s were important years for the Ennahdha Movement and its survival as a structure. At that time the principal Ennahdha structures in exile consisted of the General Congress which was the highest decision-making body, and which elected a President of the Movement and a consultative Shura Council. An Executive Council was also created to implement decisions of the Shura Council and comprised of the President and nine other members (Wolf, 2017, p. 50). A significant development and turning point followed the release of Hamadi Jebali in 2006 from jail. Jebali was promoted to leader of the MTI in the early 1980s while the main leadership was imprisoned. He was the editor of Movement's newspaper, *al-Fajir* and prior to his imprisonment he also headed the clandestine underground structures of the MTI. His expertise made him the ideal person to create new underground efforts at re-establishing the domestic structures of Ennahdha along with Ali Larayedh, leader of the Political Bureau in the late 1980s and former political prisoner (Wolf, 2017, p. 115).

Clandestine meetings of the released Ennahdha leadership took place between the cities of Tunis and Sousse on a relatively regular basis, despite heavy surveillance by the Tunisian authorities, were legitimate. The release in 2007 of Abdelhamid Jlassi, formerly chief organiser of the Movement, provided additional impetus to efforts to set-up a domestic presence. Despite positive sentiment developing for the Movement, the exiles felt that conditions were not yet ripe for their return, deciding instead on a dual structure in Tunisia and London. This would allow the external pressure to be continued through leaders such as Rached Ghannouchi, while Jebali and Jlassi were tasked with building the image of the Movement in Tunisia and engaging with the international presence in Tunis (Wolf, 2017, p. 116). During these years Ennahdha's Tunisian members were in clandestine contact with foreign diplomats resident in Tunisia, including diplomats from the USA who visited Jebali shortly after his release (Barrouhi, 2011). According to Jebali, these meetings took place regularly and were simply concerned with gaining a better understanding of the Ennahdha Movement (Barrouhi, 2011). It is critical to note that despite the efforts of the Ben Ali regime, Ennahdha sought to maintain its organisational integrity and to pursue its commitment to democracy through an approach informed by its Islamic principles.

While Jebali and Laarayedh were active members of the 18 October Movement, Jlassi was tasked with ensuring that the structures of Ennahdha were rebuilt across the country, admittedly under difficult conditions. Security was not the only obstacle to an effective structure, the disagreement between the leadership and rank and file members over the direction of the Movement would also pose problems. By late 2009 Tunisia was in a difficult place. The 2008 riots in the mining centre of Gafsa had enhanced the notion of the security state, while the elections of 2009 served to entrench the regime of Ben Ali. Around this time it is reported that 350 members of Ennahdha held discussion sessions where it emerged that the membership felt that the focus of the Movement should be to enhance its social and community work ahead of political aspirations and goals (Wolf, 2017, p. 118). This included ensuring that the financial position and assistance which Ennahdha could offer would be strengthened along with a focus on teaching Islamic values in society. The latter preference was a difficult prospect for the Ennahdha leadership as Tunisia was combatting a strong increase in Salafist activity.

The re-establishment of Ennahdha's underground network proved a positive development for the movement as it offered the leadership access to the views and aspirations of its supporters in Tunisia. The fact that the underground membership felt that the political ambitions should be secondary to the societal needs of the people at the time, was a timely reminder of the need for Ennahdha to refocus its political Islam approach to not merely pursue democratisation, but also to merge this pursuit with its Islamic principles. It can therefore be argued that the underground movement strengthened Ennahdha's political Islam credentials.

Two main political movements that can be classified under the Salafist umbrella in Tunisia are Hizb ut-Tahrir and Ansar al-Shari'a. The Salafist movement in Tunisia was first formed in the early 1980s under the banner of Hizb ut-Tahrir and has essentially been underground ever since (Zalin, 2011). Hizb ut-Tahrir tend to prefer not being called Salafists and view themselves as a purely political movement with the aim of re-establishing the Caliphate in Tunisia. During the 1990s and 2000s when the Ben Ali regime cracked down on Islamist movements, Hizb ut-Tahrir also saw many of its leaders and supporters imprisoned alongside the leaders and supporters of Ennahdha (Zalin, 2011). Ansar al-Shari'a was only formed in 2011 and its leader Abu Ayyad has verified links to extremist organisations, including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Ansar al-Sharia has expressed a desire to only focus missionary work,

however it has been involved in inciting violence and protests against media freedom and freedom of expression (Zalin, 2011).

Both Hizb ut-Tahrir and Ansar al-Sharia follow a stricter interpretation of the Koran and seek to impose Islamic law within Tunisia. Ennahdha has been cautious of both organisations while not side-lining Salafism as a legitimate form of Islam. Rached Ghannouchi and other leaders of Ennahdha preferred to seek legitimisation for Salafist movements as long as they were willing to abide by the laws of the country and seek democratic means to achieve their goals (Churchill & Zellin, 2012). This sparked criticism from the Salafists and from the more conservative elements within the Ennahdha Movement. However, the need to condemn extremist views while still showing tolerance to the Muslim values was an important policy position for Ennahdha heading towards the 2011 elections.

The Salafist movement in Tunisia had the potential to derail Ennahdha's ambitions for democratisation. Rached Ghannouchi's views on inclusion and rehabilitation of Islamists who tended towards violence were misread by Tunisian public as well as the West. In his attempts to reintegrate former members who sought more militant avenues with the Salafist movements, Ennahdha and by extension political Islam in Tunisia was seen as accepting the desire for a Caliphate in Tunisia and the supremacy of Shari'a. These views however are contrary to what we have already established of Rached Ghannouchi and the objectives of the Ennahdha Movement.

3.3 The 18 October Movement

Earlier in this chapter reference was made to the 18 October Movement. This multi-party umbrella body is significant when looking at the influences on the Ennahdha Movement during its years in exile. While Ennahdha merely participated in the Movement it remained a beacon and example for its leadership. Ghannouchi as late as 2011 felt that the 18 October Movement was still an important conduit for the united opposition (Ghannouchi R. , 2011). It is therefore important to unpack the Movement below and highlight its impact on the views of Ennahdha as well as the perceptions of Ennahdha as a result of its participation in the Movement.

In 2001 the first tentative steps towards a united opposition against the Ben Ali regime were taken. The initial engagement took place between the Ennahdha Movement and the Congress for the Republic (CPR), founded by Human Rights Activist, Moncef Marzouki, following his

exile in France after being released from jail in 1994. In 2003, the opposition forces had managed to reach agreement on several positions, including the need for proper democracy, the release of political prisoners as well as the respect for the Arabo-Muslim identity of Tunisians and an increase in the intensity of the fight against corruption. The statement was dubbed the Call of Tunis Agreement⁸ and was signed in France (Wolf, 2017, p. 101). This first tentative step to a unified opposition laid the foundation for the establishment of the 18 October Movement. Tunisia was designated the host of the 2005 World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) by the UN, much to the dismay of opposition movements who saw it as condoning the oppression of the Ben Ali regime. A group of left-wing parties, along with several journalists and members of civil society decided to protest the government's actions and embarked on a hunger strike on 18 October 2005. Their demands resonated with those of the Call of Tunis Agreement, namely freedom of organization for all, freedom of information and expression, the release of political prisoners and the urgent adoption of a law on general legislative amnesty (Hajji, 2006). The strike was viewed by its participants as a success and sparked the creation of the 18 October Coalition for Rights and Freedoms which included the Ennahdha Movement. The creation of the Coalition was based upon exhaustive discussions held between all the relevant role players. There was a lot of initial opposition to the inclusion of Islamists, as the perceived threat of Islamism was still strong, especially amongst the far-left groups who held secularism and democracy as unequivocal rights (Hajji, 2006). The overwhelming sentiment, however, was that the Islamists were a part of the political scene in Tunisia and could not be excluded (Wolf, 2017, p. 101). Unfortunately, the unity shown after the success of the hunger strikers in raising the profile of the conditions in Tunisia was short lived. Leading members of the Movement started to compete against each other with a view to contesting 2009 Presidential elections, while other prominent leaders such as Moncef Marzouki of the CPR publicly questioned the effectiveness of the Movement (Wolf, 2017, p. 100).

While it can be concluded that the 18 October Movement ultimately failed in its quest, it nevertheless laid a strong foundation for future opposition cooperation, and also showed the Tunisian people that the Islamist movements such as Ennahdha were able to understand the

⁸ Full text in French available at <https://tounis.wordpress.com/2008/10/11/appel-de-tunis-du17-juin-2003/>

greater need for political freedom from the Ben Ali regime and place this goal ahead of their own goals. The influence on Ennahdha as a political Islam movement can also not be ignored. This was a first experience at collaboration or coalition with non-Islamist parties and trying to manage different ideologies. The need for flexibility in positions, concessions on issues of divergence and the ability to compromise were all important experiences would all reappear in Ennahdha's thinking and approach in 2011. The 18 October Movement also helped to change perspectives on Ennahdha, which showed that its approach was to pursue the best interests of the Tunisian people.

3.4 Rached Ghannouchi in exile: from Islamist to Muslim Democrat

While exiled in London, Rached Ghannouchi remained an influential Islamic scholar. This influence allowed him to engage with other leading scholars as well as the academic community in London. His Islamist school of thought developed substantially in London as he spent the time writing. A major focus of his writing was pointing out the failures of the Western world to properly comprehend the impact that oppression and injustice were having on the Arab World (Wolf, 2017, p. 97). He further argued that the leadership of Ennahdha was well placed to advance modernity by striving for freedom, dignity and sharing of power.

Ghannouchi's first proposal for a political Islam or Islamist democracy emerged as he argued for the need to maintain religion within the public sphere as an inherent component of democracy. In his widely-revered publication *Al-Hurriyat al 'Ammah Fid-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah*⁹ published in 1993 he states that Islam and democracy are not contradictory, instead they complement each other and are able to coexist (Tamimi A. , 2001, p. 80). His proposal included the need for Shari'a to be followed as the supreme law of the country and enforced by publicly chosen institutions. The power would therefore lie with the Islamic community, or Uma. Ghannouchi however did not outright reject multi-party democracy, as he believed it had a place if it did not result in the promotion of secularism at the expense of the religion. When discussing multi-party democracy Ghannouchi appears in favour of the principle, even extending it to a political Islam view whereby competing views seek to obtain the favour of the Uma (Tamimi A. , 2001, p. 83). He continues by expressing that pluralism

⁹ The English translation is *Public Liberties in the Islamic State*

exists within Islam and that its presence in an Islamic political system should be welcomed to stimulate debate. Quite surprisingly he also softened his stance on the progressive Personal Status Code of Tunisia which offered equal rights to women (Ghannouchi R. , 2011). Ghannouchi's views on political Islam do not deviate far from the elements of the definition used to conceptualise the theory in this study. He takes accepted Islamic principles and re-invents them within the modern context of society. His early work however still placed a greater emphasis on the centrality of Shari'a and the need for it to be enforced by the state.

Ghannouchi's views on democracy have been heavily influenced by the situation in Tunisia, starting from the colonial rule of the French to the autocratic regimes of both Bourguiba and Ben Ali. As an overarching theme within his discussions on democracy, he consistently refers to the need to avoid despotism, hence his acceptance of liberal democratic theory giving the power to the people (Tamimi A. , 2001, p. 84). When describing his ideal form of government and democracy, Ghannouchi wanted to see a system which includes a focus on education, the protection of dignity (rights) which recognizes the dignity of man and empowers the electorate to have power over the government (Tamimi A. , 2001, p. 84). While Ghannouchi widely accepts democracy, he does offer several warnings about the way that it has been applied. While he supports the theory, the practice to him lacks a grounding which he believes can be found in Islam. Political Islam offers an accountability of a civilian authority to the public. It is for this reason that he sees a strong compatibility between democracy and Islam (Tamimi A. , 2001, pp. 85-88). It could be argued that the acceptance of the principles of liberal democratic theory happened much faster for Ghannouchi, as he was quickly able to reconcile the tenets of liberal democracy with Islamic principles and morals.

The concept of political Islam and Islamic democracy are extensively developed and explained by Ghannouchi in his 1993 book, as well as lectures he delivered while in London. The discussions of subsequent Ennahdha Congresses revolved around many of the positions which Ghannouchi argued. He also argued for the need for freedoms to be enshrined in the State, and important element of liberal democracy (Esposito et al., 2016, p.181). The strength of his position within the Movement is clear in the extent to which much of the approach of Ennahdha is based upon his writings and teachings. Importantly, Ghannouchi defines the concept of Shari'a as a set of guidelines rather than law (Tamimi A. , 2001, p. 91), an important distinction, especially for a Western understanding of the concept of political Islam. By defining Shari'a

in this way, Ghannouchi has added impetus to the concept that Shari'a is an organic concept derived from God and that it needs to be adaptable to the modern context. He continues by expressing the understanding that the guidelines are so broad that they offer sufficient space to encompass existing laws and rights that are often sought within the democratic system.

The views of Ghannouchi on Islamic democracy and political Islam do not carry much of the extremist or fundamentalist views generally associated with Islamists in Western media. He defies not only the West but also Islamists and his own followers to broaden their thinking and views and not to fall into the stereotypical thinking which is associated with Islamists. According to Wright (1996, p. 72) Ghannouchi put forward that Islamists have a duty to find the balance between modernity and Islamic principles through interaction. He proceeds to express support for pluralism and tolerance within Islam (Wright, 1996, p. 74) and defines a realist approach within Islam whereby the texts of Islam can be balanced with the current modern reality. This approach places Ghannouchi firmly in the defined political Islam space where he is challenging the dominant thinking within Islam and political science by providing well-argued and developed alternatives for Islamist movements to share a space with democracy. Ghannouchi's views on democracy and Islam have been attributed to his encounters with Islamist scholar Malik Bennabi who was one of the first to put forward the notion of an Islamic democracy, even claiming that it would be better than the Western concept of democracy (Tamimi A. , 2007).

The development of his positions and the moderate approach he espoused created positive sentiment towards the Ennahdha Movement in Europe, ensuring that a steady stream of financing and support became available. Equally important was Ghannouchi's condemnation of the 9/11 attacks in the United States and his disgust at the perpetrators of the attacks. During a time when Islamists were viewed negatively, Ghannouchi could secure meetings with politicians in Europe and push Ennahdha's agenda of highlighting the oppression of the Ben Ali regime (Wolf, 2017).

3.5 Ennahdha's return to a liberated Tunisia

A general amnesty was enforced following the removal of Ben Ali as President in January 2011. This encouraged exiled leaders from all political movements to return to Tunisia. Ghannouchi indicated in an interview with the FT that the reason for his exile was gone and

that he felt compelled to return to his country (Rachid Ghannouchi, 2011). A crowd of several thousand supporters welcomed back a leader many had not seen in 20 years when he set foot in Tunis on 30 January 2011 (RFI, 2011). This unknown factor would be one of the main motivators for Ghannouchi, who indicated that “we will go back to organising ourselves and contribute to the education of the new generation through our moderate, democratic thought (Ghannouchi R. , 2011). In an article published in February 2011, the Tunisian daily newspaper, *Le Temps*, quoted Ghannouchi as indicating that the Personal Status Code was derived from Shari’a, a statement in strong contrast to the popular opinion held by many Tunisians, especially from civil society that Ennahdha would seek to abolish the Code. Once Ghannouchi returned to Tunisia it was almost as if his homeland reset something in his political outlook. His statements carried a very strong Islamist message at the expense of a more conciliatory democratic tone, which would have been expected based upon his track record in Europe. It can be argued that this was a calculated risk taken by Ghannouchi in order to gauge the appetite for political Islam in Tunisia.

Initially, Ghannouchi indicated that the priority for Ennahdha was to rebuild and not to participate in the elections in Tunisia that were due in October 2011 (AFP, 2011). The challenge for Ennahdha was that many of the electorate had no real knowledge of the Movement and were uncertain of its programmes going into the 2011 elections. Ennahdha would participate in the legislative elections and seek to form a coalition with other parties in an attempt to build a broad consensus (Gouëset, 2011). When working towards the elections, Ghannouchi the Muslim Democrat came to the fore as his understanding and promotion of liberal democratic values with an Islamist undertone started to reveal a political movement which could meet the demands of the revolution.

Rached Ghannouchi gave several interviews in the period between his return to Tunisia and the 2011 elections. During these interviews his message remained relatively consistent and remained true to the manifesto launched by the Ennahdha Movement on 14 September 2011.

3.6 Conclusion

Since its establishment as the MTI in 1960s and eventual renaming to the Ennahdha Movement in 1981, Islamism and political Islam in Tunisia has been synonymous with Ennahdha. The initial period of détente following the removal of Habib Bourguiba was short lived following

the results of the 1989 elections and the fear of Ben Ali and his followers that a strengthening of the Islamist movement would result in an erosion of the secular way of life they had become accustomed to. After being forced into exile, Ennahdha and its leader Rached Ghannouchi experienced a period of introspection and development not seen in other Islamist movements.

The numerous congresses held through the 1990s and early 2000s throughout Europe helped to develop Ennahdha's policies and positions with a respect for democracy and the ability of Islamism or political Islam and democracy to coexist. This acceptance of liberal democracy was revolutionary in the region and amongst Islamist movements. The decision to renounce confrontation and violent struggle proved important in ensuring that Ennahdha maintained support from outside Tunisia and in the West, which ultimately ensured that the Movement could continue its activism abroad. This was also a period where the symbiotic relationship between political Islam and liberal democracy grew the most. The leadership of Ghannouchi drove Ennahdha towards the development of an approach to political Islam that embraced the influence of exile on its leadership and its future vision for Tunisia, thereby strengthening its political Islam credentials.

Despite pressures from other Islamist groupings as well as the general degradation of relations with Islamists following the 9/11 attacks on the USA, Ennahdha continued to show maturity and non-discriminatory tendencies as it sought to create goodwill between Islamists, secularists and democrats. At the forefront of all these efforts has been Rached Ghannouchi. The development of his positions, theories and interactions over years in prison and exile have been widely lauded by Western nations. His acceptance and even promotion of democratic values alongside the moral values instilled and promoted by Islam were key in ensuring the survival of the Ennahdha movement through its years in exile, but also in attracting non-Islamists to the party as it entered into the electoral campaign of 2011.

The Ennahdha Movement decision to join and even drive the October 18 Movement would be an important one in securing a captive audience for its platform, and would assist in ensuring that upon its return from exile, Ennahdha enjoyed popularity amongst large parts of the Tunisian population, who saw Ennahdha as a moral compass and an honest party which would not lie to them or grab power as the Ben Ali regime did. The October 18 Movement would further strengthen the view of Ennahdha that consensus, compromise and wide consultation were the most effective tool to promote political Islam.

The electoral period in 2011 would however prove to be a difficult and volatile one for Tunisia with Ennahdha facing strong opposition to its Islamist views and general fears that Ennahdha would be seeking to impose Islamic law in Tunisia. This fear developed despite the Ennahdha message denying this and seeking an open democratic process.

CHAPTER FOUR: IS THE ENNAHDHA MOVEMENT PRACTISING POLITICAL ISLAM: ANALYSIS USING THE 2010-2011 TUNISIAN ELECTIONS

4.1 Introduction

The return of Rached Ghannouchi to Tunisia at the end of January 2011 marked the return of Islamist politics to Tunisia. As shown in Chapter three, the Ennahdha Movement's leader spent his time in exile refining the positions of the Movement and encouraging his fellow adherents to accept democracy as the only viable way forward for the country. This introspection, by both Ghannouchi and the Ennahdha Movement, would place it on course to become the majority party in the first post-revolution elections of Tunisia.

This chapter will cover the period stretching from the registration of Ennahdha as a political party in March 2011, through the launch of its manifesto, the electoral period and the October 2011 elections themselves. The electoral cycle will be used to demarcate the phases of pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral periods, with a central theme being the centrality of the electoral process to democratic theory. By examining the aforementioned periods, the study will show the democratic principles within which the Tunisian elections are rooted and thereby providing sufficient evidence of liberal democracy against which the political Islam approach of Ennahdha can be studied. The reaction of local and international media and other parties towards Ennahdha's campaign will be utilised in order to gauge the level of tolerance for political Islam. In addition, some polling data¹⁰ will be referenced and compared to the eventual outcomes of the elections. Post-elections reports by the Carter Centre observer mission, as one of the largest missions during the elections, will also be used to assess their analysis of the elections and whether or not specific trends were identified which led to the success of Ennahdha in the elections. Of particular interest will be the political Islam message that Ennahdha put across throughout its campaign and assessing whether the message aligns with the definition of political Islam put forward by this study. Ennahdha's participation in the government and Constituent Assembly will briefly be studied within the context of the

¹⁰ Polling data is only available for the pre-electoral campaign period, once campaigning started polling was not allowed.

definition of political Islam in order to establish whether or not Ennahdha was able to translate its campaign manifesto developed on the basis of political Islam into government.

4.2 Operating in the shadow of Ben Ali: Tunisia's interim governments

Following the departure of Ben Ali in January 2011, the constitution provided for power to be vested in the speaker of the assembly, Mr Foued Mebazaa, as interim President. Under his instruction, the sitting Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi was tasked with the formation of an interim government. This first interim government announced only days after the departure of Ben Ali was hugely unpopular due to it containing many members of the former President's Rassemblement du Courant Democratique (RCD) party. This prompted protestors to return to the streets demanding the removal of any traces of the RCD from government (BBC, 2011). Over the coming days and months, the interim government struggled for legitimacy. Prime Minister Ghannouchi resigned on 27 February 2011 following several ministerial resignations and reshuffles in the preceding weeks, ultimately succumbing to the pressure of 100,000 protestors taking to the streets of Tunis and who were violently opposed by the police. The resignation of Mohammed Ghannouchi coincided with the dissolution of the RCD party, the disbanding of the secret police and the decision to declare that the Ennahdha Movement would be able to register as a political party. (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011, p. 12).

On 1 March 2011 a decree law passed by the interim government officially legalised the Ennahdha Movement as a political party (Basly, 2011). This was the first time that Ennahdha was actually a registered political party and able to contest the elections as such. It should be recalled that in the 1989 elections Ennahdha was not a legitimate party and had its members participate as independents. Ennahdha immediately formed part of the High Commission for the Realisation of Revolutionary Goals, Political Reforms, and Democratic Transition (High Commission). This wide ranging commission was tasked with developing new proposals for laws and reforms in line with the demands of the protestors, oversight of the interim government of Beji Caid Essebsi and to prepare the electoral law and appoint an electoral commission (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011, p. 13). Ennahdha did not waste any time in exercising its democratic credentials by supporting the efforts to democratise Tunisia. In keeping with its political Islam base, it sought to form part of a wider consultative process which would also provide a platform for Ennahdha to be forward looking and try and influence the political environment in Tunisia to suit its purposes.

The High Commission, formed on 5 April 2011, was comprised of as wide ranging as possible actors from political parties, civil society and the legal profession. The High Commission had to overcome the many differences inherent in its composition of 155 members to draft the necessary laws that would allow the elections to take place on 24 July 2011, as had been announced officially by interim Prime Minister Essebsi to protestors on the Kasbah square in downtown Tunis on 3 March 2011 (Usher, 2011). Ennahdha was at the forefront of the Kasbah protests which saw several thousands of Tunisians protest against the two interim governments of Mohammed Ghannouchi for aiming to derail the revolution and being too close to and filled with the remnants of the RCD. Notably these Kasbah protests were conducted in a peaceful manner and did not see the violence of the street protests. While Ennahdha was absent as an entity from the 2010 protests, it was now in a better position organisationally to seek to make clear their demands through the presence of their supports amongst those of other political movements during these protests. The strong showing of Ennahdha during these protests and their desire for peaceful protest resonated with the people of Tunisia. Once again, the symbiotic relationship between political Islam and liberal democracy is evident as the concept of protest and the will of the people being expressed aligns with the realisation of the societal demands and influences which are generated from the Muslim community.

On 23 March 2011 the interim government passed decree law 14 of 2011, which served as the interim constitution of Tunisia and was titled *Provisional Organisation of Public Authorities*¹¹. This decree law would remain in force until the promulgation of the Constitution of 2014, much longer than anyone had envisioned. The High Commission functioned on two levels, the higher level was a group of experts who were tasked with drafting legal texts, while the second was the broad based grouping of politicians, civil society and other groupings who commented on the texts and approved or rejected them prior to approval by the interim President (Mohsen-Finan, 2012). Despite the divergent views within the High Commission, it was able to propose and have passed an electoral law on 11 April 2011, followed by a decree law establishing the Higher Independent Electoral Commission (ISIE) on 12 April 2011, tasked with preparing the

¹¹ A translated English text of Decree Law 14 of 2011 is available at http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=245403

elections of a Constituent Assembly, as demanded by the Kasbah protests (Carter Centre, 2011).

Ennahdha's participation in the work of the High Commission became strained as it started to openly criticise the lack of consensus within the Commission. Ennahdha felt that many of the members were deviating from their main tasks and seeking to gain personal benefit, going against the principle of popular rule. They also criticised the decision taken to change the election date to October 2011, with the ISIE citing logistical challenges, and Ennahdha feeling that this was an effort to give less organised parties time to organise themselves in order to compete against Ennahdha. Further disagreements on political party financing and the inclusion of a republican pact eventually saw Ennahdha suspend its participation in June 2011 (Online, 2011). Ennahdha was seeking a more representative governing structure that would show a clean break from the past regimes, but also responded to their continued efforts at the coexistence of political Islam and democracy. This lack of consensus especially irked Rached Ghannouchi as he was a firm believer in the principle of consensus-based decision making.

4.3 Electoral manifesto

In September 2011, Ennahdha launched its electoral manifesto with much pomp and ceremony. In an exhibition of its reach and brand presence, the party leader, Rached Ghannouchi, along with the Secretary-General and other leaders within the party took to the stage to present the 22 founding principles and 365 measures that made up Ennahdha's electoral programme (Leaders, 2011).

In his opening statement to the thousands of guests present for the launch, Ghannouchi reiterated that the electoral programme was not only for Ennahdha but for all Tunisians and that it would seek to meet the objectives of the revolution and deviate from the failures of the fallen regime, while presenting an example to the world (Leaders, 2011). The tone and content of the presentation pointed towards an Islamist party seeking to establish itself as a moderate party in the eyes of the Tunisian public. In a later article written just prior to the 2011 elections, Ghannouchi stated that in Ennahdha's manifesto "we call for protecting the rights of women and promoting their public and political participation, on the basis of citizenship and equality" (Ghannouchi R. , 2011). This was a strong message, especially to the female constituents who

enjoyed unprecedented freedoms in a Muslim country and feared the rise of an Islamist party. With this statement Ghannouchi showed that there was room for a more open society under the leadership of a morally guided Islamist party which would embrace democratisation of society with Islam at its core. The manifesto provided a wide range of positions covering the political, economic, social and cultural aspects. The various leaders who took to the stage reiterated the belief that Ennahdha would provide a progressive approach to addressing the problems of the country and would succeed where a capitalistic system which ignored Islam couldn't (Leaders, 2011).

Ennahdha's manifesto contained strong references to the cultural history of Tunisia and its influence on where Tunisia has been and where it is heading. Interestingly in the preamble of the manifesto, there is recognition of the advances and modernisation of western civilisations in contrast to that of Tunisia and the desire for Tunisia to embrace modernity and advancement. Ennahdha refers to "ijtihad" or creative interpretation of Islam as the tool for modernisation. This is an important pillar of Ennahdha's manifesto, and the thinking developed by Rached Ghannouchi while in exile. What Ennahdha is making very clear is that as much as it recognises the traditional morals and values of Islam, it recognises the need to shape itself with the times and to interpret the teachings of Islam within the current modern context (Ennahdha, 2011, p. 4). The flexibility which is called for by political Islam is evident in the preamble and also speaks to the application of democratic principles. Its reliance on the history of Tunisia to be forward looking and seek modernisation provides evidence of the continued efforts of Ennahdha to shape a new Islamic future for Tunisia which does not rely on historical Islamic views, but instead seeks to re-integrate Islamic teachings into a modern world view.

This notion of creatively interpreting Islam does fit within the parameters of the definition of political Islam provided in Chapter one. In addition, it is pursued in order to ensure Islam's political relevance within the context of developments in Tunisia after the revolution. Ennahdha goes even further in its manifesto to uphold democracy as a key component of its programme. The first of its key objectives speaks to the tenets of a democratic system and setting up the necessary institutions and prescripts to uphold such a system. These include basic rights as demanded by the protestors during the revolution, namely dignity and freedom, as well as rule of law and good governance based upon a supreme constitution (Ennahdha, 2011, p. 6).

To lend further legitimacy to its political Islam credentials, the manifesto points to the views that Tunisia is an independent republican state with Islam as its religion and with the state playing a public role in respecting the freedoms and rights of the individual and playing the role of guarantor of these rights and liberties (Ennahdha, 2011, p. 7). These principles are further supported by the call for a parliamentary system entrenching power with the people or their elected representatives. Such parliament would guarantee freedom of expression and religion, would be supported through a multiparty electoral system and would underpin the separation of powers and respect for human rights (Ennahdha, 2011, p. 9).

A key element of the manifesto which led to much debate in Tunisia, was that of the rights of women. As previously mentioned, Rached Ghannouchi has spoken out in favour of at the very least maintaining the gains of women in Tunisia and where possible strengthening them. In the Ennahdha manifesto, this position is clearly stated and even progressed further. Importantly they seek to strengthen the role of women, respect the equality of women to men and to reject any forms of discrimination or marginalisation of women on any grounds, including the imposition of dress codes (Ennahdha, 2011, p. 23). When viewed in conjunction with priorities around the strengthening of the family unit and encouragement of the youth to pursue education and employment (Ennahdha, 2011, p. 24) Ennahdha maintains the importance of the role of the family unit and its components within Islam, while reconciling these with the democratically gained rights and freedoms, especially for women.

When examining the manifesto of Ennahdha it provides a solid and clear foundation from which to build a strong democratic state with respect for rights and freedoms, yet still within the confines and moral obligations of the Islamic faith. The manifesto therefore met the criteria established within the definition for political Islam to give credence to Ennahdha as a proponent of political Islam. Within the manifesto the tenets of liberal democracy such as respect for human rights, the need for regular and free elections, respect for the rule of law and seeking economic freedom are all clearly visible. This provides sufficient evidence that Ennahdha has an established baseline of being both a political Islam movement and respectful of the tenets of liberal democracy. It can therefore be concluded that at the very least Ennahdha entered the electoral period confident in its political Islam and democratic values and that these two theories could co-exist within the movement. The programme nevertheless remained an ambitious one, aimed at tackling all the challenges of the Tunisian state and people. With the

manifesto launched, Ennahdha would now have to sell its positions to the Tunisian people. Importantly, as the next section will examine, would be the public reaction to the manifesto alongside that of other political movements, especially those considered secular.

4.4 The electoral campaign and selling the manifesto

The Tunisian electoral laws are an important starting point when determining the compatibility and complementarity of political Islam and liberal democracy. In order to evaluate the electoral campaign of any party in the 2011 elections, it is important to understand the electoral laws which were in place, specifically those relevant to campaigning. Decree Law 35 of 10 May 2011 established the electoral law for the 2011 Constituent Assembly elections (ACEProject, 2011). Part two of the electoral law from Article 37 onward, deals with the campaigning rules. The general provisions such as impartiality of the media and administration are present as well as prohibition of using religious sites or government offices to campaign. Furthermore, the law stipulates the time frame for campaigning as starting 22 days before voting day and ending 24 hours before voting day (ACEProject, 2011). The Electoral law provides the necessary framework for the ISIE to determine the rules surrounding campaigning and the fair and equal distribution of media airtime. The ISIE in its Decision of 3 September 2011 on the *Rules and Procedures of the Electoral Campaign* (Jendoubi, 2011) set out the necessary guidelines for all participants in the electoral campaign. One of the challenges faced by the parties was that with the date of the election set for 24 October 2011 campaigning could only start on 30 September 2011. With only 22 days of campaigning parties were given a very narrow window within which to operate as all propaganda, promotion or electoral activity was prohibited starting from 12 September 2011 according to article 2 of the code of conduct (Jendoubi, 2011). Designated areas were established for parties to place electoral posters which were strictly controlled in terms of their size and appearance. Media ads were limited in time and airplay was given on an equitable basis and following a draw for their order of appearance on national stations. Private stations were required to adhere to the same system. The use of electronic media sites was allowed, however within the parameters set out by the ISIE and needed to be aligned to the campaign calendar (Jendoubi, 2011).

Within this heavily regulated space, political parties needed to draw on their strengths to try and convince voters of their manifesto and credentials. It should be recalled that although this was technically not a legislative election, the election of the Constituent Assembly would

determine the direction Tunisia would take and the type of Constitution it would gain. This however tapped into the fears and apprehensions of many Tunisians, especially those who considered themselves secular, that Ennahdha would seek to impose Shari'a Law through a new constitution.

Ennahdha, in contrast to many other parties could draw on its wide network at grassroots level to lead an extremely effective electoral campaign (Churchill, 2011). While many parties chose to make use of the free media exposure offered by the national television and radio stations, Ennahdha chose to make use of its grassroots network and supply voters with practical information on the electoral processes, ballot papers and party symbols, rather than focussing solely on its manifesto (Churchill, 2011). This approach ensured that when potential voters entered the voting booth, they were able to easily identify Ennahdha on the ballot paper. Coupling these public education sessions with being almost the only party to ensure that its campaign posters were placed in nearly every designated area, provide Ennahdha with even more visibility amongst the voting public when compared to many of the existing and new political forces in the country (Carter Centre, 2011, p. 37). Ennahdha's efforts at ensuring a transparent campaign and also being transparent and open in its electoral approach once again provided further evidence of its democratic nature and showed that political Islam was not only compatible with democratic theory, but that in practice political Islam was characteristically democratic.

The regulations put in place by the ISIE were perhaps the greatest stumbling blocks to a really competitive election and also clouded the truly democratic nature of the elections. It could be argued that overly restrictive electoral laws could be used to guide elections in a specific direction by restricting the freedoms of political parties to put across their message. As Murphy (2013, p. 237) points out, the efforts to ensure a level playing field and to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the public created unnecessary pressures on both the ISIE and the parties. While freedoms should be respected during elections, the equality of political parties and ensuring this equality is an important responsibility of the electoral commission towards the electorate.

The late application of decisions and inability to effectively apply the rules was observed by the Carter Centre in its electoral report (Carter Centre, 2011, p. 35). The inefficiencies in the electoral campaign period, in particular relating to public debate and the use of media, meant that substantive debate on the main issues facing Tunisia was not prioritised by political parties

who would rather focus on trying to convince the electorate whether or not Ennahdha would impose an Islamic State in Tunisia (Murphy, 2013). Ennahdha's biggest battle throughout the campaign period was trying to convince the Tunisian population, political analysts, the media and their political opponents that they were sincere in their manifesto and that political Islam did not mean Shari'a and an Islamic State. In this sense the opposition were successful in detracting from the real issues facing the average Tunisian as was articulated during the 2010 protests.

During the pre-electoral period, Ennahdha would come under scrutiny from the local media and opposition in an effort to discredit their democratic aspirations and to expose political Islam as an affront to the democratic aspirations of the Tunisian people. In an opinion piece in the influential weekly magazine, *Leaders*, Samy Ghorbal (2011), expressed great doubts about the proposed parliamentary system put forward by Ennahdha in its manifesto. The parliamentary system Ennahdha proposed was based on the Westminster model and appealed to the desire by many Tunisians to avoid a return to a dictatorial president by removing power from the presidency and vesting it in the parliament and a prime minister representing the majority party. From a democratic theory perspective Ennahdha could not be faulted for pursuing a system of political plurality, transparency and accountability to the people. The *Leaders* article was based on the premise that Ennahdha would win a majority in parliament and use a parliamentary system to take control of the country as it pleased, or to create a deadlock if no real majority emerges. The point of view expressed by Ghorbal was baseless, in the sense that it revealed more a complete lack of understanding of parliamentary systems from a product of the autocratic elitism fomented under Ben Ali than a true analysis of the Ennahdha proposal. In fact, Ennahdha's parliamentary proposal was echoed by most other parties as the most effective solution to neuter the presidency, the position where Tunisians felt power should no longer be centralised.

Surprisingly the general reaction to Ennahdha's manifesto was muted in the local media. With a solid proposed platform and a strong focus on ensuring religious ambiguity (Piser K. , 2016) much of the criticism levelled against Ennahdha surrounded the historical activities of its leaders, questions about its economic projects and the creation of doubt that the programme was sincere and that the lack of language supporting Shari'a law was merely a ruse. This approach however did not succeed in diminishing Ennahdha's support. Polling leading up to

the election continued to show Ennahdha at 40% (Soudani, 2011). This would ensure that although Ennahdha would not secure an absolute majority, it would be in a strong position to be asked to form a government. At the time though, these polling results were not taken as strong indicators by the public. These results contrasted strongly from an early poll also conducted by Sigma Conseil in February 2011 (Clémentot, 2011) showing that the Tunisian people had very little knowledge of political movements in the country. Apart from the RCD the Ennahdha Movement was cited by nearly 26% of respondents. The reason for this was that the electoral code contained a provision which prevented polling from taking place during the electoral campaign period (LM, 2011). The rationale behind such a decision was that there was an absence of a legal framework for opinion polling, and also the lack of a watchdog body to ensure fairness and compliance with transparency.

In an attempt to counter the doubt surrounding the sincerity of its electoral programme and its commitment to democracy and equal rights, Ennahdha's leaders spoke in favour of a Government of National Unity and strong coalition government in order to ensure that the transitional period would address all concerns. Ennahdha also signed up to the electoral pact which sought to limit the transitional period of the Constituent Assembly to one year, during which a new Constitution would be drafted (Ghali, 2011). These steps were aligned with the rhetoric of the Movement both prior to the revolution as well as the period immediately after the revolution. Ennahdha remained true to its political Islam identity and its desire for democratisation of Tunisia.

As previously mentioned, many observers noted in their post electoral reports that Ennahdha's visibility and door to door efforts during the electoral campaign period are likely to have been the greatest contributor to its high vote count. Such observations support the claims that Ennahdha secured electoral victory through sheer street level presence and superior organisation throughout the territory when compared to all other parties. In addition, as the most prominent historical opponent of the Ben Ali regime, Ennahdha was seen as a vote in opposition of the Ben Ali years while also being viewed as a trustworthy and moral vote on the basis of its religious credentials. (Gana, Van Hamme, & Ben Rebah, 2012). This latter view fits well with the notion that political Islam brings a different perspective to democratic politics, in that the moral code and ethics of Islam translate into a politics of trust and accountability to the community of faithful or Ummah. In a country where the legacy of corruption, nepotism

and propaganda were still fresh in the minds of the voters, Ennahdha's platform would prove enticing to the undecided voters.

4.5 The 2011 elections, Ennahdha rises to power

Following a short electoral campaign period, Tunisians were called to the ballot boxes on 23 October 2011 for the electoral period. Queues at polling stations were long and surprisingly patient. Following years of elections with no political plurality or with preordained outcomes, a sense of optimism gripped the country. Despite only being elections for a Constituent Assembly, this first exercise of democratic freedoms carried more than just symbolic significance. For the first time party lists in a large number of constituencies saw a large number of female candidates participating, with a number of female candidates at the head of lists. Efforts to encourage parity by the ISIE were deemed a relative success. A number of youths were also represented, a clear nod towards the important role the youth had in the fall of Ben Ali and recognition of the contribution they could make to building a democratic Tunisia.

Of particular significance was the neutrality of the military, who were deployed to secure polling stations, but who also chose to remain silent observers. Interestingly the police, National Guard and military forces are not allowed to vote in Tunisia (Dreisbach & Ben Said, 2014). This is done in an effort to ensure their political neutrality and to ensure loyalty to the Republic above all else. This decision was also important in the context of the police state present during the Ben Ali era and the high level of mistrust of the police by the Tunisian public.

According to the figures reported to the media by the ISIE on 14 November 2011, of the nearly 8.3 million eligible voters, just over 4.3 million voters registered in Tunisia and abroad. Only 2.7 million or 68% of the votes were sufficient for seats in the Constituent Assembly. Official turnout was approximately 52% of eligible voters, or around 4 million eligible votes (Gamha, 2011).

Initial results pointed to a close correlation of results to preliminary polling (Bustos, 2011, p. 6). Ennahdha appeared to be heading for 40% of the vote, indicating effective success in the electoral campaign and also strong belief in a new order from the Tunisian electorate, although some observers have analysed the result being as a consequence of protest voting against any parties linked to the old regime (Guazzone, 2013, p. 31). Ennahdha received 89 seats in the 217

seat Constituent Assembly, ahead of the CPR with 29 seats and Ettakatol with 20 seats (Gamha, 2011). While Ennahdha and the CPR improved on their polling predictions it is important to contextualise the results within an election where only five political parties fielded candidates in all 33 constituencies, both in Tunisia and abroad (Bustos, 2011, p. 6).

The result however meant that Ennahdha would need to seek coalition partners in order to form a government. The Movement was however prepared for this scenario and it was one with which they were comfortable as they had shown through the 18 October Movement participation as well as in their support for a Government of National Unity. Preliminary discussions commenced almost immediately with the CPR movement of Moncef Marzouki, as well as the Ettakatol party of Mustapha Ben Jaafar (LeMonde.fr, 2011). The Decision by Ennahdha to align with leftist parties, may have come down to the fact that neither party ran an anti-Ennahdha platform during the electoral campaign (Le Roux, 2011). A further consideration would be the lack of former government officials within the ranks of the two parties, as the election clearly showed that the Tunisian population were seeking alternatives.

The coalition between Ennahdha, CPR and Ettakatol would become known as the Troika government. The agreement reached on 21 November 2011 between the three parties was that Ennahdha would take up the powerful position of Head of Government or Prime Minister, while Ettakatol would be given the position of President of the Constituent Assembly and the CPR would be given the largely ceremonial position of interim President of the Republic (AlBawsala, 2012). The first order of business following the elections would be the establishment of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) which would oversee the drafting of the Tunisian Constitution. Initially elected for only a year, the NCA held its first sitting on 22 November 2011 during which session Mustapha Ben Jaafar was elected President of the Assembly by 145 votes to 68 (AlBawsala, 2012). The first Deputy President of the NCA was Meherzia Laabidi of Ennahdha, the most senior woman in government and a strong proponent of Women's Rights in Tunisia, despite her Islamist roots. Amongst the first orders of business of the NCA was the adoption of the internal rules and regulations and what became known as the "mini-constitution" in the form of Constituent Law no 6 of 2011 on 16 December 2011. This law was titled the Provisional Organisation of Public Powers and would remain in effect until the adoption of the new constitution, which at the time was thought to be only a year away (AlBawsala, 2012).

Chapter IV of the Constituent Law sets out the articles for the election of the Executive, including the President and Prime Minister. Amongst the conditions to be met for candidature to the Presidency are Tunisian citizenship and parental lineage as well as the important requirement that the successful candidate renounce any party-political roles and activities, a complete departure from the norm in Tunisia (Tunisian Presidency, 2011). Out of ten candidates who were nominated, only Moncef Marzouki met the criteria set out, and he was subsequently appointed as interim President on 12 December 2011 (AlBawsala, 2012).

As per the regulations set out in the Constituent Law, President Marzouki held consultations with the leadership of the leading party, Ennahdha, and asked its preferred candidate for Prime Minister, Hamadi Jebali, to form a government on 14 December 2011. Mr Jebali announced a provisional cabinet and presented the governmental programme to the NCA on 22 December 2011. Following heated debate and criticism over some appointments, the NCA provided its approval of the government of Prime Minister Jebali by 154 votes in favour, 38 against and 11 abstentions (AlBawsala, 2012).

4.6 Ennahdha in government

The previous section was needed in order to show that Ennahdha as a political Islam movement understood the need to be inclusive in its governance approach and to reinforce their position that while they seek to restore the importance of Islam in society, this would be approached through a multi-party coalition approach to ensure that there is widespread agreement on how a post-revolutionary Tunisia should look.

Prior to the announcement of his cabinet, Prime Minister Jebali elaborated on the proposed programme of his government. The main points remained true to the Ennahdha manifesto and the challenges facing a post Ben Ali Tunisia. Specifically mentioned were the challenge of overcoming unemployment by exploiting cooperation with Tunisia's neighbours, the need to prioritise development and investment in the inland areas of the country, and the respect for human rights and enforcing political freedoms (Ghribi, 2011). The tenets of liberal democracy were once again clearly highlighted through this programme proposed by a political Islam movement and supports the symbiotic relationship between the two theories in practice.

The composition of the first Jebali government saw Ennahdha dominate a list of 30 Ministers and 11 Secretaries of State. Ennahdha supplied 19 members of the Government, CPR 6 and

Ettakatol 6 with 11 Independents. Despite the electoral calls for female representation only 3 members of the Government were female (Nawaat.org, 2011). Ennahdha ensured that it secured the prized portfolios of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Justice and Minister of the Interior. These appointments were not without criticism. The Minister of the Interior, Ali Laarayedh, was a former political prisoner who endured many years of the severest torture under the Ben Ali regime and is known to be one of the more conservative members of the Ennahdha Movement. The most contentious appointment was that of Ghannouchi's son in law, Rafik Abdessalam as Minister of Foreign Affairs (Mzioudet, 2011) with questions about his competency and knowledge of foreign affairs being raised alongside fears of nepotism, the latter being common practice in the Ben Ali era. Post-revolutionary Tunisia appears to favour technocrats over political appointments. This was frequently mentioned when speaking to Tunisians on the streets and in the cafés of the capital Tunis¹². It appears that this desire for technocrats is a remnant of the bureaucratic nature of the state adopted from France during the time of Habib Bourguiba. However, in a multi-party state as emerged after the revolution, it was to be expected that political parties and movements would source from within their ranks when choosing Ministers and heads of government departments, regardless of competencies or experience.

In this post electoral phase, Ennahdha would be watched very closely on two fronts. The first would be as the government, the second in the NCA. As government, Ennahdha was expected to immediately start the task of addressing the challenges facing Tunisia in a post Ben Ali era. As previously elaborated, many of these challenges were identified and outlined in the electoral manifesto of Ennahdha, the task at hand was now to develop and implement strategies or policies aimed at addressing these challenges. Of particular interest in this phase would be the influence of Islam on the approach adopted by the government.

Almost three months after its appointment the government of Prime Minister Jebali presented its programme of action to the NCA. With a strong slant towards creation of employment and an economic recovery, the programme was widely welcomed. The interior and South of the

¹² From June 2012 to June 2016 the author was stationed at the South African Embassy in Tunisia and held numerous discussions with Tunisians during the course of his work on various subjects relating to the political situation in the country.

country would stand to benefit the most in an effort to address inequalities created by the Ben Ali and Bourguiba regimes. Keeping true to its Islamic fundamentals, Ennahdha pushed for service delivery improvements for the poor and increasing the social security reach to the poorest areas. These activities sat well with Ennahdha and were a comfortable fit in implementing these efforts with the additional funding of government now within its power. It is in this area specifically of poverty alleviation and improving access to public services where Ennahdha showed its true political Islam credentials. The principled approach and cornerstones of Islam which advocate caring for those less fortunate and aiming for equality were well merged with the democratic approach where poorer constituencies saw potential in receiving assistance by voting for Ennahdha. Ennahdha also ensured that key bureaucratic positions went to its members in order to assist in implementing their programme. Ennahdha's success was however often curtailed by the challenging economic situation which prevailed in Tunisia. An economy reliant on tourism revenues and agricultural exports along with foreign investment in infrastructure and human capital was struggling to find its feet. Despite the optimism achieved through the 2011 elections, uncertainty continued to dampen economic prospects in difficult global economic circumstances. Difficult economic conditions would not be the only challenge to Ennahdha's aim of creating an Islamic democracy.

In her brief on Ennahdha's first nine months in office, Sarah Feuer (2012) identifies three key challenges faced by Ennahdha in trying to implement its vision. The first of these is named as the threat of secular opposition parties and NGOs who provided stern opposition on matters of religion and the state, women's rights, free speech and the political system to be adopted in the constitution (Feuer, 2012). Contrary to its electoral campaign and the position taken by Rached Ghannouchi, several conservative members of Ennahdha's bloc in the NCA put forward a proposal to include Sharia as the source of law in the constitution (Feuer, 2016). Rached Ghannouchi distanced the party from the position and the Members of the NCA were called to order. However, when this proposal is seen in conjunction with the protests by several thousand Salafis on the streets of Tunis in support of the inclusion of Sharia in the constitution on two occasions (Lambolely, 2012) the outrage of secularist parties becomes evident. In response to outrage over art exhibitions which were deemed blasphemous, the Ennahdha Bloc proposed a law which would outlaw Blasphemy. This proposed provision came despite assurances that Ennahdha supported freedom of expressions and religion, as long as these did not go against the Islamic morals and identity of Tunisia (Sadek, 2013). Ultimately, despite cleavages within

the secular opposition and even amongst the members of the Troika, the proposal was withdrawn, as had been done with the earlier proposal for Shari'a to be the ultimate source of law (Feuer, 2012).

Towards the middle of 2012 Ennahdha would bear witness to the creation of the Nidaa Tounes (Call of Tunisia) party under the leadership of former interim Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi. The octogenarian politician had a well-established political pedigree and despite links to the regimes of Bourguiba (his mentor) and Ben Ali, his credentials were strengthened by his resignation from the Ben Ali government. Essebsi credits the confusion in the ranks of the opposition and the ineffectiveness of Ennahdha and the Troika government with his decision to re-enter politics. Nidaa Tounes offered a home to former RCD politicians, the Destourian (constitutional) movement and secularists who feared the rising power of the Ennahdha movement and its Islamist policies.

Despite criticism that it was allowing former RCD members back into public life, Nidaa Tounes quickly saw a rise in membership and even attracted some defectors from parties within the NCA, leading to a Nidaa Tounes bloc forming in NCA despite it not contesting the elections. Service delivery protests and general unhappiness in the interior region of Siliana which saw a violent crackdown by security forces, prompted Nidaa Tounes to form a grand coalition of opposition parties who sought to dethrone the Troika.

This posed an immediate challenge to the Ennahdha led government and its ability to maintain law and order, as well as to respect freedom of expression. It also pointed to the very clear Islamist/secular divide which would continue to permeate Tunisian society (Berman, 2014). How Ennahdha would respond to these demands was under close scrutiny by the media, opposition parties and the international community, looking to Ennahdha as a moderate Islamic party and proponent of political Islam. An organised secular opposition questioning the ability of democracy and Islam to coexist would place enormous pressure upon the leadership of Ennahdha to not compromise its positions and ideals.

The second challenge identified by Feuer (2012) is that of the divisions within the Ennahdha movement. Despite showing unity in the run-up to elections, the practice of governing and legislating opened up some cleavages within the Ennahdha movement. In particular between the more moderate and centrist leadership of Rached Ghannouchi and his followers and a more

conservative emerging youth within the movement such as the Members of Parliament who proposed the inclusion of Shari'a in the constitution, Habib Elouz and Sadek Chourou (2012, p. 6). While diverging views emerged, the ability of Ennahdha to compromise internally and maintain democratic traits should be highlighted. The 2012 Ennahdha congress saw a more balanced and mixed crop of leaders emerge within the Shura council of the movement in order to accommodate the different views. Such a decision by Ennahdha members ultimately shows that the movement remains committed to democracy on the basis of Islamic principles, in other words, political Islam (Zahar, 2012).

The third, and potential most problematic, challenge faced by Ennahdha was that of the Salafists (Feuer, 2012). Even before the elections, the Salafi movement started agitating for Tunisia to turn towards an Islamic state with Sharia as its source of law. As Marks (2015, p. 5) points out the rise of a radical Salafi movement in Tunisia was strange even to Ennahdha, who had only known a quieter Salafi movement. Ennahdha was quick to lay blame at the feet of Bourguiba and Ben Ali for side lining the Zaytouna School and undermining moderate Islamism to the extent that the youth in 2011 became influenced by more extremist thinking from the Gulf States. Following the elections attacks against art galleries and other symbols of a more secular society were carried out in June 2012 leading to major riots and the imposition of a curfew (Feuer, 2012).

The Salafi movement also occupied the University of Tunis calling for a removal of the ban on wearing of headscarves and the niqab. As mentioned before large-scale protests calling on Ennahdha to implement Sharia were also held. Ennahdha's approach to the Salafi movement was one of internalisation and allowing them to express their views yet urging them to work within the democratic electoral system. This approach included attempts at Islamic re-education for the youth and exposure to more moderate schools of thought (Marks, 2015). Whilst the Salafist movements such as Ansar al Sharia enjoyed the support of the more conservative wing of Ennahdha, Ghannouchi and his support structures within the movement were more cautious and tried to convince the Salafis to reign in their anger. In September 2012 international events impacted Tunisia dramatically. A day of rage across the Muslim world following a cartoon depicting the Prophet Mohammed emerged, led to a mass march towards the US Embassy in Tunis, as the crowd grew violent elements within the crowd started attacking the embassy. Fires erupted in the parking area and the neighbouring American

International School was looted. The Government's lack of response was heavily criticised, especially aimed at the Minister of the Interior, Ennahdha's Ali Laarayedh (Marks, 2015, p. 7). Facing mounting opposition and with efforts to control the Salafist movement, Ennahdha had no option but to denounce the movement and to withdraw Ansar al Sharia's licence to operate as a political party in April 2013, including labelling the movement as a terrorist organisation.

4.7 Political assassinations and terrorism

Unrest and criticism of Ennahdha in 2012 would give way to open revolt against the Troika government in 2013. Early in 2013, opposition politician, secularist and vocal opponent of the rise of Islamism in Tunisia, Chokri Belaid was gunned down outside his home in a Tunis suburb. The assassination rocked Tunisians across the country and visibly impacted upon the psyche of the middle class. Tunisians would visibly weep at their workplaces or would be staring into the distance in contemplation. Anger mounted as media reports started emerging pointing the finger of blame at Islamist militants¹³. Nidaa Tounes, now the leading opposition bloc in the NCA led the calls for the government to step down. Prime Minister Jebali appeared to be in favour of resignation, however Ennahdha's Shura Council felt otherwise, believing that a resignation would hamper the political Islam project. When Mohamed Brahmi was assassinated in a similar style to Belaid, and stronger indications pointed to Islamist militants being behind the assassinations, Tunisia was thrown into turmoil. With public perceptions fuelling tensions against Ennahdha, opposition parties rallied around Nidaa Tounes and took to the streets of Tunis. The general sentiment was that Ennahdha had not done enough to secure the country from the threat of Islamist militants, in fact statistics started to emerge on numerous Tunisian nationals having joined the jihad in Syria and the newly formed "Islamic State" or Daesh as it is known in Tunisia. The optimism of 2011 and 2012 quickly disappeared as the economy was not recovering as the government had hoped, tourism, one of the mainstays of the economy was under threat from terrorism and instability and the government seemed incapable or if the opposition was to be believed, unwilling to take effective steps to address these challenges. Inflation at the tills was steeply up with some indications of inflation above 15%. Unemployment continued to rise, and the bulging university graduate unemployment rate was a particular problem for the Ennahdha led troika. Rapid increases in public sector

¹³ Personal observations and experiences while working in Tunisia

employment placed the budget under strain, along with a mostly accurate trend of Ennahdha members being put into top positions in most ministries. A general sense of unease reigned over the country. The Ennahdha democratic project was under threat as it failed to guide the NCA towards a completion of its tasks within the designated one year. With no sign of a new constitution being agreed upon, the opposition labelled the NCA and Government as illegitimate, as it initially only had a one-year mandate. Blame for the failures of the NCA could not be placed at the feet of Ennahdha alone. Ennahdha's members had some of the highest rates of attendance amongst all members of the NCA. The Ennahdha bloc appeared to be disciplined and organised. While disagreements in committees over various articles of the constitution, it was by no means the fault of Ennahdha that the constitutional project was not advancing. Discord amongst secular opposition parties and calls for greater allowances and benefits, unhappiness at working conditions and lengthy holiday breaks by NCA members contributed to the frustratingly slow pace of work at the NCA.

Calls from all corners of Tunisia for a technocratic government to be installed became more prominent. The NCA effectively shut down as a result of the walkout by opposition members and the Troika's hand was forced. These calls for the democratic will of the people to be put on hold, raised more questions about the democratic credentials and respect for democracy of the opposition than it did about Ennahdha.

4.8 Conclusion

Ennahdha's first taste of power and ultimately democracy was not what its members had expected. The push back against the inclusion of Islamist principles in all areas of work in line with the theory of political Islam was generally not welcomed. Ennahdha was forced to concede on a number of issues which essentially nullified its political Islam credentials. Ennahdha as a political party was able to claim that it fought for the inclusion of Islamic principles in the work of government and the drafting of the new constitution, however it learnt that its slim majority was no guarantee that its approach would be adopted. As predicted by Feuer the threat of secularism on Ennahdha's moderate Islamist project would turn out to be a hurdle it could not overcome. While secular parties were disorganised in their political activities, they enjoyed the support of the people, and a more accurate picture emerged of the Tunisian electorate than that of the 2011 elections. The understanding and support of the electorate for a liberal democracy did however need to be questioned. Ennahdha's electoral manifesto, campaign and government

programme remained true to its political Islam foundations and to its efforts to merge these with the ideals of a liberal democracy. Ennahdha's failure to take into account public opinion is the biggest mistake that it made during this period. Believing that it had a majority support despite only half of the eligible electorate turning out to vote showed Ennahdha's lack of political maturity and provided glimpses of a failure to learn from the miscalculations of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. When more conservative and often radical Islamists despite not enjoying the full support of Ennahdha, were widely associated with the Movement, the people of Tunisia started to view every activity with suspicion and with a rising fear of the fledgling signs of an Islamic state. The assassinations of two popular opponents of Ennahdha and the inability of the government to effectively track down the perpetrators rapidly deteriorated any remaining trust in the Movement. Despite retaining the position of Prime Minister and keeping the Troika in charge of the Presidency and the NCA, effective power was lost by Ennahdha.

Despite these setbacks, it can be reasonably deduced that Ennahdha followed a political Islam approach to the 2011 elections and when entering government. Their relative success during this period also points to the ability of political Islam to succeed in a democratic electoral environment.

The following chapter will look at the difficult period of 2013 and the elections of 2014 and whether Ennahdha were able to remain consistent on their political Islam approach and how events in the country may have pressurised them.

CHAPTER FIVE: ENNAHDHA MOVEMENT REINVENTING ITSELF? ANALYSIS USING THE 2014 TUNISIAN ELECTIONS

5.1 Introduction

The period spanning July 2013 to December 2014 was nearly as tumultuous as the events of the Arab Spring. Tunisia had seemingly managed to emerge unscathed out of a revolution and was on track to complete its democratic transition following elections for a Constituent Assembly in October 2012. The political assassinations of opposition leaders in February and July 2013 however pushed the country to the brink of potential collapse. For the Islamist Ennahdha Movement this period would be a defining moment for the Government which it led and the attempts by the Movement to prove the value and place of political Islam in the Tunisian context of democratisation.

The 18-month period would test the resolve of the leadership of Ennahdha, the opposition, the security forces of the country as well as the Tunisian people. What became evident during this period was the need for compromise on all sides. Absolute positions would not resolve the challenges facing the country and its rulers and would not satisfy an angry population who had thought that turmoil was behind them. This period would also experience the added pressure of an increasingly real and present terrorist threat to a peace-loving nation.

This chapter will attempt to establish the impact of the events of the period on the Ennahdha Movement throughout the electoral phases ending in the election of Tunisia's first democratically elected President in December 2014. This chapter will rely on the observations of the author during the aforementioned period during which time he was stationed in Tunisia. These observations will provide support to the other sources referenced in this chapter.

5.2 Democracy through the streets

The assassination of Mohamed Brahmi on 25 July 2013 under very similar circumstances to those surrounding the assassination of Chokri Belaid, only six months prior, rattled the Tunisian people. The shock was palpable on the faces of ordinary Tunisians. Local media rushed to provide coverage of the assassination and to try and piece together eyewitness accounts. Not a single café, shop or office at the time did not have at least a radio or TV on a

news channel. Social media, as it did during the 2011 revolution, provided almost immediate access to the news and a healthy dose of speculation.

As the day progressed, reports of emergency meetings of opposition parties at the Bardo parliamentary precinct emerged. It was clear that democracy was under attack and that the opposition and the people of Tunisia had lost faith in the government. The public reaction was immediate and significant. People poured onto the streets of Avenue Habib Bourguiba in central Tunis, especially in the area directly opposite the Ministry of the Interior. In scenes reminiscent of the Arab Spring protests, the people of Tunisia again put blame at the foot of the security forces and of the Islamist Ennahdha party. The government had announced the day before that on the 25th of July – Tunisia's Republic Day – it would release details of the perpetrators of the Belaid assassination. There was a real sense of shock and anger amongst many Tunisians. Media outlets reported that around 500 protestors embarked on a sit-in in front of the Interior Ministry and when they attempted to close off the street, the security forces resorted to using tear gas to disperse the crowd (Le Monde, 2013). Earlier in the day these protestors had gathered in front of the offices the UGTT. The UGTT called for a general strike on the following day, 26 July 2013, which led to Tunisair cancelling all its flights into and out of the country for that day. In Sidi Bouzid, the birth place of Mohamed Brahmi and the town where the Arab Spring started, the people again showed their anger by protesting and clashing with police and setting on fire the local Ennahdha office (Le Monde, 2013).

Ennahdha tried to allay the fears of the protestors, however with very little information the people were not convinced. The Prime Minister issued a call for calm, while Rached Ghannouchi was quoted on his Facebook page, condemning the assassination as a cowardly act and calling upon the government and Ministry of the Interior to capture those responsible and to find the people behind them who are aiming to destabilise the country. He also called upon all political parties and movements to show restraint and to act responsibly (DM, 2013). To worsen matters for the regime, a suspected terrorist attack took place only four days later, killing 8 soldiers (TAP, 2013). Terrorism had been a foreign concept for many years under the Ben Ali regime, where the strong-arm tactics of the police and their informant networks did not create much opportunity for terrorism to enter Tunisia. The influx of weapons from Libya and the growing strength of Islamist groups such as Islamic State (IS) and the extremist nature of the Salafist movement in Tunisia started to undermine the security forces (Haugbølle, Ghali,

et al., 2017, p. 23) For the general population on the streets of Tunisia's cities, the evidence that the Government was no longer in control of security was mounting.

Under difficult circumstances it is noted that Ennahdha remained true to their democratic approach through a respect for the laws of the country, the freedom of citizens to protest and made attempts to remain as transparent as possible with information on the investigation into the assassination. Once again, the question of whether the Tunisian people were totally comfortable with democracy had to be considered as they were seeking solutions that would be similar to those deployed during the Ben Ali regime and not in keeping with basic rights and freedoms.

Following the assassination of Chokri Belaid in February 2013 the then prime Minister, Mohamed Jebali ended up resigning after he drifted away from the party line in his response to the political crises that erupted at the time (Haugbølle, Ghali, Yousfi, Limam, & Grønlykke Mollerup, 2017). His successor, the former Interior Minister, Ali Laarayedh, was not a popular appointment, especially amongst the political opposition (Amara, 2013). Mr Laarayedh was widely blamed for the rise in extremism gripping the country and the ineffective approach by security forces. The events at the USA Embassy and American School in September 2012 happened during his tenure as Interior Minister and damaged the reputation of the country. Under his watch as both Interior Minister and Prime Minister very little progress had been made in solving the murder of Chokri Belaid. The Tunisian economy was also not performing as the government had predicted, or the population had expected. Growth was contracting, and inflation was rising. Investments into the country were not at expected levels and the tourism industry was taking strain as security concerns started to put off tourists. The major partners of Tunisia such as the European Union and the Gulf States were facing financial troubles of their own (ECA, 2014; Haugbølle, Ghali, Yousfi, Limam, & Grønlykke Mollerup, 2017). Economic freedom was becoming one of the tenets of liberal democracy with which Ennahdha was not able to see sufficient progress and which hurt its public image the most. As a key demand of the revolution, Tunisia was not registering meaningful growth, unemployment and inflation were both rising, and the people were starting to turn away from Ennahdha.

With the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi, Laarayedh faced the most extreme opposition to his position from outside the party. The government had blamed Salafist extremists for the assassination of Chokri Belaid, but the opposition and many people who protested on the streets

of Tunisia following the Brahmi assassination accused the Ennahdha led government of failing to act decisively against Salafi extremists, an accusation which haunted Ennahdha throughout 2012 and 2013 (Amara, 2013). However, the Prime Minister and Rached Ghannouchi remained steadfast in opposing calls for the resignation of the government. Ghannouchi would not give up his belief that the elections were to be respected and that Ennahdha had been given a mandate to implement the demands of the revolution. Ghannouchi widely condemned the assassination and publicly called on the government to find the perpetrators. Prime Minister Laarayedh proposed to open up membership of his cabinet to other parties and to hold elections on 17 December 2013 (ATS, 2013). This proposal was in line with Ennahdha's principle of consensus and power sharing, a position it had reiterated since 2011. However, despite the offer on the table opposition to the Ennahdha led government remained strong. Ennahdha made efforts to increase the scope of its consultations by meeting with parties outside of the Troika, these meetings however did not meet the expectations of the protestors on the street (Haugbølle, Ghalie et al. 2017 p29).

Several opposition members of the Constituent Assembly announced that they would be suspending their participation in the constitution drafting process. Mostly from fringe political movements who identified with the leftist political movements of Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi, several Members announced their resignation, throwing the Constituent Assembly into disarray (Schneider, 2013). This move was seen by the public in solidarity with the demands of the thousands who took to the streets outside the hospital where Brahmi was taken and those that had filled the streets outside the Bardo precinct. Thousands took to the streets once the heat of the day broke until the early hours of the morning. Key opposition figures worked up the crowds and drove the call for the government to resign. The local cafés became meeting rooms for discussions with politicians. The opposition movements became organised, stalls were erected around the Bardo traffic circle and young people used these as rallying points. The cross section of the Tunisian political spectrum was represented, united under a common banner.

Following the nationwide strike called by the UGTT, a sit-in by 60 members of the Constituent Assembly continued and the opposition forces joined into a grouping called the Front du Salut National (FSN) or National Salvation Front which comprised the Union for Tunisia (coalition of Nidaa Tounes, Al Joumhouri and the Democratic Voice) and the coalition of parties falling

under the ambit of the Popular Front from which the assassinated Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi both came. The aim of the FSN was to establish a Constitutional Commission which would be made up of experts with the aim of drafting the constitution within two months. Their second objective was to establish a government of national unity made up of experts and reduced in size, with the power to implement drastic measures to save the economy and security of the country. This government would be led by an agreed upon national figure and none of the members would be paid or contest the elections (FSN, 2013). The FSN would be one of the main participants in a march organised on the 6th August 2013, in response to a gathering organised by Ennahdha on 3 August 2013. Ennahdha managed to gather several thousand supporters outside the Prime Minister's offices in a show of support for the government and in opposition to the numerous verbal and physical attacks suffered by the Ennahdha Movement following the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi (ATS, 2013).

The demands of the FSN were elaborated upon - they called for the dissolution of both the NCA and the government, the appointment of a National Salvation government made of no more than 15 Ministers with competencies in their portfolios and no political affiliation. The NCA was to be dissolved at a sitting of the members and replaced by a committee of experts who would be responsible for resolving the problems highlighted by the opposition and international experts with the final draft of the constitution. They would then hand over the constitution to a political committee which would vote in block on the articles which consensus was reached upon and only deal with debate on the articles which remained contentious. They were also to finish their work by 23 October 2013 in order to prepare the way for elections (Carter Centre, 2014). The FSN put forth a unified position and roadmap for an exit from the political stalemate. The first part of the roadmap involved a continuation of the sit-in and preparation for the week of departure to start on 24 August where the FSN movement called "Rahil" called for civil disobedience and the removal of the government appointments across the country through increased protests and sit-ins outside governor's offices and government buildings.

Several days of protests from secularists and Islamists culminated in a veritable show of force on 13 August 2013 with around 40000 people packed into the Bardo precinct calling for the removal of Ennahdha from power at the same time as several thousand Ennahdha supporters took to the main avenue of Tunis to show their support for the Ennahdha government (Reuters,

2013). Ennahdha were fearful of the Egyptian scenario replaying itself in Tunisia. With that in mind Rached Ghannouchi sought to find a solution.

On 15 August 2013 a significant moment in the political history of Tunisia occurred. A clandestine meeting arranged by opposition politician Slim Riahi in a Paris hotel room put Rached Ghannouchi and Beji Caid Essebsi (BCE) together for the first time since efforts at a national dialogue was launched. According to sources close to the meeting the two leaders were keen to meet to find a way out of the political deadlock and had agreed for the need to have a national dialogue. Nida Tounes confirmed that the meeting was at the insistence of foreign partners, including Qatar, the USA and Germany. A key outcome of the meeting was that Rached Ghannouchi and Ennahdha were inadvertently recognising the role and importance of BCE and Nida Tounes in the Tunisian political landscape (Dahmani, 2013). Preceding this important meeting, Ghannouchi held various meetings with opposition politicians from all parties but with little progress. The USA Ambassador attempted to mediate, while Houcine Abassi, the Secretary-General of the UGTT continued to engage Ennahdha. At all times Ennahdha remained open to a process of national dialogue, however it was not willing to renounce its control over government (Haugbølle, Ghalie et al. 2017 p30). At stake for Ennahdha was its legitimate claim to political power as a result of the elections in 2011. The challenge it was facing was that relying on that legitimacy would not translate into popular support, and therefore would lead to a contested constitution and put the transition at risk.

The Deputy President of the NCA, Mehrezia Labidi emphasised this realisation by Ennahdha during an interview conducted with her on 27 August 2013. Mrs Labidi indicated that the demand for the dissolution of the NCA would only worsen the situation. She recalled that the NCA is the result of the legitimate will of the Tunisian people and it would send a very bad signal for democracy if it were to be dissolved. Mrs Labidi explained that many people have failed to accept the success of Ennahdha at the polls in 2011, particularly by the political elite that failed. She goes on to accuse this political elite of having benefitted from the old regime and wanting to destabilise the country and return to a situation where political Islam is sidelined and labelled as a failure. She elaborated on the notion of these political elite as having control over business, the media and artists, control which they use to influence public opinion.

The role of outside forces was discussed, with other Arab countries being accused of fearing the success of political Islam as it would prove that democracy and religion can coexist and

would threaten their autocratic dictatorships. She believed that these parties would continue to support the forces in the opposition who would like to side line Ennahdha and who would then fill the void and complete the work that has already been done and take the credit for it. They would then allow Ennahdha to exist but in a very restricted sense and not as full participants to democracy in Tunisia.

When asked about the statements released at the time by her party leader Sheikh Ghannouchi, she expressed agreement that he had extended a conciliatory hand but did raise the prospect that maybe he had overextended himself. She shared that Ennahdha had been trying to ensure that violence did not interrupt attempts to dialogue, by ensuring that its supporters stayed away from the sit-in. She expressed concern at the incitement to violence and hate speech from opposition members such as Mongi Marzouk, Hama Hammami and Samir Bettaieb who had all described Ennahdha members as not being Tunisian. She was particularly concerned that this tendency would lead to what was seen in Rwanda, and even more so that the West saw the aforementioned people as defenders of democracy. She also raised the example of the amount of money being spent by the opposition on the sit-in with examples of members of the Assembly being offered money to join the sit-in.

Mrs Labidi was of the opinion that the greatest challenge for Tunisia at that stage was the political situation, made worse by a lack of trust between the role players. Her view was that only through the guarantee of Tunisia's friends, could compromises and agreements be made to take the country out of the situation. She admitted that the fears of the opposition were legitimate in many cases, however, was concerned about who could guarantee the good faith of the FSN if Ennahdha were to make more concessions. Mrs Labidi felt that the UGTT was not a credible mediator as it maintained its own position and had a very militant wing opposed to Islam.

Mrs Labidi expressed with evident despair the fact that on 24 July 2013, a day before the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi, great strides had been made with regard to the constitution and that consensus had been reached on the articles relating to rights and liberties and that they were very near to consensus on the preamble and founding principles. Mrs Labidi also claimed that the youth of the revolution were all employed and that is why they were not on the streets, to the great despair of the opposition. The law which was passed to offer employment to the injured of the revolution was one of the best pieces of legislation the NCA passed according to

Mrs Labidi. She again reiterated that the crisis was a political one and that she felt that Sheikh Ghannouchi had the experience to take unpopular decisions in the best interest of Tunisia due to his exposure to the UK system of democracy.

In her assessment of the situation at the time Mrs Labidi as a leading member of the Ennahdha Movement provided evidence of the influence of liberal democracy on the approach of a political Islam movement. At no time were the views expressed divergent from either the tenets of liberal democracy or of the principles of political Islam. In fact, she was effective in showing that Ennahdha would continue to pursue democracy within a context of respect for the morals and beliefs that underpin Islam. Her fear of a Rwandan genocide scenario supported Ennahdha's approach of respect for religious beliefs of others and further showed that Ennahdha had accepted the plurality of views which existed in Tunisia.

In the face of Ennahdha's refusal to dissolve the government, the walkout by a third of opposition Members and the mounting pressure from the streets of Tunisia on the NCA to act, the President of the NCA, Mustapha Ben Jaafar unilaterally suspended the activities of the NCA. This was a surprise decision by a member of the Troika, but one that led to all parties reassessing their positions and the way forward (Business News, 2013). Ben Jaafar made a direct plea to the political parties and the UGTT to find a solution to the impasse that had been blocking the work of the NCA prior to the assassination. The decision by Ben Jaafar would also impact on Prime Minister Laarayedh's ability to stick to the timetable he had committed of elections by December 2013. The decision to suspend the work of the NCA was met with criticism by the Ennahdha and CPR members of the Troika, who labelled the unilateral decision to be illegal. The Ettakatol party still remained part of the Troika, however they supported the decision by their leader as two members of the party joined the sit-in, effectively preventing the NCA from moving forward on any issues. The UGTT undertook a role as mediator to the political crisis and held a number of discussions with both Ennahdha and representatives of the FSN.

On 21 August 2013 the author met with the International Relations Coordinator of Nidaa Tounes, Dr Zied Mhirsi as well as a member of the Executive Bureau of Nidaa Tounes, Mrs Wafa Makhlouf. A discussion on the political situation was held and clarity sought on Nidaa Tounes' vision for a resolution of the current stalemate as well as the way forward. They indicated that Nidaa Tounes was sticking to the position of the FSN and that they did not see

any other viable solution for Tunisia. They remained sceptical about the possibility of elections in 2013 and also indicated that their electoral plan and campaign had been put on hold as they did not see the need to prepare for an election which was not going to take place in the short term. When pushed for more details on the meeting between the leader of Nidaa Tounes and the leader of Ennahdha, they were not willing to elaborate other than to indicate that the rumoured plan discussed during the meeting of putting Beji Caid Essebsi in the Presidency was not on the table.

The UGTT formally proposed a national dialogue on the basis of certain conditions which were very close to the demands of the FSN, except that they did not call for the dissolution of the NCA. On 22 August following his third meeting with the UGTT Secretary General, Rached Ghannouchi announced that Ennahdha had accepted to commence dialogue on the basis of the UGTT proposal. The national dialogue called for by the UGTT could only commence if all sides agreed to the proposals on the table for discussion.

On 22 August 2013 the author visited the sit-in outside the NCA to meet with parliamentarians and protestors to get more views on the situation in Tunisia at the time. Mrs Nadia Chaabane from the El Massar party and one of the NCA members participating in the sit-in was positive that the pressure being put on Ennahdha and the Troika by the FSN would pay off. She noted that the presence of around 30 young men who maintained a constant vigil and presence at the sit-in “camp” was an example of the problems of Tunisia and the inability of the current government to resolve them. Most of these young men were university graduates including engineers and an English teacher among those spoken to. The people present at the sit-in were never more than around 50, however the numbers reached several hundred in the evenings. The members of the NCA were adamant that the NCA had failed and that it needed to dissolve itself if Tunisia was ever to get out of the current situation. Mr Selim Ben Abdeselem formerly from Ettakatol and representing Nidaa Tounes shared some of the tactics employed by Ennahdha to try and dissolve the sit-in. He referred to a taxi strike which occurred during the day of the visit and noted how the reason for the strike – the blockage of traffic at the site of the sit-in – was not relevant as other routes existed around the area and traffic was flowing through the sit-in area which was situated on the sidewalk. He also produced a letter printed on the official letterhead of the employer’s union, UTICA and having the round stamp of UTICA, calling for taxi drivers to participate in the strike. UTICA however was adamant that they did not support

the strike and supported the FSN position. A taxi driver who came over to the sit-in reported receiving payments from local Ennahdha offices to join the strike. The divergence of political views and ideology present at the sit-in was eye opening as the broad spectrum of political views was present but united in its demand for the removal of the government. Rather than create doubt over the viability of political Islam within a democratic system, the evidence that was presented pointed to a respect for differing political views as the sit-in was allowed to proceed. Allegations of meddling by Ennahdha through payments and instigation of strikes could not be corroborated but did show that the Tunisian political class were still divided by a secular/Islam divide.

On 24 August 2013 the “week of Departure” campaign was launched with much expectation (HuffPost Maghreb, 2013), however social media commentary on the event was generally filled with disappointment, as attendance was low and the political speeches made did not seem to inspire those who were present. The campaign took place across the country with varying degrees of success. Media reports noted several small protests marches as well as sit-ins in front of municipal offices and Governor’s offices. While one of the aims was to force the resignation of Governors, this move was countered by the government as new Governors were announced in most of the governorates in Tunisia on the 23rd of August. This announcement coupled with the announcement on 22 August of several changes within the Military hierarchy took the opposition and its supporters by surprise.

Rached Ghannouchi appeared on the private television station, Nessma TV, for the first time on 25 August (Nessma TV, 2013), whereby he was interviewed on the situation in Tunisia and efforts at exiting the political status quo. By all accounts he took a conciliatory tone during the interview with the main points of interest being his reiteration that Ennahdha had accepted the UGTT proposal as the basis for national dialogue and that they were willing to have an “Elections Government” appointed which would guide the country through the elections. He stated however that this would only happen once the constitution was completed, the electoral commission elected, and the electoral law adopted.

He further indicated that the independent and technocratic members of this new government would not be able to participate in the elections. He also expressed his desire that President Moncef Marzouki should also not be eligible to stand for the elections, unless he chooses to do so, at which point he would need to step down immediately. This statement was not well

received by the CPR, who responded through the Secretary-General, Mr Imed Daimi, who called on Ennahdha to respect its partners in the Troika and to not make unilateral statements outside of the agreed upon positions taken during consultative meetings (HuffPost Maghreb, 2013).

Significantly, Mr Ghannouchi also indicated that Ennahdha would no longer push for the adoption of the so-called immunisation law that would exclude former RCD members from the elections, claiming that Ennahdha wanted to use dialogue and reconciliation during this difficult time in Tunisia to resolve differences. The CPR, who strongly favoured the law, reacted negatively to the statement as did Ennahdha members on social media platforms (HuffPost Maghreb, 2013). Within his own party the statement was heavily criticised, including by the conservative Minister of Health at the time, Mr Abdelatif Mekki. Mr Mekki indicated that the position was not that of Ennahdha, but the personal opinion of Mr Ghannouchi. Minister Mekki further went on to indicate that the immunisation law would be debated in the NCA, but only after more critical items had been handled. During his interview, Mr Ghannouchi also painted a very positive picture of Tunisia and claimed that detractors should stop saying the country is in trouble, as access to amenities and infrastructure as well as full hotels proved otherwise.

On 26 August 2013, a meeting was held with Mr Seyyid Ferjani a senior member of Ennahdha and also adviser to the former Prime Minister, Hamed Jebali, to discuss the current political and security situation in Tunisia. Mr Ferjani reiterated much of the elements exposed by his party leader during the Nessma TV interview. He added that for Ennahdha a government of Elections would mean that all leadership in government would have to step down as well, including the President and President of the NCA. He indicated that for his party the continuation of the work of the NCA was critical. He expressed a positive view of Ennahdha's current support and cautioned at the true level of support for the opposition who do not have the numbers being claimed and are also composed of many small parties. Mr Ferjani expressed his view that Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the UAE are behind efforts to destabilise the region and especially in Egypt and Tunisia. This analysis provides insight into the cleavages that exist within the Muslim community of states. While sharing common religious foundations, the political application of Islam has been handled differently across the MENA region, as has been explained in Chapter two. Mr Ferjani has confirmed this when he indicated that support

from Qatar and Turkey was being received as both countries had invested in the Tunisian transition and were seeking to maintain their involvement, especially given their side lining in Egypt. Apart from Turkey, the other countries mentioned are all monarchies and supports the general view that the monarchies of the MENA region are not ready to accept a linkage between Islam and politics. This could however be as a result of their reluctance for liberal democracy in their monarchies and a fear of the close nature of the relationship between political Islam, such as that in Tunisia and democratisation.

He felt confident however that Tunisia could avoid the Egyptian scenario as the government and Ennahdha had made sure that through careful appointments made within the security structures and military on 22 August 2013 that the Egyptian scenario would not unfold in Tunisia. Mr Ferjani also confirmed the involvement of the Germans and the European Union in pushing for negotiations. He further noted the involvement of the USA at all levels in Tunisia and that it was seeking to reestablish its footprint in the region. Mr Ferjani, like Nidaa Tounes denied that any plans to have the leader of Nidaa Tounes named President were on the table. Despite the confidence expressed by Rached Ghannouchi and Mr Ferjani in the process going forward, Ennahdha remained under pressure from several camps.

As protesters persisted with their activities during the long hot summer evenings and days, a quartet of influential non-partisan and technically apolitical organisations stepped to the fore with a political roadmap for Tunisia to complete its democratic transition. The heavyweight UGTT, UTICA, the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH), and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers became known after the fact as the National Dialogue Quartet. The UGTT led the way following the success of its national strike on 26 July 2013. Listening to the street, the opposition and Ennahda, the Quartet launched a proposal for a National Dialogue process and put on the table a roadmap. The big problem for Ennahdha was that none of these four organisations was in favour of religion in politics. In fact, the Quartet were more in sync with the political leanings of the opposition and in particular Nidaa Tounes.

5.3 The Quartet sets the course

The UGTT itself started to engage with civil society, realising that the task of mediating the National Dialogue was too heavy a burden on its structures, but that it also needed to provide a balanced approach to the Dialogue in order for it to succeed. UTICA under the leadership of

Wided Bouchamaoui, the first female leader of the employer's union, was as concerned about the direction of the country as the worker's union and an unlikely alliance would emerge through the engagements with the UGTT (Haugbølle, Ghali et al. 2017 p31-33).

In a decision that would lead to the Quartet winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015, a road map was developed by the respected members of the Quartet which would set the course towards elections and an end to the transitional period. The Quartet were not elected officials and as such had only the legitimacy of the support it was enjoying from the streets of Tunisia, and outside the Bardo parliamentary precinct in particular (Ben Hamadi, 2015). Their objective was rather simple, a clear timetable with the commitment from all political parties for the conclusion of the constitution drafting process and the holding of presidential and legislative elections within the shortest reasonable period possible. Their argument was simple yet effective, Tunisia was sliding backwards into complete failure and only brave and decisive leadership could put it back on track (Haugbølle, Ghali et al. 2017 p35).

The National Dialogue under the guidance of the Quartet needed to get the buy in of the Ennahdha led government and the Ennahdha Movement itself. Haugbølle, Ghali et al. interviewed several leaders of the various stakeholders and Ennahdha's leaders were clear that the initial proposals by the Quartet were not in their interest as they favoured the opposition, however over time the proposal was toned down and took on board some of the conditions requested by Ennahdha (2017, p35).

What would follow over the next months were long and difficult discussions, debates and negotiations between the Quartet and the political forces of the country. During this period Ennahdha found itself isolated. Clearly at a disadvantage against a growing united opposition movement consisting not only of the political opposition, but also the powerful historically influential groupings of the Quartet, Ennahdha became fearful of a return of the Ben Ali regime through an Egypt style coup d'état or the eruption of civil war. This fear was heightened by the emergence of the Nida Tounes movement and its membership consisting of former regime elements (Reuters, 2013).

Ennahdha's political Islam programme was under threat from all quarters. Its proposals for an Islamist leaning constitution and the creation of an Islamic State were rolled back after pressure from the opposition and the Tunisian people. Its principled position around legitimacy of the

democratic process and the need to develop strong democratic institutions to support the transition were contested by the opposition, who accused Ennahdha of double discourse (Haugbølle, Ghali et al. 2017 p36). Secular forces in the country became emboldened by the support of the Quartet who strongly favoured the retention of the historically secular character of the state. Tunisians were also now realising that Ennahdha had ballooned the size of the civil service, now filled with thousands of Ennahdha sympathisers and supporters. Women started to wear headscarves in government departments, believing that this would ensure that they would have upward mobility if they were seen to be supportive of the Ennahdha way. The Hijab or headscarf became a more prominent sight all over Tunisia as women felt more harassed (Dettmer, 2013). Ennahdha however continued to dismiss fears of an Islamisation of Tunisian society.

Even before the assassination of Brahmi, Ennahdha became deeply concerned by developments in Egypt. Strongly entrenched in the teachings of the Muslim Brotherhood, Ennahdha found comfort in the rise to power of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Having a partner in the region ignited a sense of belief amongst the Ennahdha members and leadership that their brand of political Islam could succeed and that the people of the region were in fact supportive to a return to Islamic principles in government. Unlike Ennahda though, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood enjoyed a much greater margin of support and believed that it had a mandate for rapid change. This would prove to be the undoing of the Brotherhood in Egypt as the other half of the Egyptian population favoured a secular approach. The Egyptian Tamarod (Rebellion) movement mobilised millions to the streets of Egypt calling for the removal of the President Mohamed Morsi (Akhbar, 2013). When the Egyptian General Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi seized power in a military coup on 3 July 2013, Ennahdha's aspirations were made that much more difficult.

A support movement that started in Egypt found support amongst the youth of Tunisia and even before the spark of assassination ignited the opposition, Ennahdha's popularity started to wane. The Tamarod movement in Tunisia found support through a petition that garnered over a million signatures calling for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and the removal of the Ennahdha led government. The movement accused the Assembly and Ennahda of trying to force Islam upon all aspects of Tunisian society (Akhbar, 2013). Rached Ghannouchi from an early stage dismissed the movement and its objectives, stating that Ennahdha's conviction

towards a democratic consensus approach would ensure that the Egyptian scenario could not play out in Tunisia (Akhbar, 2013).

In August 2013 Ennahdha was battling within itself on the decision of whether or not to join the National Dialogue. The legitimacy of Ennahdha's victory at the polls was a strong base for some members of the party, while the leadership under Rached Ghannouchi were insistent on finishing the work that they had started (Haugbølle, Ghali et al., p34, 2017). Following the meeting with BCE in Paris it appeared that there was movement in the thinking and position of Ennahdha. In September the roadmap was presented to all parties with the Quartet as its sponsor and mediator. Ennahdha reluctantly signed up to the National Dialogue, following an intervention by the UGTT (Carter Centre, 2014, p. 30). The roadmap would serve as a platform for negotiations on contentious issues which the Quartet had identified through its consultations with the political stakeholders. These issues covered three areas, namely the governmental, constitutional and electoral (Haugbølle, Ghali et al., p35, 2017). The process of the National Dialogue was by no means smooth and on numerous occasions it appeared as if the process had failed. The main stumbling block was the resignation of the Troika and the appointment of a technocratic government. Ennahdha's position all along had been that it would only relinquish power once the constitution was adopted. It is understandable that they would take this position, as it was in their political interest to be at the helm when the constitution was adopted, and to ensure that it was still inputting into the constitution. When the NCA resumed its work on 12 September 2013, Ennahdha started to feel more comfortable with the National Dialogue process.

The author attended a meeting with Mr Ghannouchi on 6 September 2013 wherein he reiterated the position of Ennahdha of having accepted a neutral government to be appointed once the process of drafting the constitution was completed and the Electoral Commission had been appointed along with an adopted electoral law. A date could then be announced for elections and the Ennahdha led Troika government would then step aside. Mr Ghannouchi criticised the opposition calls for the dissolution of the NCA as it would be of no use to do so. On the question of the UGTT mediation of the national dialogue, Mr Ghannouchi expressed satisfaction and indicated that more meetings would take place and that they would hopefully be more successful. Mr Ghannouchi further expressed his position that the Ennahdha Movement would not allow the country to descend into an Egyptian scenario, and that Tunisia remained the only

beacon of hope for political Islam in the region. He remained convinced that democracy and Islam could coexist in the region and in Tunisia in particular.

On the 5th of October 2013 the National Dialogue was officially launched, and the parties engaged in the negotiations around the three aspects mentioned earlier. The governmental track was the most difficult as the negotiations around who would become Prime Minister were heated and lengthy (I.N, 2013). On 14 December 2013 Houcine Abassi of the UGTT announced that a vote had been taken and that Mehdi Jomaa, the former Minister of Industry in the Laarayedh government, would become the Prime Minister of the technocratic government. It is notable that Nidaa Tounes did not participate in the vote as they did not agree on the nomination (France24, 2013). Shortly after the agreed upon deadline of 12 January 2014, on 26 January 2014 the Constitution was adopted by a significant majority of 200 votes for and 12 against, and with the electoral law in place Tunisia could head towards elections in October and November 2014 (Haugbølle, Ghaliet al., p38, 2017).

5.4 Ennahdha regrouped and focuses on the 2014 elections

Once Ennahdha realised that there was a real and dangerous threat of implosion in Tunisia, it took a decision in line with its initial political leanings following the revolution, namely that of consensus and compromise. This decision would ultimately suit the political Islam approach favoured by Ennahdha, as compromise, understanding and respect for differing views were key to the Islamic approach favoured by Ghannouchi. This approach, which epitomised moderate political Islam, was solidified during various meetings of Ennahdha's Shura Council, whereby conservatives within the Ennahdha Movement were outvoted on the issue of enshrining Sharia in the constitution (Hamid S. , 2014, p. 200). Ennahdha would seek to strengthen its political position and rebuild the trust deficit which had led to its decision to concede to the demands of the people through the negotiated roadmap. Instead of viewing this as a defeat, Ennahdha decided to take lessons out of it. Its dedication to the political Islam driven project of democratisation would be concretised through the campaign period.

The electoral campaign period of 2014 would prove radically different from that of 2011. The first difference was that there was now a stronger and more organised opposition in the form of Nida Tounes to contend with. Ennahdha needed to adjust its approach to the campaign. The Ennahdha electoral program however did not show much change from its 2011 version.

Ennahdha remained true to the objectives which it had set itself in 2011, and despite making an effort to note its achievements since 2011, it did not go into any great depth as to how it hoped to achieve these objectives. This could be interpreted in one of two ways. Firstly, Ennahdha believed that in the development of its first manifesto it had sufficiently addressed the challenges faced by the country and provide sufficient information as to how it would achieve these. In remaining true to the original manifesto, it would not create confusion and would also retain some of its initial support. The references to the role of Islam in society had therefore not changed nor had the desire to implement a process of democratisation in Tunisia. Secondly, Ennahdha had not been able to relate to the changing situation in the country and could not relate to a change in opinions towards its approach. The latter interpretation also raises the question of whether Ennahdha ever really wanted to return to power or was it a deliberate attempt to seek to rather exert influence from an opposition perspective without the demands of leadership and governance.

During a seminar discussion with two leaders of Ennahdha, Mr Abdellatif Mekki and Mr Lotfi Oueslati hosted by the Centre for the Study of Islam and Democracy (CSID, 2014), the Movement's electoral platform was unpacked. One of the main areas of focus was that of security. Given the country's troubles during 2013 and into 2014, it is no surprise that this was one of the Movement's priority areas. According to Mr Mekki, Ennahdha's respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law would underpin a comprehensive strategy to combat not only terrorism but other forms of criminality, including corruption. This strategy includes a consolidated approach whereby there is one overarching security structure rather than the two structures that existed at the time, one with the Presidency and one with the Ministry of the Interior (CSID, 2014).

Ennahdha's electoral programme provided a strong impetus on economic reform and addressing social issues. Overall the socioeconomic reforms would form the central focus of the 50-page document covering the period 2015-2020. The introductory pages focused on achievements to date under Ennahdha's rule. At the launch of the programme it was also announced that Ennahdha would not be fielding a Presidential candidate from within the party (Dejoui, 2014). This was a calculated decision by Ennahdha as the new constitution still provided very limited powers for the President, a hangover of years of autocratic presidential rule, and instead meant that power was vested in the Assembly of Representatives of the People

(ARP). Ennahdha's focus was therefore to ensure that it obtained a strong majority in the legislature (Verghese, 2014). Ennahdha provided its reasons for pursuing the path of a consensual candidate in a statement released on 19 June 2014, citing its continued effort to "contribute to the protection of the democratic process and to provide the appropriate environment to face the major challenges facing Tunisia" (Ghannouchi M. , 2014). Ghannouchi continued by indicating that the consensus candidate would form part of a "national project based on the principle of participatory governance by building a broad central role of government within the framework of a national unity government that continues the major reforms ... and guarantees political and social stability" (Ghannouchi M. , 2014).

In an interview with the Turkish Anadolu Agency prior to the elections, Ghannouchi reiterated his Movement's position regarding the need for a consensus-based approach to governance and having as wide as possible a governing coalition to represent all Tunisians. Ghannouchi emphasised the need for reconciliation as part of Ennahdha's political Islam approach and philosophy. He noted the Egyptian example as both a warning and a lesson for the need to both not monopolize power and for reconciliation (Oguz, 2014). These statements by Ghannouchi show a consistency in the approach of Ennahdha since the 2011 elections. Despite the turbulent political and security environment between elections, Ennahdha has remained true to its original path. In another interview conducted by the French media house, Europe 1, Ghannouchi explained that Ennahdha "views the Tunisian model as an alternative to Daesh, and it regroups Islam and secularism, Islam and democracy and Islam and women's rights" (Hoffman, 2014). He proceeded to explain that were Ennahdha to win the election it would be seeking the widest possible coalition and were it to come second it would not focus on ministerial posts, but rather focus on a consensus approach for the next 15 years to secure the democratic transition.

As an observer during the Legislative and Presidential elections in 2014, the author noted that Tunisian electoral fatigue was a real problem for all the political parties. Out of a possible 7.5 million potential voters, only 5.3 million eligible voters were registered for the 2014 elections, an increase of only 990 000 compared to the 2011 elections, and this despite two registration drives (National Democratic Institute, 2014). The ISIE announced the final results of the legislative elections on 21 November 2014, with Nida Tounes obtaining 89 seats and Ennahdha 69. This meant that Nida Tounes obtained nearly 40% of the votes (ISIE, 2014). Ennahdha's

performance while in power would ultimately be the greatest decider in determining the election results, the Nida Tounes party preyed on this performance during its campaign by calling for the population to rally its votes behind Nida Tounes rather than spreading their votes amongst the numerous opposition parties, under the banner of a “useful vote”, in an attempt to draw voters away from Ennahdha (National Democratic Institute, 2014, p. 35).

Ennahdha accepted the outcome of the legislative election and proceeded to enter negotiations for a coalition government. For such a coalition to succeed Ennahdha and Nida Tounes needed to put aside their differences. Fortunately, the relationship that had been developed in July 2013 between Beji Caid Essebsi and Ghannouchi would facilitate the agreement on a coalition. Nida Tounes however opted to wait for the outcomes of the Presidential Elections in November 2014 before entering into serious talks about forming a government (National Democratic Institute, 2014, p. 36). Ennahdha needed to make several concessions, however they also felt that they were contributing meaningfully to the negotiation process, as is evidenced by statement emanating from their 34th Shura Council meeting on 11 January 2015. In the statement the Chairman of the Shura Council, Mr Fathi al Ayadi, indicated that “the Council expressed its satisfaction with the success of the transitional process, the peaceful transfer of power and the acceptance by all parties of the results of the elections and the integrity of the electoral process. Despite the great difficulties experienced by the Ennahdha Movement, it contributed to overcoming them by positions that sided with the supreme interests of our country and the objectives of the revolution of freedom and dignity expressed through dialogue and consensus” (Ayadi, 2015). This statement clearly aligns with the Movement’s consistent position as well as its understanding and interpretation of political Islam.

In a paper he wrote for the UNDP as a contribution to a compendium on the Tunisian Constitution, Rached Ghannouchi reflects on the evolution of political Islam during Tunisia’s transition. In his overview he strongly emphasises the need for pluralism and the fact that Ennahdha had already adopted this approach since 1981 (Ghannouchi R. , 2016). He particularly refers to the dominant trends in Tunisia of moderate Islamism and moderate secularism and how in the view of Ennahdha any government would need to encompass both of the trends. In his view Ennahdha followed a cross-ideological approach which developed into an elaborated concept of transitory democracy in order to oppose an authoritarian and majoritarian approach (Ghannouchi R. , 2016). When discussing the national dialogue and the

constitution, he admits that Ennahdha could not surmount all the challenges, however through concessions and sacrifices to preserve unity and part of a realisation that exclusion and imposition of a majority view would not succeed in Tunisia, where he felt that the country was not yet ready for a system where a majority and minority existed (Ghannouchi R. , 2016).

5.5 Conclusion

The protests and violence which permeated Tunisia during the summer of 2013 were essentially the end of the period of euphoria ignited by the Arab Spring. The leadership vacuum created by popular protest and stagnant governance was a major causal factor in the horrific emergence of Islamic terrorism in Tunisia. Ennahdha did not emerge from this period unscathed. Its supporter base was weakened, especially in its rural strongholds, a trust deficit with its political partners as well as the public was created, and its resolve as a party following tenets of political Islam was tested. However, the 2014 elections showed that Ennahdha was still a relevant participant in the ongoing democratic transition of the country. The party remained true to its practice of seeking consensus and coalitions, ultimately forming a partnership with its fiercest rival, Nida Tounes.

The reaction by the public to the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi could to a certain extent have been predicted by the Ennahdha led government, however the paralysis of the constituent assembly would have caught Ennahdha off guard. This could be seen in their reaction to the weeks long protests and strike action. Ennahdha's attempts to recover the situation eventually led to their abdication of power in favour of an effective government of national unity. This also provided Ennahdha with an opportunity to regroup and assess the failures, but also successes in its first taste of power. Returning to the definition of political Islam and the conceptualisation thereof in chapter two, the 2014 electoral period provided sufficient evidence that Ennahdha was not only a political Islam movement, but that it was a political Islam movement seeking to develop an understanding of the close relationship that Islam could have with democracy, and that the linkages were stronger than the divergences.

The interviews conducted with key role players in the unfolding political situation during the summer of 2013 provided valuable insight into the strained relations between political role players. Even at the time the finger pointing, and blame game were strong between Ennahdha and Nida Tounes. However, it becomes evident in the positions put forward by the various

Ennahdha leaders either in person or via the media that there was a general consensus within the leadership of the party that dialogue and consensus was the only way to avoid a catastrophic scenario. The number of concessions made by Ennahdha throughout the process of the National Dialogue remains significantly higher than that of the opposition. In a testimony to the moral principles of Ennahdha's political Islam, the Movement and its leaders were able to look at the bigger picture and what was in the best interest of the people and the country, a trait which is often missing in Western democracies.

The most accurate assessment of Ennahdha, especially during the turbulent years of 2013 and 2014, is provided by the Foreign Policy website which states, "For the sake of Tunisia's political transition, Ennahda has straddled a delicate line of rejecting repression, forging democratic legitimacy, and maintaining the mantle of Islam against those would either pervert or deny it — all while willingly building coalitions with other political parties" (Piser K. , 2016). Piser is able to very accurately sum up Ennahdha's style of political Islam. As has been shown in the preceding chapters, Ennahdha and its leadership went to great lengths to listen to the fears of the Tunisian people, to address the accusations of the opposition publicly and to moderate a rising tide of extremist thinking within the country's Muslim community. During the period of 2013 and 2014, Ennahdha fully developed an approach to political Islam¹⁴ which was predominantly based upon a participatory approach and seeking widely based consensus, ultimately proving that the centre of the Movement, under the guidance of Rached Ghannouchi remained strong.

¹⁴ Whilst falling outside the scope of this study, it should be noted that Ennahdha decided to split into a religious and political wing during its 2016 Party Congress. During this process the Ennahdha Movement also decided to rebrand itself as a Muslim Democratic party. This change is summarized by Rached Ghannouchi in his article, "From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy: The Ennahdha Party and the Future of Tunisia" which appears in *Foreign Affairs* Volume 95, Number 5 September/October 2016. This significant event requires a separate study and is deliberately left outside the scope of this study.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION – POLITICAL ISLAM A VIABLE APPROACH?

At the outset of this study the stated aim was to investigate and discuss the understanding of current literature on the theory of political Islam. The result of which would lead to a determination of the compatibility of political Islam with respect to the general principles of democracy. In chapter two the concept of political Islam as a political sciences theory was examined by first identifying its roots within the Sunni beliefs of Islam, which was the more politically minded sect of the faith. It was then shown that the term Islamism is preferred by some authors as being closer to the true meaning of political Islam (Knudsen, 2003) as well as the negative perceptions which exist around political Islam in the West in particular. However the need to have a unified definition for political Islam led to the work of Denooux and March (Denooux, 2002) (March, 2015) both of whom saw the inherent political inclinations within Islam, as well as the desire to apply Islamic practice and morals to democratic rule and governance. Denooux was also able to show that there is flexibility in Islam that has come with time and evolution of the faith which allow it to mould political Islam into an Islamised democratic approach to governance.

The origins of democracy and its widely accepted use were discussed prior to identifying the tenets of liberal democracy as the form of democracy which most closely matched the demands of the protestors of the Arab Spring. In order to better understand how political Islam works in practice, the examples of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the AKP in Turkey were examined. It was important to lift out these two examples as they played a major role in influencing the ideological and practical approaches of Ennahdha. The initial victory of political Islam in Egypt gave way to a return to autocracy mainly due to an over eagerness of the Muslim Brotherhood to take full and total control of the state, mostly as it feared the persistence of the previous regimes hold on to government ministries and state institutions, but also in an attempt to remove the spectre of the military and its extensive footprint. As the study shows, the Muslim Brotherhood were seeking a more dramatic Islamisation of the state and erred in not taking into account that they only garnered 50% of the vote in Egypt and therefore did not have total support for their approach. In the context of the study it can therefore concluded that the approach of the Muslim Brotherhood deviated from the understanding developed and put forward in chapter two of political Islam and tended towards Islamisation with only modest elements of democratisation.

In Turkey a more gradual approach to the Islamisation of the state is practiced. While the objectives ostensibly appeared to be similar to those of the Muslim Brotherhood, the AKP under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan has shown a better understanding of the potential for political Islam to offer a majority Muslim population democratic politics influenced by religion. The main difficulty for the approach taken by the AKP is that it has gone hand in hand with a gradual degradation of rights and freedoms, in stark contrast to the tenets of liberal democracy. While the AKP has sought to hold regular democratic multiparty elections, it has managed to build up a reputation of intimidation and crowding out of the opposition as well as cracking down on criticism. The staunchly secular Turkish military and its role as the protector of secularism in Turkey has also been challenged and whittled away. When looking at the Turkish example it becomes more and more difficult with the passage of time to still see both the traces of a liberal democracy but also the principles and morals of Islam as understood in the definition of political Islam. These two examples present two different approaches to political Islam that have both met variable success. It is in the space between these two examples where we see the entrance of Ennahdha and its consensus-based approach to governance and politics, while still basing its approach on Islamic principles and morals. It is within the objectives of Ennahdha that we see the symbiotic relationship that can exist between political Islam and liberal democracy. This ability to seek the attainment of the relationship between democracy and Islam also provided the first signs of the potential viability of political Islam as an approach to democratisation in majority Muslim populated countries.

In order to test this compatibility, the case study of Tunisia and its Ennahdha Movement was undertaken. It was first however critical to the study to understand the evolution of political Islam in Tunisia. This included an in depth look at the origins of Ennahdha and its evolution into the political Islam movement that would compete in Tunisia's first democratic elections in 2011. The impact of the policies of both President Bourguiba and President Ben Ali on Ennahdha and its leadership were also covered. Of particular interest to the study was the use of Islam by both presidents to achieve their stated objectives. On the part of Bourguiba a policy of secularism or *laïcité* was pursued, even to the point of him defying religious practices to push for a more productive and competitive Tunisia. President Ben Ali initially chose to embrace Islamists and even allowed them to participate in elections, however when the real threat of a defeat to the MTI appeared imminent, he chose imprisonment, torture and disappearances to deal with the Islamists. This approach was also well timed with the fallout

following the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York and resulted in a period of apparent prosperity for Tunisia as a result of their President's alliance with the USA in the fight against terrorism. These periods of imprisonment, torture and disappearances served to strengthen the resolve of many Ennahdha leaders and followers. During the period from the late 1980s to 2011 when much of its leadership was forced into exile, the true strength of Ennahdha started to emerge as it forged a strong network across Europe which eventually supported the establishment of a clandestine network in Tunisia to support the efforts of the leadership in Europe and also to start communicating the political Islam approach to democratisation which Ennahdha's congresses adopted.

Leaders such as Rached Ghannouchi arrived in Europe with strong Islamist views and were compelled to experience the liberal democracy of their adopted homes. Through this exposure, interaction with other Muslims in these countries and the belief that existing Islamist views needed to be challenged in order to take the faith forward started to see value in seeking an approach where the values of Islam could be applied to a liberal democratic state. In order to even better understand the Ennahdha view of political Islam, it was necessary to delve into the thinking and approach of its leader Rached Ghannouchi and how he influenced what would become Ennahdha's approach to a democratic Tunisia. As mentioned, Ghannouchi along with many other leaders spent time engaging with the Tunisian diaspora and other intellectuals while abroad. It is within the ambit of these encounters that Ennahdha stated to plot its course towards a political Islam which would see it embrace Islamic ideals of tolerance, patience, and consensus within a liberal democratic system which respected rights and liberties. Rached Ghannouchi in particular had challenged the traditional Islamist thinking around the rights of women and religious freedom, pointing out that these rights did not have to be in conflict with Islamist values (Ghannouchi R. , 2011). While there were detractors within the Ennahdha Movement to this approach, it was nevertheless adopted during the congresses held in Europe and endorsed by the Ennahdha leadership.

It is critical to understand that during this time it was often the wives, mothers and sisters of Ennahdha's leadership that had to fight the cause in Tunisia. It is highly unlikely that this strong showing of female members of the movement did not influence Ghannouchi and the rest of the leadership in exile. It is during these difficult periods under the Ben Ali regime that Ennahdha was able to become a social movement seeing to the needs of the poor and destitute in the often

neglected interior and South of the country. It is therefore no surprise that during the elections of 2011 and 2014 these were the major strongholds of the Movement. This level of organisation and the network of supporters it was able to maintain, despite being a banned movement contributed to the ease within which it was able to embark on an electoral programme.

During this study of the approach of the Ennahdha Movement to electioneering, governance and nation building valuable insight were gained into one of the few Islamist political movements to have won an election and subsequently peacefully and deliberately handed over power to an apolitical caretaker government in the interests of national unity and peace. This respect for the results of elections, the transparency shown in their actions as well as seeking to prevent abuse of power, all tenets of liberal democracy, supported the premise that political Islam and democracy could coexist.

Throughout the period covered in this study it became very clear that a dichotomy exists within the Tunisian population that draws a line between Islamism and secularism. As much as Tunisia is an almost homogenous people, politics and religion have divided it throughout its history as an independent state. What is evident from the research carried out is that despite the best efforts of successive autocratic regimes, the political influence of Islam and the Ennahdha Movement in particular could never be completely ignored and would be engrained into a significant proportion of the population.

Consistently shown in this study has been the presence in Ennahdha, a recognised political Islam movement, of strong liberal democratic elements. Whether it is through the speeches of its leaders, the decisions of its congresses or the policies it proposed prior to the elections, the tenets of liberal democracy were clear to be seen. An unexpected conclusion has been that while its politicians may be ready for democracy, the demands of the Tunisian people during the difficult 2013 period resembled the governmental actions of the Ben Ali era. In this regard Ennahdha may be ahead of its time in seeking to propose to a Muslim majority population a brand of democracy which includes elements of the faith. This study has therefore succeeded in answering the question of compatibility of political Islam and liberal democracy but has also raised an important question requiring further study as to whether Muslim majority countries and their populations are ready for liberal democracy.

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