

Somalia and Libya there was consensus. In the Rwanda case, there could have been. In Iraq there was not. We did not have a lot of support if you look at the American coalition: the US and Britain, a few NATO allies, and a lot of tiny little states without any resources to speak of. The Bush Administration had an obvious, self-interested reason for going to war. I think we are seeing a decreasing consensus in Afghanistan.

With regard to the question of the internal opposition, the problem was that in Somalia there was no coherent opposition, unlike Rwanda and Kosovo. In Iraq, the problem was that Saddam's opponents were mostly exiles and they were not broadly integrated into the society. In Libya, there was internal opposition, which was crucial. In Afghanistan, the US supports the government. If the government were coherent, this could be OK; but I do not think it is.

Finally, I ask, "Were these operations justified?" In Somalia, we should have provided the famine help and then gotten out. In Rwanda, we should have intervened. This was, ironically, the case that meets the criteria best; and we did not intervene, to our shame. In Kosovo, we were right to intervene; it meets the criteria quite well. In Iraq, we were wrong to intervene. There was no exit strategy. There was no broad consensus. There was no broad involvement by others. There was no coherent opposition. There was no just cause under Just War Theory. And there was no valid, in my view, Responsibility to Protect justification. So it is a genuine, crashing failure, and I think that it should never happen again. In Libya, I say cautiously "yes", although I recognize that there is a lot of risk here, especially the risk of anarchy and division among the revolutionaries.

Our current involvement in Afghanistan is not justified. It is not quite as bad as Iraq, but I think

it is close. There is no exit strategy I can see, the goals are unclear, the R2P criteria are not met, and it is not a "Responsibility to Protect" situation. There is a declining consensus and commitment by others. And there is a very weak, feckless government, which is weak and unable even to prevent people from walking in and suicide bombing one of their leaders. It does not command much widespread support.

So my conclusion is as follows. Leaders in the future will call for military intervention, so you will have to think about it—10, 20, or 30 years from now. Beware of what Stanley Hoffman calls "the hell of good intentions."⁴ Do not let an idealistic set of good intentions lure you into supporting intervention without asking tough questions. I think that three of these six interventions, in the absence of crucial US interests, were unjustified, at high cost. So if you remember this talk, 10, 20, or 30 years from now when a new president proposes intervention, I would say be cautious and ask, "Has he or she articulated an exit strategy? Is this strategy based on the identification of a coherent opposition, which will be capable of running the country in a more decent manner, at least than the people they have already got, when they are allowed to be in power?" These are hard cases, and you have to make sure all the criteria line up. If a vigilant public does not hold its government accountable for interventions in a coherent way, the United States will continue to engage in poorly conceived or badly motivated interventions, as well as in those that are justified. As James Madison said in Federalist paper number 10, "enlightened leaders will not always be at the helm." It is up to us, in the attentive public, to offer criticisms as well as support on a reasoned basis to hold leaders accountable and give them incentives to enact sensible and justified policies.

Endnotes

¹ Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962).

² Joseph S. Nye, *Nuclear Ethics* (NY: Free Press, 1986).

³ For my views on this issue in more detail, see Allen Buchanan and Robert O. Keohane "Precommitment regimes for humanitarian intervention," *Ethics and International Affairs*, volume 25, no. 1 (spring 2011).

⁴ Stanley Hoffmann, "The Hell of Good Intentions," *Foreign Policy* 29 (winter 1977-78).

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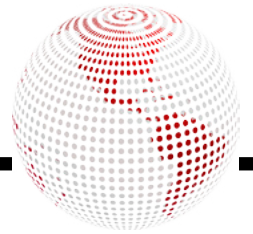
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Letter from Tunisia



Elyès Jouini

Distinguished Professor and Chairman of the Institut de Finance

Université Paris-Dauphine

Former Member of the Tunisian Transition Government

Elyès Jouini is the vice-president for research of Université Paris-Dauphine and former Minister for the Economic and Social Reforms of the Tunisian transition government. He currently serves as the President of the Fondation Paris-Dauphine, and as Chairman of the Institut de Finance of Université Paris-Dauphine. Named best young French economist in 2005, Jouini was also a member of the Economic Analysis Council (attached to the French Prime Minister) from 2008 to 2010.

I will remember that phone call of January 20th 2011 for a long time. Six days after the flight of the Tunisian president Ben Ali, the Prime Minister, Mohamed Ghannouchi, called me and said, "I need you to form a new government." I asked for a few days to organize my departure from Paris, but Mohamed Ghannouchi passed the phone to one of his advisers, who said, "the situation is too unstable, come as soon as possible". So the next day, I took the 8am flight for Tunis and settled in an office adjacent to Prime Minister. My role was to attend all of the Prime Minister's meetings and assist him in forming a new government, which would become the second Ghannouchi government.

In terms with the Constitution, after the flight of President Ben Ali, the President of the National Assembly became Interim President and the Prime Minister appointed a new government. The new government was immediately criticized by the mob for not being that new, because although there were some figures from the opposition, the first Ghannouchi government had too many former ministers and close aids of Ben Ali. Therefore, the challenge facing us was to form a government that was able to stop the total vacancy of power and was able to govern with the consent of as much of the population as possible. I noticed this total vacancy of power upon my arrival in Tunis, when I presented myself at the office of the Prime Minister in the Kasbah. When I said I had an appointment with

Mr. Ghannouchi, I was told, "His office is on the first floor." No one checked my identity or whether I actually had made an appointment. It took several days to realize that the security of the Prime Minister did not fall under the police, but under the presidential guard, and as the leaders of the latter were arrested, nobody was ensuring the security of the Kabash!

The whole week was dedicated to consultations with the main forces of the country, and was marked by a struggle between those who wanted no change and those who wanted a government with the strongest possible foundation and



Tunisian protestors take to the streets, sparking the Arab Spring.

legitimacy. Therefore, Ghannouchi advocated a government largely made up of technocrats, that is, competent individuals who didn't have political issues. Figures ready to ensure the transition of government, so that at the same time the political forces could put themselves

in marching order, organize themselves, occupy the political arena, discuss, debate, and prepare the next steps.

After a week of marathon negotiations, the government was finally almost created and I accepted the position of Minister to the Prime Minister. I was in charge of economic and social reforms, and the coordination between the ministries involved. Within five weeks, without any political experience, I was the de facto number two of the Tunisian government in charge of organizing the democratic transition. Number two of a government that was immediately faced with a three sided challenge: how to transition the



Protester during manifestations in front of government buildings.

government, while ensuring that Tunisia is being placed on a short-term and long-term virtuous path, how to deal with current affairs, while initiating the construction of future institutions, and how to respond to the many legitimate requests that should be made by a real and legally constituted state.

The task was tough, especially because the government did not intend to last more than six months. The task was tough because building democracy is not only implementing a transparent and fair democratic structure, but also ensuring that elections are conducted in a socially and economically peaceful environment, in which everyone can take stock of the hopes and challenges opened up by this revolution. Hopes and challenges, because it was not about restoring social peace at the price of the sustainability of our actions. It was not about harboring false hopes

and distributing the benefits likely to generate the crises of tomorrow. The government's goal was to establish democracy in a peaceful climate, within the time promised, and to leave a healthy economy for the next government.

Furthermore, a successful transition to democracy after decades of autocratic rule was a cumbersome task – especially in attempting to build a legally constituted state while at the same time preserving the many achievements of 55 years of independence.

Although the responsibility was enormous, it was a very exciting task. The transitional government was there to allow the release of energy that was necessary to build tomorrow's Tunisia. The transitional government was there to avoid the political and institutional vacuum that constituted the greatest danger for the revolution, the return of dictatorship. Nothing predestined me to enter a government, nothing but an education, a journey and values. As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote, "J'ai trahi mon but si j'ai pu vous engager à admirer d'abord les hommes. Ce qui est admirable d'abord, c'est le terrain qui les a fondés." Which translates to: "I have betrayed my goal, if I have seemed to encourage you to admire people first. What is admirable first, is the ground that has founded them."

Through education primarily based on example, my parents left me the strong values that guide me: respect for others, concern for others, and the pleasure of giving. Acting for others and acting in the public interest was, and still is, the motivation for my actions. I grew up with the image of my great-uncle Mohamed-Salah Mzali, former Minister and President of the Council. He enjoined those who would listen to not forget their duties towards those who came before them and those who would follow them, and loved to quote Gustave Le Bon, "Respecter les traditions est une condition d'existence, savoir s'en dégager lentement une condition de progrès." Which translates to: "Respecting traditions is a condition for existence, knowing how to diverge from them is a condition of progress." Being part of continuity, innovativeness, and developing

things are also some of my key traits, which may have been what made me think I had a role to play in the democratic transition; a role of promoting the long-awaited radical change, without rupture.

All of this would not have happened to me without the government's policy, which has been in action since the Tunisian independence, granting scholarships to the most brilliant secondary school students for a preparatory class for admission to the Grandes Écoles in France. My results in high school allowed me to receive such a scholarship. "Never forget that you carry the Tunisian passport and never forget what you owe to your country," told us Mokhtar Latiri, who was in charge of this scholarship program, to which he added, "and be polygamous!" which meant, being able to take on several activities simultaneously, and knowing how to be multiple.

Thus, in 1984, I went to the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Rue d'Ulm to study mathematics. It was in this institution, which formed the largest number of Fields medal winners in the world, that I prepared my PhD

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in applied mathematics and was immersed for the first time in the world of mathematics. Never forgetting my duty to "polygamy", I created at the same time the Association of Tunisian Grandes Écoles, which now has over 3,000 members and branches in Tunis, Paris, London, and wherever else Tunisian skills shine. In 1989, at the age of 24, I was recruited as an Assistant Professor at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, and at the age of 27, I became a full Professor there.

From a scientific point of view, my work is an interdisciplinary combination of mathematics and economics. From a geographical point of view, I have one foot on either side of the Mediterranean, since I also taught in Tunis and participated in the

great reform of Tunisian higher education initiated by Mohamed Charfi. I've participated in creating Tunisian preparatory classes, in developing mathematics, and in creating the Tunisia Polytechnic School. A few years later, I would also participate in the reform of the pensions sector, while teaching at the Stern School of Business at NYU.

For me, being "polygamous" meant building my career on both sides of the Mediterranean. It was in both of my countries that I had the opportunity to teach and help develop the education system: as a member of the Tunisia National Commission for University Reform (Commission Nationale de Rénovation Universitaire), and a member of the High Council of Science and Technology (Haut-Conseil de la Science et de la Technologie) in France; as vice president of Paris-Dauphine University, and director of Tunis-Dauphine; as member of the Council of Economic Analysis in France, and administrator of the Bank of Tunisia; decorated with the insignia of Chevalier in the Order of the Legion d'Honneur in France, and Commander in the Order of Educational Merit in Tunisia. This is how I have never stopped being double. Being double encourages tolerance, listening, and understanding each other. Being double also means to live twice as intensely, provided that you do not get lost. As Jorge Luis Borges wrote, "tout homme est deux hommes et le plus vrai est l'autre." Which translates to: "every man is two men and the truer one is the other." This has allowed me to never cease to be vigilant about my involvement in Tunisia. Thus, in 2008, I decided to give up my position of Administrator of the Bank of Tunisia rather than sitting alongside the members of Ben Ali's group when they decided to seize the bank and endorse their methods.

This is the journey that led me to co-sign a manifesto after the revolution with the French-Tunisian writer Abdelwahab Meddeb, in which we wrote:

"This revolution did not need a providential man and everyone fears that it will be confiscated from the people who brought

it. And yet, we must continue to manage current affairs, and yet, we must build the institutions of tomorrow. The task is difficult; however, a government acknowledging what it is to serve the people and not to administer the people is able to meet this challenge. Not because it will be the best, but because the Tunisian people is there, vigilant!

Indeed, it is futile to find the ideal government, as it will always be questionable. Faced with so much uncertainty and complexity to lead this transition and organize a new political landscape without further compromising the economy and solidarity, no government can be up to the task, a priori. It is by moving forward that we will all learn together. We need to project ourselves into a model where it is not so much the people but the mechanisms that matter. However, in this progressive construction, fundamental risks should be excluded by taking some tough and irreversible decisions, and we must be vigilant. The arrangements for this watch are yet to be finalized. It will be largely based on freedom of expression and, we know now, on new technologies. We need to converge all our energies. Events, neighborhood committees, exchanges on the web, manifestos, focus groups, debates, ... all show that from now on we want to take our destiny in our own hands with a huge surge of mobilization and solidarity, with our requests, with our requirements, with our vigilance! So yes, let us ask, demand, be vigilant and judge on the actual evidence!"

Chance or premonition, this text had been finalized and published on 20 January, on the same day of the telephone call from Mohamed Ghannouchi.

So, for five weeks, in charge of "economic and social reforms, and coordination with the ministries involved," I was working day and night in the tense atmosphere of revolutionary Tunisia. Outside my offices in the Kasbah demonstrators were standing to demand the fall of the government. I was questioned myself, by some in the revolutionary movement; as a Tunisian from abroad, my patriotism was

questioned. Although I had resigned from all my mandates of company administrator before entering the government, I was suspected of conflict of interest. I did not have the time to respond to those attacks as I was very absorbed by my tasks: putting an economy that was destabilized by strikes and the collapse of tourism back on track; receiving Foreign Delegations; reassuring the backers of the country; and rebalancing the development between the outskirts and the centre of the country. This, a few weeks later, would bring me to write in my letter of resignation:

"This government has probably taken more measures and more pivotal decisions in one month than many governments do in several months, or even years. Ratification of international conventions guaranteeing human rights, aid to needy families, implementation of an integration program for unemployed graduates, confiscation of property improperly acquired, protection of our heritage as part of the universal heritage..."

The government that I was part of had managed to restore an almost normal situation at the institutional level. This government of technocrats was the only possible solution to maintain continuity of the State while waiting the replacement of a policy not related to the former regime.

This is a new period that starts today. Outside the government, I had endeavored to mobilize my network to the service of my country. I took on the role of Sherpa of the Tunisian government for the preparation of the G8 in Deauville, whose guest of honor,

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together with Egypt, was Tunisia. In Tunis, I have just founded a think-tank to consider reforms in a spirit of social liberalism, attentive to the redistribution of wealth. In Paris, I have mobilized economists all over the world to



Protesters raid the streets in opposition to the government.

write a column distributed the same day in English, Italian, German and French to the international press calling on the developed countries to financially support Tunisia. This text, signed notably by Joseph Stiglitz, Philippe Aghion, Jean-Paul Fitoussi, Richard Portes, Daniel Cohen, Klaus Zimmermann, and Nouriel Roubini, stated:

"Many countries in the region have focused all their attention on Tunisia, and a failure of its democratic transition would be a victory for all the dictatorships in the region and a severe defeat for democracy.

We have a collective responsibility to ensure the success of this transition and prove that economic cooperation is the best barrier against extremism.

The risk that we face today is the poor coordination of actions, the risk that the world waits Tunisia to complete its transition to help it, while Tunisia needs this help to carry out this transition successfully.

We economists know that investments are judged in the long term. We firmly believe that the establishment of democratic institutions will be a determining factor to improve attractiveness and economic performance over the medium to long term.

Endnotes

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The revolution has attracted support, sympathy and respect. Now, we must go further. It is the responsibility of the international community to prevent Tunisia from entering a vicious circle of poverty and rising unemployment leading to an increase of populism and extremism, which, in turn, lead to isolationism, and from there to the increase in poverty and unemployment. At the international level, the consequence would be the spread of extremism and the proliferation of waves of migration fleeing this extremism.

We now call on the G8 leaders to support the transition in Tunisia and more specifically to support a road map that would be developed and led by Tunisia; this road map would clearly identify the actors involved and the amounts to be mobilized.

Tunisia is the leader of the Arab democratic transition. Its population has reached a high level of education. The status gained by women, exceptional for the Arab world, is a big reason for hope. Its small size makes it a perfect laboratory of democracy. It offers us the unique opportunity to prove that democracy can develop harmoniously in the region. The cost of such a laboratory, the cost of the plan that we recommend is only 2 to 3% of the cost of German reunification and less than the cost of one to two months of the war in Iraq."