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CASE STUDY

When the institutional context thwarts public-private partnerships: The role of political factors in the failure of PPPs

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ABSTRACT

The PPP scholarly work has effectively explored the material values attached to PPPs such as efficiency of services, value for money and productivity, but little attention has been paid to procedural public values. This paper aims to address this gap by exploring how Enfidha Airport in Tunisia failed to achieve both financial and procedural values that were expected from delivering the airport via the PPP route, and what coping strategies the public and private sectors deployed to ameliorate any resultant value conflicts. Based on the analysis of Enfidha Airport, it is argued that PPP projects are likely to fail to deliver financial and procedural values when the broader institutional context is not supportive of PPP arrangements, and when political and security risks are not adequately counted for during the bidding process.

KEYWORDS

public-private partnerships; public value; procedural value; failure of PPPs

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1. Introduction

PPPs are "agreements where public sector bodies enter into long term-contractual agreements with private sector entities for the construction or management of public sector infrastructure facilities or the provision of services" (Grimsey and Lewis, 2002, p. 108). Despite the promise of the PPP approach to enhance the efficiency and manage risks associated with mega-infrastructure projects, major PPP projects have not been universally successful (Ke et al., 2014). The PPP literature documents stories of high-level PPP projects that failed to complete (Alam et al., 2014), projects where issues of corruption and financial misconduct were identified (Okwilagwe, 2017), or where the terms of contract were re-negotiated (Chandoul and Gondard, 2019).

Although PPP scholarly work has over-emphasized material values such as efficiency of services,

value for money, competition and productivity (Wettenhall, 2003), little is known about factors that affect the achievement of procedural public values (Reynaers and Graaf, 2014). Public value is defined as “what the public values” (Talbot, 2006, p. 7), and it provides the “normative consensus about (a) the rights, benefits, and prerogatives to which citizens should (and should not) be entitled; (b) the obligations of citizens to society, the state, and one another; and (c) the principles of which governments and policies should be based” (Bozeman, 2007, p. 17). In the context of PPPs, procedural values represent accountability, transparency, responsiveness, responsibility and quality (Reynaers, 2013). However, the task of balancing between the “demands of achieving material value” while “safeguarding procedural values” (Weihe, 2008, p. 156) is challenging because it requires public and private actors to manage conflicting and sometimes incompatible values (De Graaf et al., 2016; Spicer, 2009).

It is important to examine how public values are achieved in PPP projects because “realizing one value can directly affect, postpone or thwart the realization of other values” (Steenhuisen and van Eeten, 2008, p. 147), and actors adopt “coping strategies” to defend the values they associate with (Stewart, 2006). Unpacking the factors that directly hinder the achievement of material and procedural values can yield valuable theoretical and empirical lessons that PPP scholars and practitioners can learn from to manage the uncertainty associated with PPPs. It is particularly important to explore such issues within the context of the Middle East and North Africa that has not attracted sufficient attention from PPP scholars (OECD, 2010). Therefore, this paper’s underlying research question is “Why do the promised material and procedural values underpinning the adoption of PPP projects fail to materialize?”.

Enfidha Airport PPP project in Tunisia offers an interesting empirical context to answer this paper’s research question. It was the first and only PPP project in the transportation sector in North Africa in 2007, and its planning and procurement processes lacked sufficient measures of transparency and accountability that translated into the drastic failure of the project to achieve its objectives. As a result, the project contract was renegotiated several times resulting in significantly lowering the concession fees as well as deferring their payment for ten years. It is argued that PPP projects are likely to fail to deliver financial and procedural values when their institutional environment is not supportive of such forms of project delivery, and when political and security risks are not effectively captured in financial proposals during the bidding process.

This paper is organized as follows. The next section offers a brief overview of the PPP environment in Tunisia in early 2000s, and the background and expected benefits from the Enfidha Airport. The project planning and procurement are then discussed, followed by the implementation of the project and the political and institutional problems that affected the operation of the airport. The following section then reflects on the failure of the airport to achieve its expected financial and procedural values, and presents the different actors involved in the project and how they influenced the project outcomes. Finally, the paper discusses the factors leading to the failure of this PPP project, and the key lessons learned from this experience.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Tunisia’s PPP environment, project background and expected benefits

The introduction of PPPs to Tunisia has been essentially driven by international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that implemented a wide range of structural reforms including privatization and outsourcing since 1980s (Chandoul and Gondard, 2019). These organizations proposed PPPs to Tunisian government with the aim to “create partnership between public and private institutions, reduce the state’s direct involvement in industries” (Malgas et al., 2007, p. 396), and enhance the efficiency of projects. Importantly, PPPs were meant to be a vehicle that would finance mega-infrastructure projects and decrease the budget deficits the Tunisian government had been struggling with since late 1970s. The World Bank considered PPPs as a strategic policy instrument that would bring along its financial assets, the international private sector’s business acumen and enable the transfer of knowledge and skills to Tunisian public sector employees (OECD, 2014). Likewise, the IMF “pressured” Tunisian government to adopt PPPs through its loan conditionalities that mandate adopting private finance for infrastructure projects (Chandoul and Gondard, 2019, p. 12).

The PPP market remains modest in Tunisia despite the World Bank and IMF’s pressures to adopt PPPs to bolster private sector participation in the economy. As **Table 1** demonstrates, since 1993, Tunisia has only implemented 10 PPP projects worth \$4.4 billion mainly in water and power projects (5 projects) and ICT and natural gas. These projects were procured on a PPP basis because the Tunisian government did not possess the capital resources and the know-how to implement them (Malgas et al., 2007). The first PPP project in Tunisia was the Miskar Gas Pipeline which supplies more than 85% of the country’s natural gas supplies to Hannibal gas treatment where it is treated before it is delivered to Tunisian Company of Electricity and Gas (STEG) which is the main supplier of electricity in the country (Meziou, 2013). Tunisia’s first Independent Power Plant (IPP) was Rades II that was implemented in 1996 when the government authorized the private sector to generate electricity, followed by El Biban IPP in 2002 (Malgas et al., 2007). More recently, Tunisia followed the international best practice of relying on renewable energy to generate electricity and constructed solar and wind farm power plants in 2019 and 2020, respectively. Nonetheless, only one airport PPP project was delivered via the PPP route: the Enfidha Airport that was awarded in 2007.

The PPP legal and regulatory frameworks in Tunisia have witnessed significant developments over the past twenty years (Meziou, 2013), and have been drafted with support from the World Bank that “intensively pushed for PPPs” (Chandoul and Gondard, 2019, p. 12). The first law to

Table 1. List of PPP projects awarded between 1996 and 2020 in Tunisia

Sub/industry	Number of projects	Contracts’ value (in \$US millions)
Electricity	4	341
Water and sewerage	1	95
Transportation/airport	1	840
Natural gas	2	657
ICT	2	2,527.00
Total value	10 projects	\$US millions 4,460.00

Source: *The World Bank (2022b)*.

authorize private sectors' involvement in electricity generation was law No. 96-27 that was passed in 1996 and it enabled IPPs to sell electricity to STEG, followed by the Hydrocarbon Law in 1999 that further facilitated the participation of upstream natural gas producing companies in electricity generation (Malgas et al., 2007). In lieu of the previous sectorial laws that governed the Tunisian PPP landscape, the government embraced a wider spectrum of administrative reforms proposed by the World Bank in 2008 to facilitate PPP development such as the concessions' law 2008-23 (Benmansour, 2016). Nonetheless, this concessions' law did not lead to the procurement of any PPP projects, and the government issued a new concessions' law and two decrees in 2013 establishing a PPP unit to be housed at the Prime Minister's Office, and numerous policy guidelines and procedures (OECD, 2014). An important milestone in the PPP legal and regulatory environment in Tunisia was the adoption of the 2015 draft law on public private partnerships on 23 April 2019 by the Tunisian Parliament, and it was observed that the "World Bank was the driving force behind the changes in the legal framework rather than the Tunisian government" (Chandoul and Gondard, 2019, p. 10).

2.2. Enfidha Airport's background and benefits

The key motivation behind constructing Enfidha Airport in 2007 was to address the increasing demand for air traffic that emanated from a rapidly growing tourism industry in Tunisia. In early 2000s, Tunisia attracted 7 million tourists in 2007 compared to 1.8 million in 1987, and the number of sold hotel nights increased from 18.5 million in 1987 to 37.3 million in 2007 (Ben Abda, 2009). This exponential growth in the tourism industry contributed 7% to the national GDP, and generated substantial job opportunities in the local economy (Lanouar and Goaied, 2018). Furthermore, the Tunisian government was negotiating multiple open sky agreements with the European Union, but the surge in tourism industry was not paralleled with sufficient investment in airport infrastructure development which limited the number of tourists that Tunisia could host per year. The eight airports in Tunisia exceeded their capacity of 19 million passengers per year by one million in 2003 (Chandoul and Gondard, 2019), and the three major international airports either reached saturation such as Monastir Airport which exceeded its maximum capacity of 3.5 million per year when it reached 4.32 million passengers in 2008, or were expected to reach their maximum capacity in the following 5 years such as Tunis-Carthage and Djebra-Zarzis (Ben Abda, 2009).

Constructing Enfidha Airport promised job creation from expected increases in the number of passengers and tourists heading to the coastal areas of Tunisia. Since the options of upgrading or expanding the facilities of Monastir and Tunis-Carthage airports was not possible due to geographical and environmental constraints, increasing air traffic was only feasible through building a new airport (OECD, 2014). The location of Enfidha Airport was 90 km south of the capital city, 45 km from Monastir Airport and based in a region that attracted 70% of national tourism industry (Benmansour, 2016). The airport was envisioned to become the second largest airport in Tunisia, hosting 7 million passengers per year in 2009, with four future expansion plans that would increase the airport's capacity to 22 million by 2036 (Amicucci and Stoyanova, 2012). The expected benefits from this airport were to reduce congestion at the Monastir Airport, strengthen the tourism industry and enact open sky agreements that would attract several chartered flights, and strengthen commercial and industrial activities in Enfidha region (TAV, 2010; International Finance Corporation (IFC), 2009). Importantly, however, the airport was expected to create 2,200 direct jobs during the construction phase and 1,200 during its operation, and additional 10,000 jobs would be created

in the local private sector, further increasing the contribution of tourism industry to GDP growth (OECD, 2014).

2.3. Project planning, procurement and construction

When the need for the Enfidha Airport was first outlined in the Civil Aviation Authority's 1998 strategic study and master plan for 2020 (MEED, 2004a), it was planned as a traditional Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) project. The Civil Aviation Authority awarded France's Aeroports de Paris a \$10 million design contract for Enfidha Airport in January 2000 and tender documents were prepared for the airport's construction that was estimated at \$390 million (MEED, 2002). However, the local banks could not raise the liquidity to finance the airport, and the Tunisian government was advised by the World Bank to adopt the PPP model that would bring to Tunisia the international best practice in building and operating airports (Benmansour, 2016). Therefore, two years later, the Ministry of Communication, Technologies and Transport invited bidders for a 40 years' Build, Transfer and Operate (BTO) concession, and seven prequalified groups were invited to submit their proposals (MEED, 2004a, 2004b).

Several issues around lack of clarity and transparency emerged during the procurement of the airport project resulting in extensive delays. The first issue was when "local officials were accused of presenting donor organizations with false projected passenger statistics" (MEED, 2004, p. 1). The bidders found these projected statistics unrealistic and expressed concerns around the financial feasibility of the project particularly since it would be competing with the neighbouring Monastir Airport (MEED, 2005a). Consequently, the project was put on hold in April 2005 as the government reviewed further concerns raised by the bidders around landing rights, airport fees and the fate of the Monastir Airport (MEED, 2005b).

The bidding process of Enfidha Airport was re-launched after substantial changes were made to its initial design. The key change to the initial design of the project was the inclusion of Monastir Airport in the concession that would entitle the winning bidder to have a combined concession of managing the Monastir Airport while building the Enfidha Airport and operating it on a Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) contract (MEED, 2005c). The combination of the two airports entitled the winning consortium to have a revenue stream from Monastir Airport during the construction phase of Enfidha, and that would preclude unhealthy competition between the two airports, too. Additionally, the government agreed to increase the costs of landing fees and passenger taxes to attract more international investors (MEED, 2006). Ultimately, from the six initial bidders, Turkey's Tepe-Akfen-Vie Airports Holding Corporation (TAV) and a consortium of three companies from France, Germany and Canada were invited to submit their technical and financial bids in March 2007 (MEED, 2007).

TAV was ultimately the winning bidder, and a 40-years BOT contract was signed between TAV and the Tunisian government on 18 May 2007, and TAV established a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) named TAV-Tunisia. According to the concession agreement, TAV was to operate the existing Monastir Airport and to design, engineer, finance and finish constructing Enfidha Airport by 1 October 2009. After two months of delay, the airport began its operation on 4 December 2009 (TAV, 2020). The total cost of the project was 560 million Euros and TAV-Tunis financed it through 67% debt and 31% equity (IFC, 2009). Several international financial institutions supported the project, and the Tunisian government offered a subsidy of 11 million Euros (OECD, 2014).

The procurement of the Enfidha Airport revealed several issues around the profitability of the airport, and the transparency and good governance of the procurement process. Chandoul and Gondard (2019) argue that the airport “was not considered profitable by the public authorities in the first place, but it was hoped that the revenue of Monastir Airport would cancel out any losses at Enfidha” (p. 3). While the choice to procure the project via the PPP scheme was based on the need to mobilize the financial resources from the private sector, and the pressure from the World Bank and IMF to adopt the PPP model to reduce public debt, it is unclear if the airport represented a bankable and profitable project. Amicucci and Stoyanova (2012) cite the findings of a consultancy firm that conducted a review of European Investment Bank’s loans—which offered a loan of 70 million Euros for the airport in 2009—and the report stated that: “the project is considered to have low economic return... This does not comply with the Bank’s transport lending policy, which states that airport projects should be financed only if they demonstrate high economic value.” (p. 15).

The infeasibility of TAV’s financial proposal and its overly optimistic projections of passenger volumes also posed several questions by the public. TAV won the tender and airport’s concession contract based on its technical proposal, but importantly based on the overstated financial proposal and the annual fee it promised to pay the government. However, the concession fee that was set between 11% and 26% was deemed unrealistic, and the estimated passenger volume between 7 million and 22 million was implausible (Chandoul and Gondard, 2019).

The general public in Tunisia believed that the construction of Enfidha Airport was to serve the personal interests of the autocratic regime of former President of Tunisia Ben Ali and his family (Amicucci and Stoyanova, 2012). As **Table 2** shows, prior to the Arab Spring in 2011 that toppled down the regime of Ben Ali, the country scored 23% in Voice and Accountability (lower than MENA region that scored 28%) and 48% in control of corruption in 2000 compared to 62% and 74% in OECD countries, respectively. An OECD report (2014) considered corruption and lack of transparency as considerable barriers for private participation in infrastructure development in Tunisia. Amicucci and Stoyanova (2012) state that the PPP deal was made possible via bribing public officers and interest in building an airport in the hometown of the former President where his family businesses would flourish and benefit from the surging tourism industry in the region.

Table 2. Governance indicators affecting PPP environment in Tunisia (1 = worst; 100 = best)

	2000			2015			2019		
	Tunisia	MENA	OECD	Tunisia	MENA	OECD	Tunisia	MENA	OECD
Control of corruption	48	47	74	56	43	88	53	41	87
Government effectiveness	71	46	75	49	45	88	49	43	88
Political stability	60	45	74	16	27	74	17	28	75
Regulatory quality	54	42	75	38	43	87	36	41	89
Rule of law	43	48	73	55	43	88	56	43	87
Voice and accountability	23	28	62	56	25	88	57	24	87

Source: *The World Bank (2022a); World Bank Governance Indicators (2022).*

3. Methodology

The paper adopts a case study methodology (Yin, 2014) to answer the research question. The case study approach is the most suitable to investigate the factors that led to the failure of the airport to achieve its objectives. The paper has relied on numerous secondary sources such as newspaper articles, government and private sector reports were also used to support the analysis in this paper.

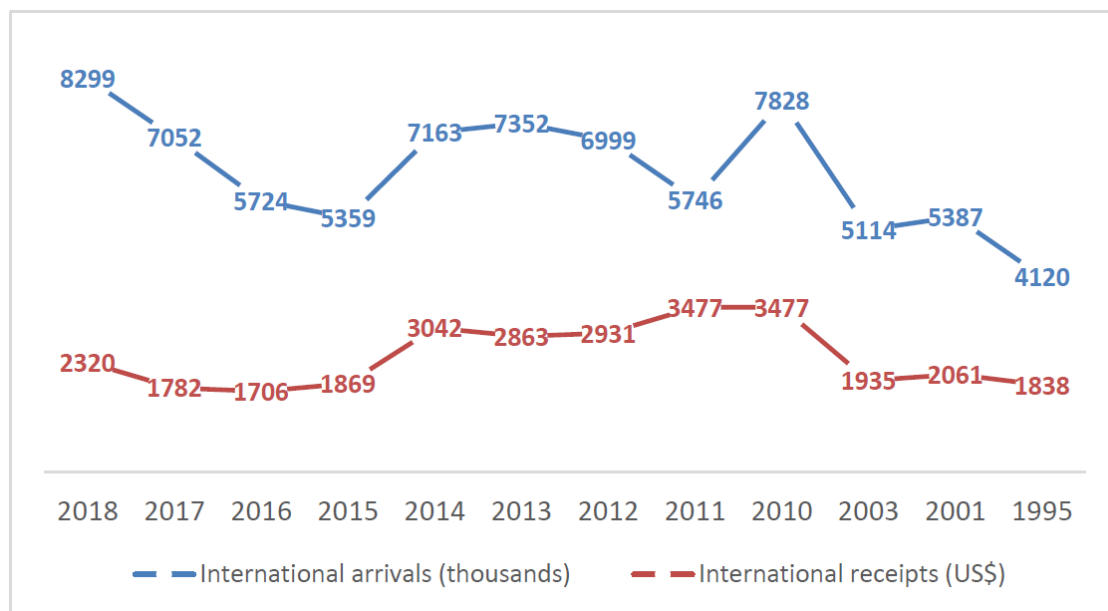
4. Findings

This section presents key findings regarding the Enfidha-Monastir Airports' failures to achieve the expected value for money, gain trust and support of the airports' employees and failure to win the trust of the general public in Tunisia. These findings reveal the importance of taking into consideration the broader institutional factors that can potentially affect the performance of PPP projects after their implementation.

4.1. Failure to achieve value for money due to unpredicted economic and political crises

There were several external factors that contributed to the failure of Enfidha Airport to achieve its goals of value for money and efficiency. First, the Tunisian economy relied heavily on international tourism particularly from Europe, and the Tunisian government did not design a tourism strategy that could alleviate the risks of any unexpected economic or political crises (Jlassi et al., 2015). The Enfidha Airport began operation on December 4th, 2009 amidst a global financial crisis that severely affected the global tourism industry and reduced the number of European tourists arriving to Tunisia in 2009–2010 (TAV, 2011).

Second, Tunisia was the birthplace of the Arab Spring movement that resulted in toppling down the regimes of numerous autocratic leaders in the Middle East including the Tunisian President Ben



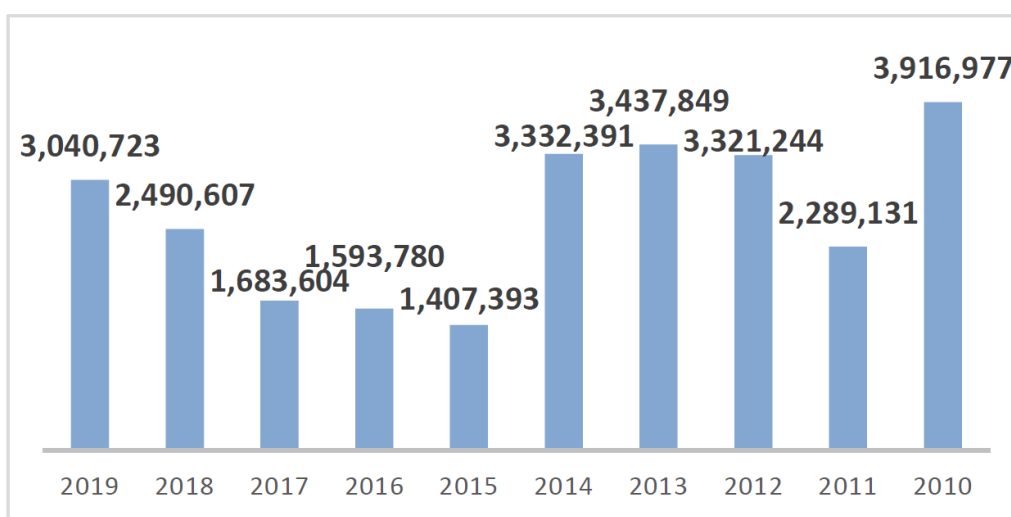
Source: World Bank Group (2022).

Figure 1. International tourism, number of arrivals in Tunisia (in thousands).

Ali in 2011. The political turmoil the country went through had an unavoidable negative effect on tourism industry (Jlassi et al., 2015). Countries that were traditionally the main sources of tourists such as the United Kingdom, France and Spain instructed their citizens not to travel to Tunisia in 2011 (TAV, 2011), and as **Figure 1** shows, there was a significant reduction in the number of international arrivals at all the Tunisian airports from 7 million to 5 million in 2011. Figure 1 also demonstrates that the drop in number of arrivals correlates directly with a drop in international receipts and income as well.

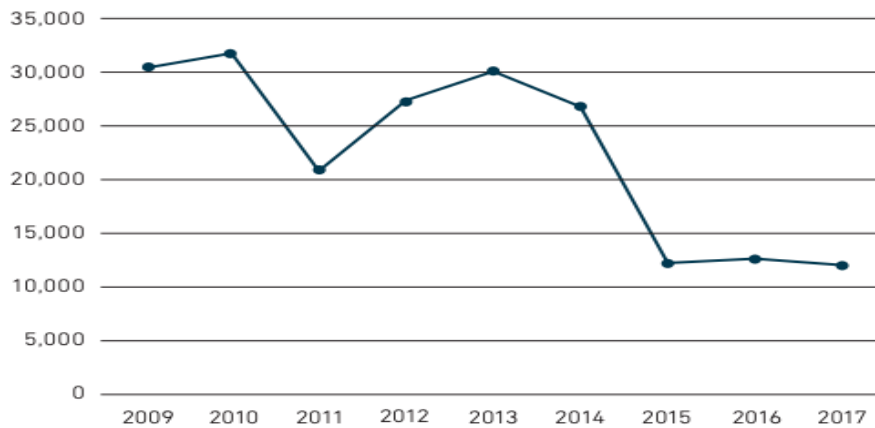
The third major factor that had a considerable impact on the performance of Enfidha-Monastir Airports resulted from the terrorist attacks Tunisia experienced in March and June 2015. As a direct consequence of these terrorist attacks, the number of arrivals dropped from 7 million to 5 million, and arrivals to Enfidha-Monastir Airports declined considerably from 3.3 million in 2014 to 1.4 million in 2015. This enormous drop in the number of arrivals exacerbated the impact of the Arab Spring on the airports which witnessed a drop in the number of arrivals from 3.9 million in 2010 to 2 million in 2011. The number of arrivals remained at 1 million range for the following 3 years, and began to increase slightly to 2.4 million in 2018, and 3 million in 2019. Nonetheless, these numbers are substantially lower than TAV's predictions that the airports would attract 7 million passengers per year as was indicated in their financial proposal upon which the airports' business and operational models were based when they were bidding for the project in 2007 (IFC, 2009).

The number of commercial flights arriving at the Enfidha-Monastir airports was also affected by the political and security factors that affected the tourism industry in Tunisia. As **Figure 3** illustrates, the Arab Spring had impacted the number of commercial flights that dropped from 33,000 in 2010 to 20,000 in 2011. Importantly, however, while commercial flights began to rise again to reach a peak of 30,000 in 2013, yet the 2015 terrorist attacks in Tunisia resulted in a massive drop of commercial flights to a record low of 12,000. Amicucci and Stoyanova (2012) describe Enfidha Airport as a "white elephant with empty halls and parking lots" (p. 3) given its large space that was designed to accommodate for more than 7 million arrivals.



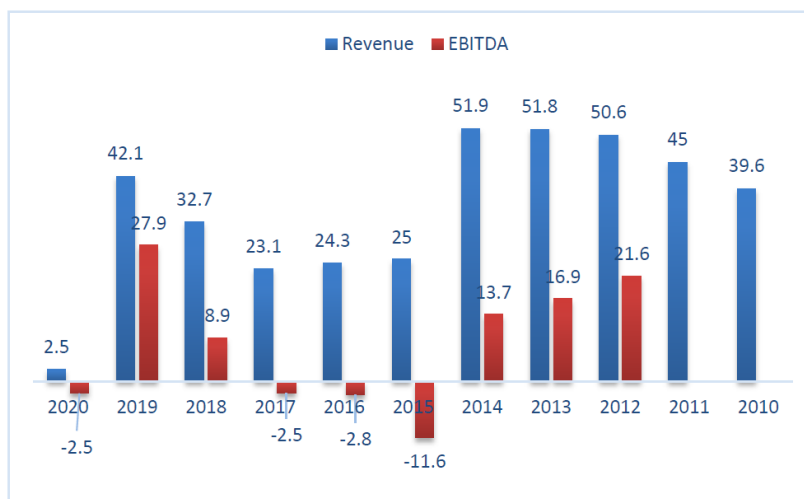
Source: TAV Financial Reports (2010, 2011, 2020).

Figure 2. Passengers Traffic at Enfidha-Monastir Airports.



Source: Chandoul and Gondard (2019).

Figure 3. Commercial flights to Enfidha-Monastir Airports.



Source: TAV (2010, 2011, 2020).

Figure 4. TAV-Tunis revenues (in US\$ millions).

The economic, political and security challenges that Tunisia underwent between 2009 and 2015 had a negative impact on the performance and profitability of Enfidha-Monastir Airports. The period between 2010 and 2015 witnessed tourists' arrivals and hotel overnight stays dropping by 31.5% and 54.5%, respectively, and the 2015 terrorist attacks resulted in a shrinking of economic growth to 0.8% in 2015 compared to 2.3% a year earlier (Lanouar and Goaid, 2018). Furthermore, the impact of 2015 attacks on Enfidha-Monastir Airports revenues is illustrated in **Figure 4** that shows the drastic fall in revenues from 51 million in 2014 to 25 million in 2015 and a continuing decline in revenues especially in 2017. The earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) equally witnessed a sharp decline of -11.6% in 2015 and negative performance in 2016 and 2017. While the Enfidha-Monastir Airports' revenues began recovering again in 2018 and 2019, the restrictions on travel due to COVID-19 resulted in another significant reduction in the number of flights and passengers arriving at the Enfidha-Monastir Airports.

The unpredicted economic, political and security factors that affected the performance of

Enfidha-Monastir Airports had severe impact on the concession agreement that was signed between the Tunisian government and TAV. One year after the operation of the airports, TAV requested the re-negotiation of the concession agreement based on Article 44 that stated that in case any external factors interfere with the performance of the airport, both parties should “take the necessary measures to restore the conditions needed for the balance of the contract such as the suspension or renegotiation of the fee” (Chandoul and Gondard, 2019, p. 20). Therefore, since 2010, TAV suspended paying its annual concession fees to the Tunisian government until 2013 when an amendment was agreed upon, reducing the concession fees for the period between 2010 and 2014 by 22 million Euros and deferring the payment until renegotiations of the agreement contract was finalized (Chandoul and Gondard, 2019).

The re-negotiation of the concession agreement was finalized in November 2019, ten years since the commercial operation of the airport during which TAV ceased paying fees to the government. During the re-negotiation process, TAV-Tunis threatened to resort to international arbitration as well as terminating the agreement and requesting a full refund to cover the loans for constructing and operating the airport (Al-Tunisia, 2014). Ultimately, the Tunisian government agreed to further reduce the concession fees that were due for the previous 10 years by 65% and to be payable at 1.2 million Euros per annum till 2047 (Bouazza, 2019). Furthermore, TAV injected an extra 66 million Euros into the airport’s project company to fulfill some of its loan obligations, hence increasing its stake in the airport from 67% in 2009 to 100% in 2019 (National News, 2020). TAV-Tunis was also allowed to increase the International Pax Fee from 9 Euros per passenger to 13 Euros (TAV, 2020).

TAV-Tunis managed to negotiate a drastic restructuring of the original concession fees’ schedule. As **Table 3** demonstrates, the 2009 concession fee stated that TAV-Tunisia was expected to pay a fixed rate of 14.6% of its revenues to the Tunisian government irrespective of the number of passengers. Starting from 2047, TAV-Tunis would then increase the concession fee to 26%. However, in the revised concession agreement, the new concession fee from 2019 onward was 5.1% if the Enfidha-Monastir Airports received less than 4 million passengers, but the concession fee would increase to up to 22% in case the number of passengers exceeded 7.5 million. The concession fees were also adjusted based on the number of passengers from 2047 onward. Nonetheless, since the number of passengers did not exceed 4 million in the past 10 years, it is unlikely that the

Table 3. Enfidha-Monastir Airports’ concession fee schedule re-structuring in 2019 (in %)

	Under 4 million passengers	4 million passengers	5 million to 7 million passengers	Greater than 7.5 million passengers
Old concession fee 2009 onward	14.6	14.6	14.6	14.6
Old concession fee 2047	26	26	26	26
New concession fee 2019 onward	5.1	11	18.3	21.9
New concession fee 2047	9.1	19.5	32.5	39

Source: <https://ir.tav.aero/Uploads/Files/TunisiaRestructuring.pdf>

government of Tunisia would receive a concession of fee of more than 5% from TAV. Additional meetings took place between the Tunisian government representatives and TAV on December 30, 2020 to discuss another re-structuring of the concession fees as a result of COVID-19 impact on the performance of the airport (National News, 2020).

4.2. Failure to gain trust and support of airport employees and the general public

The Tunisian employees at Enfidha Airport have organized dozens of strikes to express their dissatisfaction at the airport's management. Tunisian workers are supported by strong labour unions that protect employees' rights and the application of national labour laws. Therefore, the airports' employees have participated in numerous strikes that averaged two to three days when they did not report to work and caused serious disruptions to the normal operations of the airport (Al-Jareeda, 2017). As **Table 4** shows, despite the severe financial constraints TAV-Tunis faced to operate the airport, the employees requested salary increases at least 10 times since the operation of the airport and pressured the management to convert temporary employees to permanent positions and offer them extra social benefits (Al-Jareeda, 2017). Furthermore, Tunisian employees within the airport complained about the poor work culture and miscommunications between the Turkish managers and Tunisian ones, ultimately leading 200 Tunisian employees to organize a one-day strike and

Table 4. Impact of Enfidha Airport's employees on operation of the airport

Dates of strikes	Employees organizing strikes	Reasons for strikes	Impact of strikes on airport operation
21/12/2011	Security and rescue	Expelling 5 employees due to poor performance	Diverting 16 flights from Enfidha to Monastir
14 to 17/05/2012	Cleaning staff	Requesting salary increases and opportunities for promotion	Unclean airport facilities
11 to 15/05/2014	300 employees from different departments	Requesting TAV to reduce working hours from 48 to 40 per week	73 flights were diverted from Enfidha to Monastir Airport Compensating 14,000 passengers for delays
14 to 16/04/2017	Ground crew, technicians and administration	Requesting salary increases and other benefits	Delaying flights and slowing down the airport's operations
25 to 27/09/2017	Cleaning staff	Requesting salary increases	Unclean airport facilities
07 to 10/08/2018	Employees from different departments	Requesting promotions of 400 employees	Delaying flights and slowing down the airport's operations
17/01/2019	100% of airport employees	Requesting salary increases and other benefits	Complete standstill of the airport
08 to 10/05/2019	Cleaning staff	Requesting salary increases	Unclean airport facilities
09 to 28/09/2020	300 employees from different departments	Requesting unpaid salaries since March	Delaying flights and slowing down the airport's operations
23/06/2021	100% of airport employees	Denouncing laying off 100 workers	Longest closure of the airport

submit their grievance to the Minister of Transportation requesting the Turkish managers to treat their Tunisian counterparts with respect and dignity (Al-Tunisia, 2014). As a result of persistent employees' strikes, TAV-Tunis was forced to outsource employees from Turkish companies to fill operational gaps at Enfidha Sirport (Al-Shourouq, 2013).

Lack of trust in the airport's management and PPP arrangements in general is also exhibited by several social and political actors in Tunisia. For example, when the concession agreement was revised in November 2019, the Secretary-General of the Tunisian General Labour Union made a public statement stating that: "an agreement was made giving the Turkish side a reduction of about 65% in the concession to exploit Enfidha Airport by re-scheduling its debt. With this agreement, which is buried in total secrecy, it was as if we gave Enfidha Airport away to the Turks for free" (Al-Shahid, 2019). The Secretary-General called for investigations regarding the alleged lack of transparency regarding how the new concession fees were reached (Al-Shahid, 2019).

Furthermore, when the PPP law was debated in the Tunisian Parliament, several Members of the Parliament strongly opposed PPPs stating that they posed "serious threats to the sovereignty of Tunisia and its critical infrastructure projects since Tunisian banks do not have the liquidity to finance projects" (Al-Sabah, 2013), and the involvement of foreign states and banks in local projects would undermine the capacity of Tunisian government to control and own its assets. The strongest opposition to PPPs emanated from the Tunisian General Labour Union that lobbied against PPPs considering them "a masked form of privatization that has not been successful in most international experiences and only burdens the public with massive loans and risks" (Al-Tunisia, 2014). The Tunisian General Labour Union commissioned a report that demonstrated the risks associated with PPP arrangements such as the risk of easily laying off employees, exploitation of employees and lack of social corporate responsibility in PPP arrangements (Al-Tunisia, 2014). The failure of the Enfidha Airport PPP experience contributed significantly to the negative image that several social activists and labour unionists formed about PPPs (Al-Shahid, 2019).

5. Discussion

5.1. Importance of considering procedural values for PPP projects

Public management scholars consider five procedural values to be essential for PPP projects (Steenhuisen and van Eeten, 2008). First, accountability refers to ability of the public to hold their governments accountable for any failures in delivering the promised values of PPP when service delivery is transferred to a private entity (De Graaf et al., 2016). Second, transparency refers to availability and accessibility of information on procurement of the PPP project and its performance and existence of systems of monitoring performance of the private party (Stewart, 2006). Third, responsiveness refers to the degree to which procurers of services respond to the public's requests, complaints or suggestions for improving a public service. Fourth, responsibility explores if the government remains responsible for quality of public services when they are delivered by a private entity (Spicer, 2009). Fifth and finally, quality refers to the overall "satisfaction on the part of the public procurer with the public services and goods provided by the private firms" (Reynaers, 2013, p. 4), and this also extends to the satisfaction of other stakeholders involved in the project.

There are certain coping strategies that actors enact to solve any resultant conflicting public

values (Spicer, 2009). Firewalls entails that different organizations and departments should be responsible for certain values but requires a single organization to be in charge of fulfilling one specific value (De Graaf et al., 2016). Bias means that some values are no longer important when other values are deemed to be more significant in a given situation, but this strategy might disadvantage individuals who believe their values are still important (Stewart, 2006). Cycling means that organizations or actors can emphasize the importance of a value for a certain period of time, and then shift their attention to another value ensuring that they do not create a situation where there are multiple values that require concurrent attention (Steenhuisen and van Eeten, 2008). Finally, incrementalism signifies that organizations take small steps to emphasize the importance of a certain value without triggering resistance or dissatisfaction from others (Reynaers, 2013). This approach ensures gradual acceptance of a value instead of an abrupt change that could lead to strong resistance.

The analysis of value conflicts in Enfidha Airport reveals that the government relied on four coping strategies to undermine the importance of certain procedural values during the procurement and implementation of the PPP project, as summarized in **Table 5**. Bias was a coping strategy that was adopted by government actors to silence the significance of accountability during the era of Ben Ali's autocratic regime. During this era, government accountability was compromised for the sake of full political acquiescence to Ben Ali's regime and his political and economic interests. This is demonstrated in Table 2 that shows Tunisia scoring 23% in World Bank's Governance Indicator of voice and accountability in 2000. The toppling of Ben Ali's regime in 2011 saw the advent of a new government with new political and economic actors that did not want to shoulder responsibility for the lack of accountability in the procurement of the Enfidha Airport in 2007. This new government, however, adopted incrementalism as a strategy to strengthen the values of transparency and accountability in the operation of the project post 2011, and ensure that any governance shortcomings of the previous regime were addressed.

Because of the alleged lack of transparency in the procurement of the PPP project during the Ben Ali era, firewalls were a strategy adopted by the Tunisian government to ensure that government entities in Tunisia are aware of their roles in addressing any challenges related to the PPP project. Nonetheless, this coping strategy did not resolve several issues related to the government's reluctance to respond to the private sector's requests for re-negotiating the concession contract that took ten years to be resolved, nor address employees' concerns regarding the working environment within the airport, and the rising opposition to PPPs by the Labour Union in Tunisia.

Finally, cycling was a coping strategy that was adopted by the Tunisian government to undermine the values of responsibility and quality since that airport was initiated and implemented during the era of Ben Ali. Instead, they shifted focus to the availability of the airport as an important asset for the future of the aviation industry in providing services with higher levels of quality and efficiency. Likewise, the management of the airport emphasized satisfying the monetary demands of the employees over maximizing the financial gains from the operation of the airport especially during the years of low arrivals at the airport.

Enfidha-Monastir Airport has not achieved most of the expected procedural values due to the governance limitations that characterized the old political regime under Ben Ali. The newly elected governments post the Arab Spring did not assume responsibility for the failures of the previous

Table 5. Enfidha-Monastir Airports PPP project’s public value conflicts and actors’ coping strategies

Public values	Issues and actors involved in value conflict(s)	Coping strategies	Impact of value conflicts on PPP project outcomes
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of government accountability for the project due to change of political regime after Arab Spring Due to lack of capacity in procuring PPP projects, government officials could not be held accountable for concession agreement clauses 	Bias	The project did not lead to higher levels of accountability
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of transparency and suspicion of corruption during bidding process Lack of proper mechanisms of monitoring the progress and performance of concession agreement 	Incrementalism	The project did not achieve the value of transparency
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government initially reluctant to respond to private sector’s requests for renegotiating the concession contract Insufficient government responsiveness to address employees’ complaints Lack of government responsiveness to public’s opposition of PPPs 	Firewalls	The project did not result in stronger responsiveness from the government
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The newly appointed government post Arab Spring could not assume responsibility for the PPP project and its failures Lack of capacity within government to procure PPPs and hold responsibility over changes to concession agreement 	Cycling	Lines of responsibility in this project are blurred due to complete change in the political regime
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to achieve value for money as concession agreement was re-negotiated and lower fees implemented Failure of concessionaire to meet expected number of passengers per year Poor financial performance of the airport Employees constant complaints about wages and working hours and quality of working environment Disruptions to airport operations due to employees’ strikes 	Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversized airport of 7 million passengers only receiving less than 3 million passengers per year Large portion of unsatisfied airport employees and poor organizational culture The project did not enhance the quality of the overall airport

regime and the governance weaknesses inherited from the airport. The adopted coping strategies were meant to shift emphasis from the project related procedural values that were not achieved, to how such values can be incrementally introduced in the long run. However, these strategies did not ameliorate the failure of the airport to achieve the promised higher levels of efficiency and value for money.

5.2. Managerial implications

This section presents the four central factors that led to the failure of Enfidha-Monastir Airports to achieve its financial and procedural values. It also offers the main lessons learned from the failure of this PPP project and how to ameliorate the chances of success for future PPP projects in Tunisia.

First, PPPs were introduced to Tunisia via the World Bank and IMF without ensuring that the institutional context was receptive to PPPs. Tunisia was not ready to adopt a PPP arrangement for a mega-infrastructure project of this magnitude. There were no specific PPP laws and regulatory frameworks that could constitute a solid ground for PPPs to take off, nor capacity within the local public and private sectors to draft and negotiate PPP contracts and monitor their implementation and operation (Meziou, 2013). Importantly, however, PPPs were perceived by most members of parliament as well as the trade unions as a “masked privatization” initiative that aimed to “sell” the resources of the country to foreign banks and corporations (Al-Shourouq, 2013). PPP was not regarded as an appropriate form of project delivery in Tunisia, and that was apparent from the strikes of employees at the airport and lack of trust in the Turkish operators of the airport. Such ideological resistance to PPPs should be addressed by raising awareness about the value of PPPs and by establishing a PPP enabling environment in Tunisia.

Second, the business case that was developed for Enfidha was too optimistic. The government’s initial forecasting of expected passenger volumes was deemed unrealistic, and suspected to be a misleading attempt to attract investors (Chandoul and Gondard, 2019). Likewise, the winning bidder offered impracticable passenger traffic and inflated project revenues. As a result, the partnership was jeopardized and all the indicators upon which the award of the project was based failed, and the contract was re-negotiated with drastically lower fees paid to the government. The Tunisian government did not demonstrate either that PPP route was more efficient than traditional procurement but was rather pursuing a PPP to satisfy the demands of international organizations to reduce public spending.

Third, lack of principles of good governance and capacity to administer PPP projects in Tunisia during Ben Ali’s regime compromised the procurement process of the PPP project. Prior to 2011, Tunisia was an undemocratic country under the political leadership of an autocratic regime that did not recognize the importance of core public values such as accountability, transparency and quality while initiating and implementing infrastructure projects. Instead, nepotism, corruption, and lack of clear lines of voice and accountability were the dominant features of the governance system in Tunisia prior to the Arab Spring movement (World Bank, 2014). Transparency International Perception Index shows a decline in Corruption Perception Index score from 5.0 in 1999 to 4.4 in 2008, and a drop in Tunisia’s global ranking from the 34th position in 1999 to the 62nd out of 180 in 2008 (Transparency International, 2010).

Fourth, and finally, the risk assessment for the Enfidha-Monastir Airports PPP project did not offer a holistic calculation of economic, political and security risks before launching the project in the market. The Tunisian economy was heavily reliant on the tourism industry, and although the procurement of the PPP project took place during the onset of the global financial crisis in 2007, proper risk evaluation of the potential impact of the financial crisis on the tourism industry and airport revenues was not effectively conducted. Furthermore, the risk assessment for the airport project did not take into consideration the volatile political landscape in North Africa

and particularly the repressing nature of the Tunisian political regime under Ben Ali's autocracy. Additionally, risk assessment did not account for the domestic security challenges particularly that Tunisia had experienced terrorist attacks on its soil in 1995 and 2002.

5.3. Lessons Tunisia learn from Enfidha-Monastir Airports

The Enfidha-Monastir PPP experiment offers several lessons that the Tunisian government should build upon to ameliorate the PPP landscape in Tunisia and foster the chances of success for future projects. First, the adoption of PPP projects should emanate from local actors after exploring the suitability of the PPP arrangement for projects, and its acceptability by concerned stakeholders. Enfidha experience demonstrates that when PPPs are enforced by external actors, they trigger opposition and resistance from the general public and from the employees directly affected by introducing a private operator. Second, the government should adopt an incremental but resolute approach in strengthening principles of good governance in Tunisia, and reforming government institutions to reflect values of transparency and accountability. This would strengthen the appetite of foreign investors to bring capital to Tunisia and invest in mega-infrastructure projects. Third, the government should carefully assess the suitability of projects to be delivered on a PPP basis, and ensure their bankability and profitability in line with the economic and political characteristics of Tunisia. Finally, PPP projects in the Middle East are seemingly risky endeavors and therefore, political and security risk assessments should be carefully conducted to address any potential drawbacks on PPP projects.

6. Conclusion

This paper provided an overview of the PPP market in Tunisia and the high expectations attached to the Enfidha Airport, and the process of its procurement and implementation. It unpacked the institutional and political factors that negatively affected the achievement of material and procedural values from the PPP route. Several factors led to the failure of the project to achieve its objectives namely the introduction of PPPs by the World Bank and IMF without ensuring a receptive environment. The absence of democratic principles under the autocratic leadership of Ben Ali shadowed the importance of key procedural values. Furthermore, the overly optimistic estimates of the financial returns of the airport and a project risk assessment that did not account for the unpredicted economic and political crises drastically affected the performance of the airport. The paper offered important lessons to enhance the PPP environment in Tunisia.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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