

Tunisian political landscape: 2019 and after?



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The Tunisian public space, previously closed to free political expression, has been transformed since January 14, 2011 into an open mega-forum where all Tunisians meet and interact with each other, with all their differences and antagonisms.

The relationship to speech, space and the State is no longer the same today as it was before the Revolution. For observers and researchers, as well as for the actors themselves, the Revolution, which brought down an authoritarian regime, also allowed the emergence of new dynamics and new actors freed from fear and exclusion.

Indeed, the proliferation of free media, the increasingly important role and place of civil society, as well as partisan pluralism, are manifestations of the real shift that the country is undergoing.

However, the multiple terrorist attacks that have hit Tunisia since 2011 and the political assassinations of the two Popular Front¹ leaders Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi, in addition to the tragic death of Lotfi Naguedh, following a deliberate attack by radical and violent groups, have plunged the country into an orbit of destabilization and civil war.

The shock of the elections, called by some as "the revolution of the ballot boxes" following the 2019 elections, both for the anticipated presidential elections and for the legislative elections, leading to a new political framework, is a challenge for researchers and observers alike. It is indeed a total upheaval in the political field, a profound and untimely metamorphosis for political actors themselves, as well as for citizens and analysts.

What are the main elements and indicators of this profound change after the elections? How can we understand them? Is this a real turning point and a real transformation of the social body and

¹ Coalition of Left and Far Left Parties

its relationship to politics, or a conjunctural parenthesis? To what extent can we speak of a new Tunisia in the making following the 2019 electoral earthquake?

To answer these questions, we propose in this paper a first reflection that will shed light as best as possible on the profound changes that have affected both the country from below and the closed spaces of the political elites.

To begin, we will focus on the emergence of an active citizenship that underpins the democratization process. We will then discuss the changes that have affected the major political families, namely Islamists, Arab nationalists, centrists and the left, and through them, the entire classical political field. We will then focus on the phenomenon of Kais Saïd, the newly elected president, before concluding with the realm of the possible that is unfolding today.

A slow march towards citizenship: glory and disenchantment

After 9 years of changes in the political framework, Tunisians have blown hot and cold: they have both displayed a firm and proud citizenship defending their fundamental, political, economic and social rights, and have simultaneously expressed disenchantment, disarray and even skepticism towards their revolution and their experience of democratic transition.

The dynamism of civil society, following the promulgation of Decree-Law 88-2011 on associations², can not only be measured in figures (there are more than 20,000 associations). It is above all visible in the autonomy and independence of an association movement that operates in multiple directions without any allegiance to the political power. The effects are perceptible in the different fields of social, political and cultural activity, both at national and local level.

In addition, the number of parties exceeds 200, including about twenty that really count and have access to political and media visibility, and that represent the different political families and the different social projects being debated.

The elections, organized by an independent constitutional body, the ISIE, were, despite the abuses highlighted by many observers, despite the pitfalls and shortcomings, times of a democratic exercise that was both moving and beneficial for society.

The first electoral event on 23 October 2011 was experienced as a national celebration. Then, in 2014 and under the pressure of strong bipolarization, Tunisians held their breath out of fear, anxiety, doubt and moral fatigue, before hoping for an exit from the tunnel with a balanced political landscape between conservative Islamists and secular democrats.

² Decree-Law No. 2011-88 of 24 September 2011, on the organization of associations.
On November 8, 2019, there were 22983 Associations <http://www.ifeda.org.tn>

Very quickly, distress and confusion reigned: in addition to the economic and social crisis³, there was a political crisis after the collapse of Nidaa Tounes⁴, the dismissal of the head of government H. Essid, his replacement by Y. Chahed, himself on the spot a few months later when he became involved in a conflict with his mentor, the President of the Republic B. Caid Essebsi and more specifically with his son (H. Caid Essebsi), who is blamed for all the troubles that brought Nidaa Tounes to its knees.

The 2018 elections, despite local, announced the emergence of a non-partisan citizen political dynamic. The political landscape had been marked since the first elections by the presence of three major political spaces: the Islamists, including the Ennahdha party, remaining the first most structured and pragmatic party; the centrists, who are the most heterogeneous sharing a space where the Rcedists⁵, members of the former regime, the liberal socialists and the conservative liberals, and the Arab nationalist current represented mainly by the *People's Movement* and the *Popular Current*; the diverse left claimed by social democratic parties or parties and currents of the Marxist-based radical left. This landscape shows real signs of a crisis of parties as intermediate bodies and the emergence of new forms of independent, horizontal and networked engagement and politicization.

In sum, the two political parties that were able to have an electoral impact in the two elected chambers, the Constituent National Assembly (ANC) from 2011-2014, and the Assembly of People's Representatives (ARP) from 2014-2019, were Ennahdha⁶ and the Nidaa Tounes party formed in the midst of this process. The other formations, with relatively low electoral weights, ended up being weak allies in ruling coalitions or in the role of an opposition, while trying to mark dividing lines on issues of individual freedoms, gender equality, the fight against corruption or economic and social issues.

In another direction, the increasingly well-functioning and skilled civil society – the trade union (UGTT) and the new social movements have also marked the public debate – has focused on crucial issues such as individual freedoms, especially after the publication of the COLIBE⁷ report,

³ Figures show that the growth rate in 2011 is negative -1.9%, then 3.9% in 2012, 2.4% in 2013, 2.3% in 2014, 1.2% in 2015, 1% 2016, 1.9% in 2017 and 2.4% in 2018. The unemployment rate is 15%, the inflation rate is between 7 and 8%.

⁴ Nida Tounes: a progressive party bringing together left-wing actors, liberals and members of the old regime, founded by the future president Béji Caid Essebsi in 2012.

⁵ Note of the translator: In reference to the Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD), the party of former dictator Zine Al-Abidine Ben Ali.

⁶ The main political group representing the Islamist current founded in 1981 under the name MTI (Movement of the Islamic tendency) before changing its name in 1989. Linked to the global brotherhood of the Muslim brothers since its foundation, the Ennahdha party has been trying since its 10th Congress to assert its "Tunisianity" and its civil vocation which separates politics from religion. "We are also the children of Bourguiba", as Islamist leaders have said.

⁷ Commission for Individual Liberties and Equality (COLIBE) formed following an initiative by the President of the Republic in August 2017 with the task of drafting a set of proposals that would promote individual freedoms and equality between citizens in the legislation. Its report was made public on 8 June 2018 and contains several

economic and social rights, ALECA⁸ and austerity policies, transitional justice and the struggle against corruption and impunity.

In summary, we will say that a society in motion has given rise to moments of glory and moments of defeat. The essential thing being, that citizen engagement has not faded since the 2011 Revolution, and that the ideals of democracy, living together and social justice continue to haunt people's minds.

The 2019 elections: an uncertain context and a deconstructed political field

Since the results of the 2014 elections and throughout the last five years, the intensity of secular/Islamic bipolarization has made room for another divide linked more to the economic and social transition so long awaited by populations in distress, the fight against corruption and the demands of good governance.

The governmental formation that emerged after the 2014 elections on the imperative of consensus and national unity was at the end only a clearer expression of this decline, which led to sidelining or dodging direct, open and tense confrontations between secularists and conservatives, mainly between Nidaa Tounes and Ennahda, becoming the tandem that is responsible to govern the country and manage its peaceful transition.

This new reconfiguration, whose origins date back to the Paris meeting between the leaders of the two parties, B. Caied Essebsi and R. Ghanouchi, in the midst of the political crisis of summer 2013, is often seen from three angles:

Some see it as a necessary step imposed by the electorate's choice to advance the democratic transition, stabilize institutions and avoid the apocalyptic scenario of society's disintegration, with the additional argument of the need for political stability to be able to revitalize investment and blocked economic growth.

Others, the modernist "elites" faithful to the bourguibian⁹ legacy, see it as a real threat to this transition and a setback in the country's history. For decades, the latter considered the State of Independence as a modern and secular State that protected itself from the forces of "religious regression" in order to be able to build civil political institutions on the model of the Western secular states and more precisely the French one.

recommendations: abolition of the death penalty, equality in inheritance between men and women, decriminalisation of homosexuality, etc.

⁸ Note of the translator: The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA or its French acronym ALECA), is a free trade agreement being negotiated between the EU and Tunisia since 2015.

⁹ Habib Bourguiba, 1903-2000, first President of the Tunisian Republic, leader of the national liberation movement and founder of the modern state, founder and President of the Neo-Dostour Party, which became the PSD (Parti Socialiste Démocrate) and then the RCD (Rassemblement Consitutionnel Démocratique) under the Ben Ali regime.

From a third angle, this coalition government is perceived by the political and civil left and the social forces and youth of the Revolution as a kind of circumvention of the Revolution and a diversion of its social horizon, to put it on another political path that excludes those most affected by the old system and redraw the political landscape for a new Islamo-dostourian tandem. This will ultimately transform the revolution into a purely political change that has put an end to the hegemony of the single party and the exclusion of Islamism by westernized modernist elites.

However, this consensus has not succeeded in freezing political life and putting an end to contradictions and conflicts of ideas, projects and classes. The latter are expressed to varying degrees, both in terms of individual freedoms and gender equality, as well as on issues of corruption, regional development, deteriorating purchasing power, deteriorating living standards, police violence, etc. They have thus ended up being at the core of the political issue, and at one particular point, at the core of the social conflict between, on the one hand, the civil, trade union, professional and political forces committed to continue the revolution and in the sense of distributive justice, and on the other hand the forces that reject it to defend the return of the old regime and maintain the same disastrous economic and social choices made before 2011.

Today, the disillusionment of the "modernists" is obvious. It affects first and foremost the parties that claim this political identity, but also a large part of the civil society. The electoral defeat of this current in the elections, the death of President B. Caied Essebsi, the break-up of Nida Tounes, the low audience of parties such as *Albadil* (a party founded by former head of government Mr. Jomaa) and *Afek* (a party representing the new social-liberal right), etc., all those factors have led this political family to the state of decline and perdition where it finds itself.

Qalb Tounes, now the second largest party according to the figures (38 seats), is too fragile to play a structuring role at the center. Its compromises with Ennahdha, and the threat of legal proceedings for its president N. Karoui, risk destabilizing a heterogeneous group without a real project.

Tahya Tounes who managed to save the day with 14 elected officials (4.4% of the vote), won a victory that tasted like defeat, according to Mr. Ben Ahmed, a former trade unionist and founding member of the party. This party begins the new phase undermined by two pitfalls: the evaluation of Y. Chahed's legacy as outgoing President of Government, and the "casting" of his newly elected deputies seemingly affiliated with the old regime and its outdated practices rather than the expected renewal.

One thing is certain, however: the country needs this liberal social center, which has its *raison d'être*, its followers, its voters, but it will never be built in anti-Islamist fear, in tergiversation and without cutting ties with corruption and crony capitalism.

At the same time, the protest movement and the social movement, with its various tributaries, succeeded in discrediting the Ennahdha-Nidaa alliance and imposing dissenting voices in the public space. Finally, let us say that these new movements, supported by an engaged civil society, trade unions and opposition political forces, free and alternative media, have succeeded in creating new pathways for the social conflict, which we refer to as the society of resistance.

This resistance society constitutes a protean configuration of opinions, trends and actions, united by an opposition to the ordinary and dull game of politics. It upholds the banner of a *Dégagisme*¹⁰ that advocates renewal.

Islamism in decline or renewal?

The parliamentary elections have led – in terms of elected representatives and representation of the different political families – to changes in the political situation of the country. In particular, new elements representing political Islamism emerged. Ennahdha, which has been monopolizing the conservative vote since 2011, found itself after October 6th 2019 being followed up by two other Islamist groups: The *El Karama Coalition* (Coalition of Dignity) and the Salafist party *Arrahma*¹¹.

Is it a real division that ideologically and politically divides Islamists or rather a role-playing game between currents that share the same social project?

The main observation over the past few months is that the disputes within Ennahdha are real. Leaders like A. Mekki, M. Ben Salem and Z. Chhoudi no more restrain about criticizing the movement's president, who is too authoritarian. On the opposite side, R. Ghannouchi (*Note of translator: the president of Ennahdha*) and his son-in-law R. Abdessalem, accuse them of manipulation, connivance and personal powers and ambitions.

Other Nahdhaoui voices speak out against the adventurist political line of the movement, represented mainly by the now rebellious "child prodigy", L. Zitoun. The latter has repeatedly expressed his refusal to disagree with B. Caid Essebsi and Nida Tounes, his support for individual rights, and recently his preference for Afek and Nidaa's presidential candidate, A. Zbidi. So many messages and distancing, he wanted to take with his movement's line and positioning.

Moreover, a large proportion of the young and radicals (ideological and political) of the Islamist base were turning their backs on the movement and withdrawing from it or joining the dynamic launched by lawyer S. Makhlouf (*Note of translator: Al Karama Coalition*) and I. Dghije, a highly

¹⁰ Note of the translator: „Ben Ali dégage” meaning “Ben Ali get lost” was one the main slogans of the Revolution of 2011. The concept of *Dégagisme* although became spread among protestors, demanding politicians in charge to resign.

¹¹ Hizb Errahma (Mercy Party) is a Tunisian Islamist political party with a Salafist orientation led by Said Jaziri, a former spokesman for the Muslim community in Canada. The party claims to be committed to the parliamentary system, and advocates the inclusion of Sharia law in the Constitution. Following the 2019 elections the party is ranked 18th with 4 deputies and 27,944 votes.

controversial figure of the Lignes de Protection de la Révolution, as well as the former Imam of the largest mosque in the city of Sfax, R. Jaouadi and other Salafist figures. This movement managed to mobilize and win 21 seats in the new ARP, and to present itself as a partner in power.

Despite all this, Ennahda managed to be first in the election and avoid the worst. The party is certainly weakened with only 561,132 votes in 2019, against 947,034 votes in 2014 and 1,501,132 votes in 2011. For the May 2018 local elections, the Conservative party won 517,134 votes, resulting in 2139 municipal councilors. The figures confirm the decline of political Islamism. Its leaders and representatives are also affected by the *Dégagisme* which shakes up the classical political landscape and deconstructs it.

It is too early to judge Ennahdha's ability to react or regain its lost foundations, but it is possible to advance elements of a socio-political analysis that reveal a trivialization of the Islamist phenomenon and that deserve further study. However, two main observations have already been identified.

The first is that Islamism is plural. Its range extends from the most moderate to the most radical, with links between the various components that are fragile. The latter can no longer share, at least publicly, the same ideological-cultural matrix. In the same way, we can say that the cleavage is also social between a political Islam of the bourgeoisie and upper middle classes, which can be called by paraphrasing P. Haenni¹² a "market" Islam, and an Islam that wants to be pious, puritan and radical, and that speaks to the popular segments, and that is in resonance with their desire to break with the unjust society. The cleavage seems to oppose the Islamism of the "dominated"¹³ to an Islamism of the "dominant".

The second element is the still real capacity of Mainstream Islamism to frame a loyal electorate. Electoral behavior does not only depend on socio-economic characteristics, even if they have a strong influence. It also depends on forms of socialization related to the family, associations, the professional environment, the use of places of worship for partisan purposes, and also on other forms of participation in political life. A survey that analyzes the importance of multiple forms of political supervision and socialization in electoral choice and change is more necessary than ever after the October 2019 electoral earthquake and following the evolution of the Tunisian experience since 2011.

The left: the crisis continues!?

¹² For this political scientist who wrote "Market Islam, the other conservative revolution", Ed, Seuil 2005, there is another Islam that is emerging in Muslim countries; Egypt; Turkey, Indonesia ... in the shadow of radical Islamism. This other Islam is making pragmatic compromises with the West and is supported by the new urban bourgeois elites.

¹³ We will argue that Islamism, often advanced as the voice of the South in the face of colonial policy, is in the process of becoming, in part at least, a dominant ideology that justifies social inequalities and integration into a global economy in the service of powerful and dominant global capital.

The question often asked at this level by left-wing activists themselves or by observers is the following: what explains and makes the left's dispersal last? The usual answer that comes up most often is the competition of egos.

Such an answer does not solve the problem. There are inevitably doses of narcissism among some left-wing leaders, but the issue is much more complex and deserves to be addressed in a different way.

The manifestations of the crisis can no longer be dissimulated or concealed, and they cannot be reduced to the (indeed important) question of leadership.

It must be acknowledged that the crisis of the left is global for at least three decades, and in particular in Europe. This has greatly affected a Tunisian left that is very close to Euro-Western patterns. Indeed, political, progressive, libertarian and emancipatory thinking in on motion since May 68 and the crisis of structuralism has accelerated further since the 1990s and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In Tunisia, this thought is indeed dysfunctional and lacking in imagination and fails to connect with intellectual effervescence and citizen awakening in the age of globalization and altermondialism.

The second problem is the absence of a theorization of the opportunities and limits of representative democracy and the alternatives to be proposed.

The third problem facing the Tunisian left today, linked to the two previous ones, is the disorientation of the left consciousness, which is unable to aggregate societal and social struggles, hence its weak social and anthropological anchoring due to a tragic rupture between the social dynamics from below and the elites of the ideologized, bureaucratic and paternalistic classical left.

Indeed, we have seen and heard the many expressions of a society of resistance, of protest, an angry and indignant society, driven by vital demands, starting with access to water, the right to health, the high cost of living, the right to a decent job, regional development, but also a vibrant and courageous society that defends individual freedoms, gender equality and artistic creativity.

Most of these neo-resistant dynamics, which have broken away from the traditional forms of partisan, trade union and associative, horizontal, spontaneous and diverse organization, have totally marked the public space since January 2016¹⁴, facing a paternalistic, opaque left unable to adapt to the new social expressions of anger and the new forms of organization and mobilization.

¹⁴ FTDES reports indicate 8713 protest movements in 2016, 10456 in 2017 and 9356 in 2018 for more details see contact@ftdes.net

The Left, and mainly the Popular Front, was certainly defeated because of its mistakes, but it was also victim of the strong Dégagisme which targeted what are often called, without nuance, the "modernists", the "centrists", the "democrats". This catch-all has harmed the left because it has assimilated it to the fierce defenders of the old regime and restoration, to the corrupt pseudo-elites, to a right-of-humanism hostile to the social struggles of the most deprived and excluded, to the liberals cut off from the people who prefer a comfortable life for themselves, while the bottom has been changing and lost enthusiasm has been returning.

Such a "family" called "centrist" is an aberrant and meaningless political construction for the left that only makes it lose its soul and that dissolves it into such an unrelieved nebula. Distancing oneself, fixing opponents, drawing borders with privileged economic elites is more vital for the left than continuing to defend a soft consensus, in the name of a fight for modernity that is always conceived from above. Adopting the idea of a radical democracy will make this democracy a place of political life crossed by a class conflict not a depoliticized consensus. The left will gain in credibility and popularity by embracing this conflictual and radical political grammar on the social issue, redistribution, and equitable development.

For the pragmatists, it is now the *Tayyar*¹⁵ party, placed as the third political force with 22 deputies (10.14% of votes), which can serve as a platform for debate for a new political gathering of the social left. It goes without saying today that the exit from the crisis for the left is not imminent, and that the exit routes are not yet clear.

Shams Radhouani, a young left-wing feminist activist and LGBT rights activist, calls for the de-liberalization of struggles for individual freedoms¹⁶, the only possible way in her view that will allow the articulation of societal and social struggles and give the left the opportunity to rebuild itself in an open way. The global experience shows it well: archeo-lefters are dying and new left-wingers are emerging. The second wave of Arab revolutions that have been part of a vast global insurgency against neoliberalism for months have opened our eyes to the need to articulate the social question with the democratic question.

Kais Said beyond Kais Said

Everyone anticipated the shock, something was going to happen during the presidential elections following BCE's passing, leaving his Nidaiist and "modernist" family disoriented in the image of a Mexican army where the leaders are numerous without loyal and united men and women behind them.

¹⁵ Tayyar, the *Democratic Current* is a party with a social-democratic tendency founded by Mr. Abbou following a split of the CPR party from Mr. Marzouki's party in 2013. The party fought tirelessly against corruption and the former regime between 2014-2019.

¹⁶ The Nachaz debate on Saturday 16.11.2019

On 13 October, after the first round, two outsiders, with regard to the existing partisan apparatus, found themselves face-to-face: N. Karoui with 15.58% of the vote and K. Said with 18.40% of the vote. This was in fact due to A. Mourrou's defeat, candidate of the Ennahdha party with 12.88% and the two candidates, once close to each other, who became rivals, Y. Chahed at 7.38% and A. Zbidi with 10.73% of the votes.

The remarkable rise of many names has been a matter of interest to observers and the media, for example the conservative L. Mraïhi, candidate of a small party, the UPL with 6.56%, the highly mediatized S. Said with 7.11%, supported by the nationalists of the *People's Movement* (Mouvement du Peuple), and the controversial conservative S. Makhoulouf with 4.37% of the votes, the candidate of *Al Karama Coalition*, a radical Islamist faction dissident of *Ennahdha*.

The most striking of course is the case of K. Said. Indeed, his overwhelming score against his competitor N. Karoui can not only be explained by the suspicions of corruption tainting Karoui's image or by his imprisonment during the election campaign, which nevertheless altered the entire electoral atmosphere. The televised debate on Friday, October 11, followed by 6.2 million Tunisians, showed the gap between the two men: on the one hand the academic, straight in his boots and words, honest and clean, and on the other hand the media tycoon and businessman far away from the statesman capable of assuming the highest office of justice.

The results of the second round only confirmed the popular trend in favor of the law professor. K. Said was elected with more than 72% and a turnout of 56.8% (out of a total of 7 million registered voters).

The question that continues to be asked is as follows: how could a single man get there and how could he challenge money machinery, parties and the media, to be the embodiment of a disavowal, which exceeds his person, towards political parties and the ruling elite?

Even if abstention must always be a concern to us, but above all the calls for a blank vote, did not ultimately have an impact on the street and electoral dynamics, but rather a new bipolarization has taken root: integrity versus corruption, revolution versus counter-revolution. According to the story constructed by the victorious candidate himself, "it is a cultural revolution with the tools of democratic legitimacy that we are living through", the candidate and his entourage are constantly repeating. Indeed, as the focus on the identity issue and the cultural divide had overshadowed the social issue, K. Said's candidacy made it more audible in the political field.

Presented as a new savior or a Kaiser, uncriticizable by his narrow-minded followers, or as a populist and even an ultra-conservative Salafist for some of his detractors, K. Said is, to be fair, neither one nor the other.

K. Said has succeeded in fostering a close relationship with the citizen, and in displaying a modesty much appreciated by his voters. His discourse, based essentially on the rhetoric of the revolution, and on the social rather than societal question, on anti-corruption, on the radical rejection of

centralization, on the defense of a new governance and a new organization of state power, is not that of a conservative president. His inauguration speech to the ARP reassured his state and law-abiding sense. Nevertheless, his positions on issues of individual freedom and gender equality leave part of the public opinion, and especially human rights activists, perplexed. They are, quite rightly, worrying for a country that wants to build a true democracy that respects human rights rather than a normative and mechanical democracy that is hostage to the dictatorship of the majority. In any case, K. Said's mandate has only just begun and he will be judged on the facts. We will always mobilize to defend freedom, equality and democracy for all.

To return to the vote, it is useful to focus on a significant fact of the voting dynamics that led the winning candidate, namely the role of young people and the broad political-ideological spectrum that voted for him in the second round, confirming the perception of an unintended popular engagement for a vote fundamentally "anti-systemic". This vote therefore resonates with the *Dégagisme* that was smoldering at the bottom of society. There is a shift from passive to active citizenship that appropriates the vote as a means of political change.

Even if the voting of young people, and even the politicization of young people and their involvement, remain the subject of few sociological or statistical studies, we will advance here some initial lines of thought. With 37% of voters in the first round and 90% in the second round, higher and secondary school graduates voted en masse for the academic candidate. The young graduates who were a major actor during Ben Ali's last years, during the 29 days of the revolt, and after 2011, are resurfacing through this vote and even after, with the cleaning campaigns launched spontaneously in the districts and regions¹⁷. We are not talking about a flood of young people for the elections in general, since their participation continues to be low with less than 6% of those between 18-26 years old who went to vote, but rather we point out that the choice of the young people who voted was to block N. Karoui and to support K. Said. To put it in moral terms, young people are for righteousness and hostile to corruption and trickery, and that is ultimately good for the new Tunisia.

On the other hand, the vote on 13 October did not follow the same territorial divide as in 2014 and 2011. It is thus in the south, in the district of Tataouine, that K. Said achieves his best score with 96.09% of the votes, and in Zaghuan that he achieves the worst score at 37.12%. Elsewhere in Tunisia, as well as abroad, it was in the same line as its national average. The dynamic for K. Said is thus national, not regional and territorial¹⁸. It is part of a moralization of political life, which is thus a strong aspiration shared by the majority of Tunisians.

¹⁷ A campaign called "state of consciousness" has emerged almost everywhere to appropriate the space, cleaning, graffiti, mutual aid... recalling the atmosphere of the first days after January 14, 2014.

¹⁸ To compare the results of 2011, 2014 with those of 2019 see; A. Gana and G. Van Hamme dir, Elections and territories in Tunisia; teaching of post-revolution elections (2011 - 2014) IRMC -Karthala 2016. According to this study the opposition center/periphery is evident in electoral behavior both in 2011 and 2014.

This provides a first overview of the representation of the state, elites and the media, the so-called "system", among young graduates. It is with this in mind that we will advance our interpretation of the vote for K. Said.

Let us briefly recall here some theoretical elements of electoral sociology by which we can distinguish three paradigms.

The first, let's call it the "sociological model"¹⁹, proposes to study the effect of the election campaign on electoral choices.

A second model, defined as a "psycho-political" model, considers that voting is first and foremost a political act driven by voters' perception of the main political objects²⁰.

Finally, the model proposed by O. Key, which already criticized the notion of the passive electorate, trapped in the "straitjacket" of social or psychological determinants, and stressed the ability of any electorate to make a judgment, positive or negative, on candidates.

Let us adopt at this level as a theoretical perspective that emerges from these three models that electoral behavior is the result of multiple factors, structural, cyclical and contextual, where the voter is neither completely rational, i.e. completely trapped in the social or psychological determinants, nor completely decision-making, nor completely passive or follower.

It is the bifurcation and synthesis of the last two models that will help us to understand the general and breaking wave towards K. Said. With regard to young people as a social group, and in line with Anne Muxel's²¹ analysis, we confirm in the case of the vote of 13 October, i.e. the second round, a new form of link that young people establish with politics, hence the blurring of old partisan or ideological allegiances. Indeed, youth activism manifests itself in many ways and through different repertoires of action. Thus, the civic norm that attaches voting to normative citizenship is challenged or, at least, weakened. The behavior of young people does not necessarily mean a break with politics but rather a new politicization, or, more clearly, a new form of relationship with politics.

To conclude, our point is that nothing will be after 2019 as it was before. The elections have shown that Tunisian democracy is in the making, it manages to sustain at the same time the various forms of protest and even subversion, and the commitment to a participatory and peaceful democratic game through the polls. There is thus a political urgency to give this way a long-term breath. Not to do so, is to open the door to the unknown and the unpredictable.

¹⁹ He is associated with the pioneering work of sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld and his team at Columbia University.

²⁰ See H. T.'s book Himmelweit, P. Humphreys, M. Jaeger and M. Katz, *How Voters Decid* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986).

²¹ Meeting with Anne Muxel : «Les jeunes ont un nouveau rapport au politique» Sc . Humaines Février 2012.