



## CONFERENCE

# *TUNISIA: A CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION?*

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Villa La Fonte, Via delle Fontanelle, 18 - San Domenico di Fiesole

**30-31 MAY 2016**

## ■ INTRODUCTION

Five years after the 2011 revolution, Tunisia is alternatively praised as a democratic exception in the region, and described in an alarmist perspective, as a country plagued by insecurity and unemployment. This workshop seeks to discuss the political and social changes that have occurred in Tunisia in the past five years beyond the dichotomy of failure and success. Looking at the Tunisian revolution as an ongoing process, we will discuss the ways in which political power is being redistributed and renegotiated, and how cultural and religious norms are redefined. To what extent has the democratic transition been achieved at the expense of the revolutionary claims of social justice and dignity? And in what sense can the Tunisian political transition be described as a conservative revolution or as a counter-revolutionary democratization? Bringing together scholars of Tunisia and of the broader Middle East and Turkey, we want to reflect upon what makes the Tunisian democratization story original, and potentially paradigmatic, while avoiding the language of exceptionality and specificity.

The conference will be both in English and French.

## ■ PROGRAMME

### 30 MAY

09.00 - 09.30

#### **Welcome coffee and presentation of participants**

09.30 - 11.00

#### **How do revolutions compare, succeed, and end?**

Keynote lecture Jean-François Bayart

*Pour une sociologie historique et comparée du politique*

Comments by Olivier Roy

11.30 - 13.00

#### **Secularizing religion, democratizing secularism**

Introduction by Olivier Roy and Georges Fahmi

Responses: Teije Donker, Emna Ennaifer, Charles Tripp, Mathilde Zederman

- *What are the prospects for the emergence of a non authoritarian form of secularism?*
- *How is Nahda evolving, between political Islam and Muslim Democracy?*
- *What attempts at institutionalizing Islam away from state control have taken place after 2011?*
- *How does the religious field redefine itself through a diversification of religious practice?*
- *How should we understand the appeal of salafism in the context of Nahda's turn toward a form of "makhzenization"?*

13.00 - 14.00

Lunch

14.00 - 16.00

#### **Power and Representation**

Introduction by Hamza Meddeb and Béatrice Hibou

Responses: Souhail Belhadj, Laryssa Chomiak, Ines Djedidi, Mine Eder, Corinna Mullin, Stefano Pontiggia

- *To what extent is democracy desirable in its own right regardless of the socio-economic situation?*
- *To what extent does the divide between "insiders" (relatively privileged, formal and organized forces, the political and business elite, members of unions...) and "outsiders" (unemployed, the informal sector and marginalized rural areas) structure the remaking of Tunisian social contract?*
- *Is Tunisia headed toward a form of political pluralism without social justice?*
- *Will socio-economic contention politics progressively replace identity politics in Tunisia ?*

## 31 MAY

10.15 - 10.30 Coffee

### 10.30 - 12.30 **Who speaks for/of Tunisia?**

Introduction by Nadia Marzouki and Jocelyne Dakhli

Responses: Fadil Aliriza, Meriam Guellouz, Corinna Mullin, Stéphanie Pouessel, Charles Tripp

- *What is the subversive potential of the new artistic sphere that has opened up after 2011? To what extent is there a commodification and neutralization of this post-revolutionary art?*
- *What forms of grassroots citizenship have emerged since 2011? How do they challenge or fall into the process of neoliberal “ngo”ization of civil society?*
- *To what extent did the revolution change the way in which Tunisia-based scholars and experts engage with their Northern and Western based colleagues in the process of knowledge production and formation of narratives about contemporary politics and history?*

12.30 - 13.30 Lunch

### 13.30 - 15.30 **A democratic virtuous cycle in the region?**

Introduction by Karim Emile Bitar and Hamza Meddeb

Responses: Fadil Aliriza, Nicolas Dot-Pouillard, Mine Eder, Lotfi Nalouti, Brahim Rouabah

- *Can Tunisia act as the initiator of a virtuous circle in the region or will its fragile democracy be endangered by regional politics?*
- *To what extent do international partners and some local actors perceive the democracy as a form of pluralist stabilization without real pluralist politics?*
- *Will the war on terror allow the return of the police state, and military regimes?*
- *What is the future of the Arab state: in what ways does the Arab spring call for a rethinking of the state in the Arab World?*

15.30 - 16.00 Coffee break

### 16.00 - 18.00 **Comparative perspectives from Turkey, Egypt and the Middle East.**

- *Georges Fahmi: Lessons from Egypt*
- *Mine Eder: Lessons from Turkey*
- *Nicolas Dot-Pouillard: Social movements and Arab Left*
- *Fadil Aliriza: Lessons from Libya*