

Update Briefing

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Tunisia's Borders (II): Terrorism and Regional Polarisation

I. Overview

Since the December-January 2010-2011 uprising, Tunisia has successfully overcome successive political crises, yet seems less able to absorb the impact of major jihadi attacks. Despite the success of a national dialogue that significantly reduced tensions and helped begin 2014 on a note of optimism, leading to a significant reduction in political tensions, concerns are growing again. At the heart of this anxiety are an increase in violence along the Algerian border; the chaotic situation in Libya; the advance of radical Islamism in the Middle East – all made all the more acute by an alarmist anti-terrorist discourse. An echo chamber for the deadly conflicts agitating the region, Tunisia needs to approach the issue of terrorism in a calmer and depoliticised manner. The battles against terrorism and organised crime are inextricably linked. The government would gain from adding to its security measures new economic and social initiatives that would ensure that border communities are on the side of the state.

Since 2013, the alliance between arms and drugs traffickers and armed jihadi cells appears to have considerably strengthened in the border regions. The activities of the major illegal trade networks are encouraging violence that much of the media is quick to blame on terrorists. This violence could reach dangerous levels, particularly should a worsening of the Libyan conflict lead to serious economic and political consequences for Tunisia.

The social crisis in the south, the lasting alliance between cartels and jihadis, the exacerbation of ideological polarisation by regional developments and the approaching elections could form an explosive mix. Voters and candidates in the forthcoming parliamentary and presidential elections – scheduled for 24-26 October (parliamentary), 21-23 November (first round, presidential) and 26-28 December (second round) – are fearful that the electoral process could fail and that Tunisia could suffer the same fate as other countries in the region. The deepening security crackdown, combined with the reprisals carried out by weakened jihadi groups, risk forming a vicious circle. The independent, so-called “technocratic” government of Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa is playing on the resonance of anti-terrorist sentiments. This is recasting the anxieties of the educated middle class toward a fear of religious extremism. In this context, the risk is that a major terrorist attack would promote further ideological polarisation between Islamists and secularists.

In order to deflect another crisis, the authorities would benefit from carrying out two principal measures. The first is to strengthen the state's presence in border regions through socio-economic development policies whose impact would be quickly noticed by local communities. The second is to implement an effective and calibrated counter-terrorism strategy, in contrast to sensationalist media treatment that only serves to increase anxiety about jihadis and indirectly promotes confusion between different strands of Islamism.

Regional and international ideological trends on the question of political Islam impact Tunisia, but need not determine the country's future. After its initial report "Tunisia's Borders: Jihadism and Contraband" (November 2013), this briefing analyses the new reality of threats on the Tunisia-Algeria and Tunisia-Libyan borders and offers suggestions to attenuate risks.

In the near term, it is crucial for the main political, trade union and civil society forces – both Islamist and non-Islamist – to maintain a consensual approach to public security and for the authorities to adopt a calmer anti-terrorist discourse in order to prevent renewed polarisation in the event of a major attack on the country. Similarly, it would be desirable that the government, or the one that will follow it, increase security cooperation with neighbouring Algeria, pursue the creation of a new National Intelligence Agency, and dialogue with contraband cartels in order to persuade them to stop trade in dangerous goods, and possibly encouraging some to collaborate with the Tunisian state on the security front. Such measures would ultimately help keep border communities from becoming irrevocably alienated from the state and be tempted, in the medium term, to challenge it directly by joining militant groups.

II. Between Charybdis and Scylla

A. Fragmentation and Radicalisation of the Jihadi Movement

Since the anti-jihadi turn of the last two governments – that of Ali Larayedh (March 2013-January 2014) and in particular that of Medhi Jomaa (since January 2014), a raft of measures have been undertaken, such as the return of the security services to risk-prone urban peripheries. The designation of Ansar Sharia (Partisans of Sharia), the main Tunisian radical Islamist group, as a terrorist organisation in August 2013 was followed by a number of successes in the fight against Salafism-jihadism. For instance, the ostentatious and sometimes menacing marches by individuals with beards and wearing *kamis* in poor suburbs, which had become a regular feature of everyday life, have ceased.¹ Observers close to the jihadi movement and experts on radical Islamism estimate that between 1,000 and 2,000 Ansar Sharia militants and fellow travellers are currently in detention.² The group has failed to build a solidarity movement to campaign on behalf of its imprisoned followers. Indeed, the authorities seem to have practically eradicated the organisation from the country.³

Nonetheless, since the end of 2013, skirmishes between security forces and small jihadi brigades have intensified in the border regions. The perpetrators of these attacks claim responsibility for them and increasingly issue threatening statements.

¹ Crisis Group observations, Greater Tunis, June-August 2014; Crisis Group interviews, residents of Menzel Bourguiba and Bizerte, Tunis, June-August 2014. The *kami* or *jellabah* (long white robe) is the usual Salafi attire. It was popularised in Islamist circles by Afghan jihadis in the 1980s.

² Crisis Group interviews, jihadi supporters, experts on jihadism, Tunis, August 2014.

³ As an academic and expert on jihadism noted, "this represents a political failure". Crisis Group interview, academic, Tunis, June 2014.

Clashes regularly claim dozens of casualties among army soldiers and national guards along the northern half of the Tunisian-Algerian border: improvised explosive devices blow up military vehicles; small armed groups exchange fire with security forces, notably on army outposts and camps in the wooded mountain along the border.

The jihadi movement is weakening and fragmenting, which in some respects is making it more dangerous. At the end of May 2014, for the first time in Tunisia, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for a terrorist attack on the family home of the interior minister, Lotfi Ben Jeddou, in a residential neighbourhood of Kasserine, the administrative centre of a border governorate. AQIM justified the attack as being carried out in solidarity with their Ansar Sharia Tunisia “brothers”, “victims of police arbitrariness” and “prevented from conducting their peaceful preaching activities”.⁴ In mid-July, an AQIM cell in Tunisia, the Okba Ibn Nafa brigade, indirectly claimed responsibility for the death of fifteen soldiers by enthusiastically presenting photos of the attack on Facebook.⁵

On 28 July, on the occasion of Eid celebrations at the end of Ramadan, Ansar Sharia Tunisia issued a communiqué expressing solidarity with the international jihadi movement, notably Ansar Sharia Libya and the militants entrenched in the mountain regions of western Tunisia. Although the group omitted to mention any involvement in the recent armed violence, it called on the Tunisian security forces to choose between peace and compromise or war.⁶ On 25 September, the small jihadi group Okba Ibn Nafa provoked further concern by publishing a video in which it threatened “the state and its accomplices”, legitimising a possible future attack on civilians.⁷

Although the interior ministry believes that Ansar Sharia Tunisia is the main instigator of terrorist attacks in the country since 2012, the organisation – or at least, what remains of it since so many of its supporters have either been arrested, stopped participating for fear of police repression or left to fight in Libya, Syria and Iraq⁸ – is divided into three loosely connected currents. The degree of involvement in attacks differ:

- A peaceful, “conciliatory” wing, which is on the point of publicly rejecting violence on Tunisian territory. Some members of this tendency may support independent candidates put forward by more quietist Salafis in municipal elections scheduled for 2015.⁹

⁴ AQIM communiqué, استهدافوزير الداخلية, 13 June 2014.

⁵ “Mont Chaambi: “Qatibet Okba Ibn Nafaa” publie les photos de l’attentat sur sa page Facebook”, DirectInfo (directinfo.webmanagercenter.com), 19 July 2014. The attack, which took place on 17 July, inflicted the heaviest casualties on the army since 1961.

⁶ “You who have declared war on Islam and Muslims, you who have enslaved and humiliated the people [...]. You are showing how stupid you are by not negotiating. You have interpreted our tolerance as cowardice. The events that have taken place in the land of Kairouan [Tunisia] since last May involving our mujahedeen brothers in the mountains proves that you only understand the logic of force and the sound of bullets. As this is your attitude, we tell you that you are not the first tyrants or the first to fight Allah, choose whether you want peace and compromise. If you want war, you shall have it, and vengeance for our martyrs and prisoners will be on the agenda for as long as we exist. You have already had experience of war and this war could [...] become global and international”. See Ansar Charia communiqué, <http://site.ansar-alsharee3a.com>, 28 July 2014.

⁷ See “Katibat Okba Ibn Nafaa menace les forces de sécurité tunisiennes (Vidéo)”, Kapitalis (kapitalis.com), 25 September 2014.

⁸ See Aaron Y. Zelin, “Shabab al-Tawhid: The Rebranding of Ansar-al-Sharia in Tunisia”, The Washington Institute, 9 May 2014.

⁹ Some observers believe that this municipal policy is not in contradiction with Islamic law (Sharia) because it serves local people, contrary to the parliament, which is regulated by the constitution and wrongly places itself on the same level as Sharia. Crisis Group interviews, activists in an

- A current close to AQIM and to the Front for the Victory of the People of the Levant (Jabhat al-Nusra), which uses violence in Tunisia but only in self-defence.¹⁰ It aims to win ideological support from local communities while maintaining tension with security forces.
- A current drawn toward alignment with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's Islamic State (IS). It is tempted to align with IS because of the large number of Tunisians who are fighting with the group (close to 2,000 according to the interior minister) and its appeal among unemployed youth in the urban periphery and border regions.¹¹

Ansar Sharia Tunisia, however, no longer has a clear strategy, a factor that reinforces the vulnerability and instability of its two, quasi-autonomous, more belligerent currents. According to a former Ansar Sharia supporter, the aim of the current closest to IS, most of whose members are for the moment in Iraq and Syria but retain networks in Tunisia and Libya, is to seize control of a parcel of Tunisian territory.¹² This current could grow in appeal, at least at the ideological level, if a hardening of the security crackdown leads to violence, and if the regional situation further deteriorates.¹³

At a national scale, there exists a genuine risk of isolated elements pursuing a path of individual violence or rallying the pro-IS current as a result of the near-eradication of Ansar Sharia – or the “raids on mosques”, as an activist in a Muslim association puts it.¹⁴ At a regional or international scale, the succession of jihadi victories in the region are strengthening the hold of radical Islamism and its eschatology continues to fascinate many young Tunisians, several thousands of whom are already fighting alongside Islamist militias in Libya and IS in Iraq and Syria.¹⁵

This context renders it difficult to stop or slow the repression/radicalisation spiral. Moreover, with hindsight, the approach of dialogue and de-radicalisation pursued by An-Nahda toward the Salafi movement in 2012 and the first half of 2013 has mostly failed. This strategy notably included the legalisation of radical but non-violent Islamic political parties such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir; dialogues on the validity of Islamist gradualism (not trying to impose Sharia immediately but educating the population so that, over time, it calls for it to be introduced); the rejection of vio-

Islamic association, Tunis, June-August 2014. For more on the different currents of Salafism, see Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°137, *Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge*, 13 February 2013.

¹⁰ This current seems to be dominant. An Ansar Sharia communiqué dated 28 July 2014 first salutes the leaders of al-Qaeda, Mullah Omar and Ayman al-Zawahiri, before mentioning the IS “caliph”, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. It also implies that the group has not yet declared war, a position often defended by AQIM, which called on Ansar Sharia Tunisia to avoid giving in to the provocations of the authorities on several occasions in 2012-2013. Crisis Group interview, expert on Salafism, Tunis, August 2014. See Ansar Sharia communiqué, *op. cit.* Also see Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Thomas Joscelyn, “Zawahiri’s Revenge”, *Foreign Policy* (foreignpolicy.com), 31 July 2014.

¹¹ Crisis Group interviews, residents of Kram, Ettadhaman and Menzel Bourguiba, Tunis, August 2014. According to the interior minister, in June 2014, about 2,500 Tunisians were fighting in Syria, with 80 per cent supporting IS. “Ben Jeddou: 2400 jihadistes tunisiens combattent en Syrie”, *Radio Express FM* (radioexpressfm.com), 23 June 2014.

¹² Crisis Group interview, former Ansar Sharia supporter, Tunis, September 2014.

¹³ See Crisis Group Report, *Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge*, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Crisis Group interview, Islamic association activist, Tunis, August 2014.

¹⁵ It is estimated that there are somewhere between several hundred and several thousand Tunisian combatants in the so-called “revolutionary” Libyan militias. Crisis Group interviews, journalist, jihadi supporter, commander of the Libyan air force, Tunis, June-August 2014.

lence and tolerance toward even the most virulent preaching; and joint charitable and associative work by supporters of An-Nahda, quietist Salafis and even jihadis.¹⁶

Despite these measures and the space accorded to it, the Salafi-jihadi current continued to threaten the authorities. Moreover, An-Nahda's position has been contradictory: it supported the security crackdown after the banning of Ansar Sharia's congress in Kairouan in May 2013, and helped draft a democratic constitution that enshrines freedom of conscience and omits any mention of Islamic law. Should An-Nahda win a plurality of seats in the coming legislative elections and change its approach by resuming its policy of dialogue and integration toward the Salafis, those parts of the population most receptive to anti-Islamist discourse would see this as a policy of appeasement and de facto collusion. Such an approach would dangerously reinforce Islamist/anti-Islamist polarisation in a context in which economic, social and political violence are closely inter-related.

B. *Rising Sense of Insecurity*

Since An-Nahda exited the cabinet and Mehdi Jomaa took office at the beginning of 2014, attacks against the security forces in the border regions have become commonplace.¹⁷ These attacks have ceased to increase anti-government sentiment on part of the population, as they had during the crisis of 2013. Nonetheless, in a regional context in which states appear to be fragmenting or retreating inwards, these attacks sow doubt about the capacity of security institutions to protect the country and maintain the integrity of its borders.

As jihadi militias in Libya and the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq enjoy successive victories and Tunisia enters an electoral period, a growing sense of insecurity is strengthening the nuisance capacity of armed groups, excessively politicising the security question and leading the government to develop an un-nuanced anti-terrorist discourse. As the government and most of the secularist political parties prioritise the fight against terrorism, this situation is pushing a growing number of Tunisian

¹⁶ See Crisis Group Report, *Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge*, op. cit. Crisis Group interviews, supporters and former supporters of Ansar Sharia, expert on jihadism, Tunis, Kairouan, 2012-2014.

¹⁷ On 16 February, an ambush at Ouled Manaa, near Jendouba, in the north west, killed four national guards and wounded three. On 23 May, an army vehicle was blown up by a mine near Mount Chaambi during a search operation, killing one soldier and wounding five others. On the night of 27-28 May, the family home of the interior minister, located in a residential area of Kasserine, in the west of the country, was targeted by about 30 jihadis, who killed four municipal police officers guarding the house before parading around the area for about one hour without the security forces intervening. On 2 July, in a mountainous region (Jebel Ouergha) of the north west near Kef, a mine was set off by a military vehicle participating in a search operation, killing two of the four occupants (police officers and soldiers). On 17 July, the security forces suffered the most deadly attack since the early 1960s. Two mobile army camps located a few kilometres from the Algerian border were simultaneously targeted by two groups of about thirty jihadis using machine guns and RPG rocket launchers, killing fourteen soldiers and wounding twenty. The attack took place on the nineteenth day of Ramadan, as with the ambush of 29 July 2013 near the Chaambi national park, which killed nine soldiers. On 26 July, also in the north west, near the Algerian border, at Jebel Ouergha, two army vehicles were ambushed and two soldiers and a young civilian were killed. On 29 July, an army helicopter came under fire during a clash with presumed jihadis in the Jebel Sammama, near Kasserine. On 2 August, a soldier was killed during an attack on an army outpost at Sbeitla. On 16 August, two soldiers were wounded when a mine exploded at Henchir Ettala near Mount Chaambi. Crisis Group interviews, journalists, residents of border areas, Tunis, May-August 2013. Also see Walid Mejri, "Terrorisme en Tunisie: Carte interactive des événements après le 14 janvier", Inkyfada.com, updated on 29 July 2014.

citizens to consider the failures of the security forces unjustifiable.¹⁸ In the meantime, the number of clashes and casualties is mounting, leading some to accuse the army of “negligence and amateurism”.¹⁹

This zero-tolerance discourse toward terrorism is creating an all-or-nothing atmosphere: for many Tunisians, since the fight against terrorism is a national priority, no setback is tolerable. Even if the regular attacks against the security forces along the western border no longer cause political shockwaves as they did in the second half of 2013,²⁰ every reversal, even small, deepens the crisis of confidence between a significant sector of the country's political, media, economic and social elite and the security forces. The government has responded by rushing headlong down the anti-terrorist path in a manner that could increase the political impact of future attacks. Most notably, it could excuse an increase in the violation of civil liberties, against the letter and spirit of the Arab world's most liberal constitution, adopted in February 2014.²¹

On the military front, the security forces and small Islamist militias are playing a game of cat and mouse. The progress made by the former on the ground and the government's triumphant declarations often provoke retaliatory action by the latter.²² In purely technical terms, and despite what they deem to be important advances on the ground, army officers and soldiers sometimes deplore the army's lack of professionalism, its failure to adapt to an asymmetrical war, the lack of clear orders from their superiors and the failure to follow elementary combat procedures. These training and tactical problems can be remedied in the short and medium term.²³ In addition, some security experts call for the creation of an intelligence agency under the joint command of the defence and interior ministries, which would improve human intelligence and the military's capacity to react in the border regions.²⁴

¹⁸ Crisis Group interviews, residents of Tunis and Sfax, Tunis, June-August 2014.

¹⁹ Crisis Group interview, medium rank civil servant, Tunis, August 2014. Also see Sami Ghorbal, “Armée tunisienne: la grande désillusion”, *Jeune Afrique*, 2 September 2014.

²⁰ See Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°148, *Tunisia's Borders: Jihad and Contraband*, 28 November 2013.

²¹ Crisis Group interviews, staff at national and international human rights organisations, Tunis, June-August 2014.

²² On 4 February 2014, two days before the first anniversary of the assassination of left wing opposition leader Chokri Belaïd, the security forces attacked a house in the northern district of Raoued, in Tunis. They killed seven jihadis, including Kamel Ghadghari, a member of Ansar Sharia Tunisia's military wing, who is, according to the interior ministry, involved in the murder of Chokri Belaïd and attacks on the army on Mount Chaambi in July 2013. On 27 May, a few days before the attack on the home of the interior minister, Lotfi Ben Jeddou, the authorities had announced the dismantling of a terrorist plot. On 20 July, the prime minister publicly declared he would close mosques under jihadi control and any media responsible for publishing messages from “extremist Islamist groups”. Several hundred individuals under suspicion of being terrorists or of supplying jihadi groups were detained for questioning. This did not prevent another ambush taking place against the army near the Algerian border a week later on 26 July. Moreover, a few days before the 17 July attack, the interior minister had increased police powers and made hundreds of arrests in the border regions. The Algerian security forces also set up road blocks at 60 illegal border crossing points. Crisis Group interviews, former army officer, security experts, Tunis, June-August 2014. Also see “Jomaa: L'attentat de Kasserine est une réponse à l'opération antiterroriste de Médenine”, *Business News* (businessnews.tn), 28 May 2014.

²³ Crisis Group interviews, members of the security forces, Tunis, August 2014.

²⁴ This intelligence agency would be the Tunisian equivalent of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the French Direction générale de la sécurité intérieure (DGSI) and would bring together the intelligence services and the intervention forces controlled by the defence and interior ministries. This would improve the distribution and processing of information and the capacity to

Meanwhile, the interior ministry, supported by most of the media, is politicising the issue of terrorism. Instead of focusing on the practical task of reducing border violence, its discourse has promoted the prevailing atmosphere of insecurity. This indirectly encourages renewed polarisation over the debate on political Islam and fuels fears that the government may restrict civil liberties in the name of state security.

For example, the interior ministry regularly announces that the intelligence services and the security forces have dismantled terrorist plots threatening the country's vital interests (attacks on chemicals factories, bridges, shopping centres, tourist installations) and prevented political killings – rather than focus on border areas, where clashes have become a regular occurrence and are therefore less frightening.²⁵

Meanwhile, several media outlets have adopted the position that criticism of the security forces for human rights violations in the context of the fight against terrorism is tantamount to appeasing the armed jihadis.²⁶ The government, citing the terrorist threat, which is certainly real but amplified by the spectacular nature of attacks, has unceremoniously implemented a series of security measures.²⁷

The day after the most deadly attack on the armed forces, on 17 July 2014, the government established a crisis unit chaired by the prime minister. Its remit partly overlaps with that of the National Security Council, which depends on the presidency. This unit was initially tasked with relations with the media but became a kind of mini-ministerial committee, meeting weekly and, depending on the agenda, attended by the interior, foreign and defence ministers, presidential media advisers and security spokespeople and officers.

This crisis unit has facilitated coordination of the army, the national guard and the police force on the ground by unifying command at the local level under the military. However, it has also taken a series of sometimes controversial decisions: a freeze on the activities of 157 charitable and religious associations suspected of funding the Salafi movement; closure of media outlets such as the Nour Islamic radio station and the al-Insan television channel; and the detention of 21 young Tunisians for publishing material on Facebook justifying terrorism. It called for the blocking of jihadi websites and called up army reservists to ensure security at the forthcoming elections.²⁸ Since mid-July, security forces have reportedly detained more than 1,000

react at the operational level. The unified command would strengthen cooperation between on the one hand, the police and the national guard, which come under the authority of the interior ministry, and on the other, the army, which is controlled by the defence ministry. Sensitive information is currently compartmentalised and cooperation is weak. This problem already existed but became more acute after the 2010-2011 uprising. Crisis Group interviews, security experts, members of the security forces, Tunis, 2013-2014. Also see Crisis Group Report, *Tunisia's Borders: Jihad and Contraband*, op. cit.

²⁵ For example in May and August 2014. See "Une attaque terroriste visant des personnalités et établissements économiques et touristiques avortée", Tunisia Daily (tunisiadaily.com), 25 May 2014. Also see "Le ministère de l'Intérieur annonce avoir déjoué un vaste plan terroriste", Agence Tunis Afrique Presse, 8 August 2014.

²⁶ For example, see Samira Dami, "Évitons le piège de l'indulgence à l'égard des terroristes", *La Presse Magazine*, 31 August 2014.

²⁷ Also see "Conseil ministériel: une batterie de mesures touchant la sécurité, l'économie et les élections", Business News, 27 August 2014.

²⁸ See "Tunisie: vers la convocation de l'armée de réserve pour sécuriser les prochaines élections", Agence Tunis Afrique Presse, 9 August 2014. The banning of 157 associations has provoked criticism from national and international human right organisations. See "Tunisia: suspension of associations arbitrary", Human Rights Watch, 13 August 2014.

people, many of them from villages close to the Algerian border, who are suspected of supplying food and water to armed groups.²⁹

Despite these measures, a feeling of insecurity is spreading among the public and the political elite.³⁰ This emotional reaction has led party and association leaders to exaggerate the political impact of terrorist attacks, which they claim are a threat to the elections. For them, a single attack against a civilian target or one of the country's key economic centres would justify a permanent state of emergency and even the postponement of the elections.³¹

The idea that a grain of sand could jam the cogs of what is, after all, a well-oiled transition is widespread, even among the most optimistic leaders of associations and political organisations, including those involved in dialogue initiatives between political parties or the organisation of the forthcoming elections.³² As a civil society activist put it: "If many Tunisians are convinced that such an attack could compromise the transition, the terrorists must think so as well! This risks encouraging them to act".³³ The president of the Independent Electoral Commission (ISIE2) notes: "there have been attempts to destabilise the process. Many countries do not want the elections to succeed".³⁴

Some believe that the current climate of anxiety could increase the political impact of a major terrorist attack. A new political crisis, secretly supported by regional powers projecting their rivalry into Tunisia, would have a lasting effect on the country.³⁵

III. Western Borders: Jihadism and Organised Crime

Contrary to a counter-terrorist discourse that focuses on the presumed ideology of the terrorists, several security experts, political leaders and residents of the border regions claim that some of the armed clashes between jihadi cells and the security forces in 2013-2014 were due to economic factors and involved organised crime networks.³⁶ As Crisis Group feared in November 2013, it is becoming increasingly hard to distinguish between the type of violence linked to the underground economy, particularly the arms and drug trade, and that which forms part of radical Islamist strategy.³⁷

The small groups stationed in the mountainous border regions are just as often composed of armed individuals whose job it is to secure the transport of dangerous goods in partnership with smuggling networks as they are of militant jihadis set on

²⁹ Crisis Group interviews, retired army officer, association leaders, Tunis, August 2014.

³⁰ The president of a secular party said: "A single attack on a tourist resort and we are lost!". The leader of a party that was a member of the government coalition took an alarmist position, expressing fears that there will be further political killings, which could "make everything collapse!". Crisis Group interviews, political party leaders, Tunis, June-August 2014.

³¹ Legislative elections are scheduled for 26 October and presidential polls are due on 23 November for the first round and 28 December 2014 for the run-off.

³² Crisis Group interviews, leaders of political groups and associations, Tunis, July-September 2014.

³³ Crisis Group interview, civil society activist, Tunis, August 2014.

³⁴ "Chafik Sarsar: Certains Etats ne veulent pas que les élections réussissent en Tunisie", Business News, 30 August 2014.

³⁵ Crisis Group interviews, leaders of political groups and associations, Tunis, July-September 2014.

³⁶ Crisis Group interviews, advisers and former advisers of the presidency of the republic and the prime minister, members of the security forces, political leaders close to the former Troika or anti-Islamists, security experts, economic operators and residents of villages along the borders with Libya and Algeria, Tunis, June-August 2014.

³⁷ See Crisis Group Report, Tunisia's Borders: Jihad and Contraband, op. cit.

weakening the security forces by undertaking violent action. This allows them to benefit from the financial windfall of this illegal trade as well its protection.

These mixed groups are becoming more professional: corrupting members of the security forces; recruiting young men involved in petty crime to settle scores with competitors; attacking army and national guard units that obstruct trafficking; or securing food supplies from marginalised communities in the mountainous areas (Jebel Chaambi, Jebel Semama, Jebel Salloum).³⁸

Some residents of western regions claim that armed jihadis now control many of the steep border routes that link Tunisia with Algeria – beyond the border posts and positions controlled by the security forces – along the 300km of mountainous and forested Algerian border between Tabarka and Kasserine. Most high value contraband cannot cross these areas without their agreement. Traffickers are said to be forced to provide food supplies to these armed groups and even pay them a tax for right of passage.³⁹

Border residents say that the “terrorists” attack the army and the national guard in order to attract security forces away from the cross-border contraband routes so that smugglers, who sometimes belong to the same tribal clans as the jihadis, can safely transport “dangerous” goods along various routes: Morocco-Algeria-Tunisia-Libya for cannabis resin;⁴⁰ Libya-Tunisia-Algeria for military equipment; and Algeria-Tunisia for hunting rifles used in for personal protection.⁴¹ According to a former army officer, the chief aim of some of the attacks described by the media as terrorist is nothing more than securing the transport of these valuable goods:

When it comes to goods such as foodstuffs or subsidised gasoline, the traffickers use lookouts armed with sticks to protect them. For more valuable goods, which involve greater risks, their accomplices will go as far as breaking through police roadblocks. Finally, if they are transporting arms or drugs, they may use their own weapons or hire “terrorists” to secure the routes.⁴²

Among political leaders, the conclusion is similar no matter the ideological persuasions: terrorism is the tree that hides the forest of organised crime. Those close to the former Troika, such as a former adviser to the president, say that the “manipula-

³⁸ Crisis Group interview, residents of Kasserine and Sakit Sidi Youssef, former member of the army, Tunis, June-August 2014.

³⁹ Crisis Group interviews, residents of the west of the country, Tunis, July-October 2014.

⁴⁰ In December 2013, the Algerian prime minister said that terrorist groups operating in Tunisia funded their activities with money from drugs trafficking. See Malik Tahir, “Rencontre Jomaa-Sellal à Tébessa pour mieux combattre le terrorisme, le crime organisé et la contrebande”, *Al Huffington Post* (huffpostmaghreb.com), 22 July 2014.

⁴¹ A resident from a small village in the north west posited that improvised explosive devices could be buried under roads so that only those people who pay this tax can use them to transport their goods. Crisis Group interviews, residents of villages along the border with Algeria, Tunis, June 2014. A Tunisian sociologist, agreeing with many residents of the south east of the country, even established a link between the increase in clashes on the border with Algeria and the reorientation of fuel smuggling toward Libya. Libya is in fact suffering from a shortage of fuel following the worsening of the armed conflict between militias since July 2014. It now imports petrol smuggled in from Algeria and across Tunisia, causing a violent struggle for control of routes across the Tunisia-Algeria border. Crisis Group interviews, Tunisian sociologist, residents of Médenine and Zarsis, Tunis, June-August 2014.

⁴² Crisis Group interview, former member of the army, Tunis, August 2014.

tion of the jihadis by mafia groups is already a reality and will grow".⁴³ Others, such as a leader of the dissolved ruling party of former President Ben Ali, say that some jihadi attacks against the security forces are coordinated by important traffickers who have no affinity with radical Islamism.⁴⁴

Jihadi violence and organised crime violence therefore seem to be increasingly interlinked. Although there may only be about 100 armed militants entrenched in the mountainous, forested areas of the west,⁴⁵ the number of people involved in the lucrative illegal trade networks and associated violence runs into the tens of thousands along the borders and in the suburbs of the major cities. There is therefore a risk that the contraband networks and the small armed jihadi groups could form an enduring alliance and become, in effect, a single belligerent entity.

The government should avoid criminalising all cross-border informal trade (an option advocated by some senior civil servants),⁴⁶ which forms an important safety valve and maintains social peace in regions that are neglected by the authorities, or conduct a frontal attack on the interests of the major clan-based business cartels. In a fragile economic and security context, notably due to the worsening Libyan crisis, it needs a balanced response aimed at ensuring that residents of the border regions who are tempted by the lucrative activities undertaken by the armed groups stay on the side of the state.

IV. South East Border: the Tunisian Dimension of the Libyan Conflict

The failure of the political process in Libya and the porosity of the Tunisian-Libyan border have given rise to many fears. Tunisian jihadis have had the opportunity to withdraw, train and reorganise alongside their ideological allies, who operate with total impunity in parts of Libya. Abou Iyadh, the leader of Ansar Sharia Tunisia, is able to move freely in Derna (in eastern Libya).⁴⁷ Several hundred and possibly thousands of Ansar Sharia members and supporters are thought to have crossed the border into Libya to fight alongside Islamist militias. Journeys to Middle Eastern fronts, notably through Turkey, are easy to undertake from Libya.⁴⁸ A probable future global route for drug trafficking,⁴⁹ Libya has strong economic and human links with Tunisia – for better or for worse.

Formal trade with this important neighbour accounts for close to one third of Tunisia's gross domestic product. Informal trade, for its part, provides a livelihood to a large proportion of the residents of the south-eastern border region.⁵⁰ Many Liby-

⁴³ Crisis Group interview, former adviser to the presidency of the republic, Tunis, August 2014. The Troika was the governing alliance from December 2011 to February 2014. It was composed of An-Nahda, Ettakatol, led by Mustapha Ben Jaafar, the president of the National Constituent Assembly (ANC), and the Congress for the Republic (CPR), led by President Moncef Marzouki.

⁴⁴ Crisis Group interview, former leader of the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD), security experts, Tunis, August 2014.

⁴⁵ Crisis Group interviews, security experts, August 2014.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group interviews, senior civil servants, June-August 2014.

⁴⁷ Crisis Group interviews, journalists, experts on Libya and jihadism, Tunis, March-August 2014.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See Crisis Group Report, *Tunisia's Borders: Jihad and Contraband*, op. cit.

⁵⁰ See "Situation brief: The Libya conflict and its impact on Egypt and Tunisia", UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), New York, 12 August 2014.

ans live in Tunisia and could pose a security problem. Since the fall of the Qadhafi regime, over 600,000 Libyans have taken up permanent residence in Tunisia, including tens of thousands of senior officials from the former regime.⁵¹ The economic situation of many Libyan families is deteriorating and single young men are beginning to get involved in crime, including activities that are traditionally reserved for organised crime networks, such as the procuring of prostitutes.⁵²

Moreover, as Tunisian Red Crescent officials attest,⁵³ if the flow of migrants across the border is for now under control, a worsening of the human and security situation cannot be excluded. For example, on 31 July 2014, the foreign ministry declared that Tunisia's economic situation would not allow it to absorb hundreds of thousands of Libyan refugees and that the national interest may require the country to close its borders.⁵⁴

A border closure, depending on its duration and how efficiently it was enforced, would engender a social crisis in the south of Tunisia that could manifest itself in the form of jihadi violence. Ideologies that extol armed struggle are widely disseminated in that region. For example, the trading town of Ben Guerdane is historically a recruitment centre for supporters of national, Arab and Islamist liberation causes.⁵⁵ Paradoxically, these regions have not yet suffered deadly raids against the security forces, but this could change if the social situation were to seriously deteriorate.

Moreover, the quick succession of tribal militias that control the border posts and smuggling routes on the Libyan side (caused by frequent changes in the balance of forces between armed groups) has caused chaos in the contraband trade, with the emergence of new business groups that are more opportunistic in their alliances. These networks contest the historic monopoly held by the cartel controlled by the Touazine tribe of Ben Guerdane, weakening its capacity – and willingness – to report the movement of jihadis and dangerous goods to the authorities.⁵⁶

Finally, although the flow of drugs and firearms between Tunisia and Libya is not comparable to the amount circulating across Libya, the small quantities that are regularly brought into Tunisia are accumulating.⁵⁷ Likewise, in a context in which the traditional tribal cartels are weakening along the southern borders and jihadism and smuggling increasingly overlap, the eventual return of Tunisian IS foot soldiers and

⁵¹ The Tunisian Red Crescent gives a figure of between 1 million and 1.5 million. The most realistic estimates made by Tunisian experts visiting Libya on a regular basis and consulting members of the Libyan diaspora in Tunisia put the figure at between 300,000 and 1 million. Crisis Group interviews, Tunisian Red Crescent official, experts on Libya, Tunis, June-August 2014. The Tunisian Red Crescent is a charitable association and is active at the border posts of Ben Guerdane-Ras Jdir and Dhehiba-Wazen.

⁵² Crisis Group interviews, Libyan resident in Tunis, residents of Tunis, Tunis, June-August 2014. Several Libyan residents in Tunis say they feel that Tunisians discriminate against them, which was not the case in 2011. Crisis Group interviews, Libyans residents in Tunis, Tunis, September-October 2014.

⁵³ More than 180,000 people have crossed the borders since May 2014. Most of them were Egyptian and have been repatriated. 3,000 people cross the borders at Ben Guerdane and Dhehiba every day, compared to more than 20,000 in 2011. Crisis Group interviews, Tunisian Red Crescent officials, Tunis, August 2014.

⁵⁴ See "Mongi Hamdi: La Tunisie s'apprête à fermer ses frontières avec la Libye", Agence Tunis Afrique Presse, 30 July 2014.

⁵⁵ See Crisis Group Report, *Tunisia's Borders: Jihad and Contraband*, op. cit.

⁵⁶ See Moncef Kartas, "On the Edge? Trafficking and Insecurity at the Tunisian-Libyan Border", Small Arms Survey, December 2013. Also see Crisis Group Report, *Tunisia's Borders: Jihad and Contraband*, op. cit.

⁵⁷ Crisis Group interview, expert on the circulation of small arms, Tunis, June 2014.

leaders⁵⁸ from Syria and Iraq – notably if conflict breaks out within IS or if it loses ground – via Libya⁵⁹ could swell the ranks of mixed smuggler-jihadi groups. This is particularly the case if the social situation were to deteriorate in the border regions and if south east Tunisia were to become the main supply line for militias operating in Tripolitania.

The notion that the country's future now depends on the outcome of an armed conflict between Sunni Islamists and anti-Islamist Sunnis in Syria, Iraq and especially Libya, is spreading.⁶⁰ Before the capture of Benghazi's third military base (base 21) and its arsenal by the city's Shura Council of Revolutionaries on 30 July 2014, some media speculated on a scenario involving a massive influx of Libyan jihadis into Tunisia fleeing the offensives of General Khalifa Haftar. More recently, experts say, not without exaggeration, that the victorious advance of Islamist militias in Tunisia and Algeria is inevitable in the medium term.⁶¹

This fear, for the moment unfounded given the heterogeneous character of the Libyan Dawn coalition (Fajr Libya, more or less composed of Islamists and various anti-Qadhafi and anti-Haftar elements), demonstrates that Tunisia is an echo chamber for regional conflicts. Such irrational fears can have a positive effect by promoting compromise and dialogue, but may also fuel ideological polarisation in the run-up to legislative and presidential elections.⁶²

Fearing that opponents will open hostilities, Islamist and secular leaders both appear to have adopted a peaceful approach and declared that they will accept the outcome of the ballot box.⁶³ However, reconcilable national-level issues are often overshadowed by ideological discourses that internationalise them, transforming them into diametrically opposed positions:

- Turkey, Qatar and “revolutionary” militias in the Libyan Dawn on the side of the former Troika;⁶⁴
- Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and the former Libyan General Khalifa Haftar supporting the “Destourians”;⁶⁵
- Algeria, which is in a position to tip the scales, taking a pragmatic attitude toward both sides.⁶⁶

⁵⁸ Crisis Group interviews, leader of a party in the former Troika, Tunis, June 2014.

⁵⁹ Crisis Group interviews, residents of Tunisian-Libyan border communities, Tunis, July-August 2014.

⁶⁰ Crisis Group interviews, residents of Tunis and Sfax, Tunis, June-August 2014.

⁶¹ See Imed Bahri, “Tunisie-Libye: Les barbares à nos frontières sud”, *Kapitalis*, 3 September 2014. Also see “Si Zanten tombe aux mains des milices, la Tunisie aura des frontières avec Daech [Arab acronym for the former Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, ISIL, now called IS]”, *DirectInfo*, 30 July 2014. Most Tunisians are worried by the advances of this armed organisation, which they see as a sign of the inevitable progress of radical Islamism. Crisis Group interviews, residents of Tunis, July-October 2014.

⁶² See Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°37, *The Tunisian Exception: Success and Limits of Consensus*, 5 June 2014.

⁶³ Crisis Group interviews, political leaders, Tunis, April-August 2014.

⁶⁴ For more on the Troika, see fn. 43.

⁶⁵ The Destourians, named after the independence party (the Néo-Destour), belong to a current that Islamists associate with the old regime. This party sees itself as the standard-bearer of secularism and modernity in line with the legacy of Bourguiba, first president of Tunisia (1959-1987) and to a lesser extent that of Ben Ali (1987-2011). They include parties like Nida Tounes (The Call of Tunisia) led by Beji Caid Essebsi, the Initiative led by Kamel Morjane and the Destourian movement led by Ahmed Karoui, all three former ministers of Bourguiba or Ben Ali.

A number of Islamist and Destourian activists believe that the post-electoral balance of forces will depend on the outcome of the armed clashes in Libya, in other words on the inevitable victory of either General Haftar or of the “revolutionary” militias of Libya Dawn. According to these, beyond ideological affinities, the main Tunisian political parties have close economic and diplomatic relations with the belligerents in the Libyan conflict.⁶⁷ There are numerous links between, on the one hand, the Destourians and pro-Haftar Libyans, and, on the other, between An-Nahda and Libya Dawn.⁶⁸ The political ties and economic interests that unite the two countries could thus threaten the relatively civil relations between Tunisian political organisations.

In light of this, wonders an activist of the former Troika, how can one imagine a future government of national unity or of independents, or even a peaceful power-sharing deal hatched behind the scenes, in the context of extreme regional polarisation in which “everything pushes Islamists and anti-Islamists to assert their hegemony on the political scene”?⁶⁹ For the most pessimistic, a brutal rupture in the spirit of consensus⁷⁰ is only a matter of time, especially if armed conflict intensifies in Libya and push the most radical militias to get the upper hand over those that still have hopes for the political process.

In fact, even if regional polarisation manifests itself militarily in the Libyan conflict, in Tunisia, where peaceful ideological disputes have replaced political violence, parties remain capable of keeping these rivalries at arm’s length – at least while those states involved and their international supporters remain interested in protecting the country from these deep divisions and the brutal violence that accompanies them.

V. Depoliticising Terrorism and Placing Ideological Conflicts in a National Context

Even if political elites showed a keen sense of responsibility when seeking dialogue and consensus during the crisis of the second half of 2013,⁷¹ the transition is far from over. Were the Middle East and North Africa a stable region, the political instrumentalisation of the terrorism question in Tunisia would be limited to calls for increased security, particularly by the educated middle class, which forms an important part of the electorate. However, nationalists (secularists) and supporters of gradual or revolutionary Islamisation (more or less radical Islamists) are engaged in a bitter regional armed conflict.

Tunisians have adopted these ideological divides in a peaceful manner. But were the regional situation to spin out of control, the vicious circle of repression and radi-

⁶⁶ Crisis Group interviews, Destourian militants and supporters of the former Troika, Tunis, February-August 2014. Also see Monia Mahjoub, “Pourquoi Bouteflika reçoit-il l’islamiste tunisien Ghanouchi”, Mondafrique (mondafrique.com), 31 August 2014.

⁶⁷ For example, those close to Nida Tounes explain that An-Nahda and pro-Islamist businessmen have close links with Abdelhakim Belhaj, former military governor of Tripoli after the fall of Qadhafi and an influential Islamist in Libya. Supporters of the former Troika emphasise the links between members of Nida Tounes and nationals of the United Arab Emirates and Libyans of the old regime or who support Haftar. Crisis Group interviews, Destourian militants and supporters of the former Troika, Tunis, February-August 2014.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Crisis Group interview, militant of the former Troika, Tunis, August 2014.

⁷⁰ See Crisis Group Briefing, *The Tunisian Exception*, op. cit.

⁷¹ Ibid.

calisation to intensify, and a large-scale attack to occur in this climate of deep anxiety, the possibility of Islamists and anti-Islamists moving from rhetorical polemics to violence cannot be excluded. This is all the more plausible given that thousands of Tunisian jihadis on foreign battlefields are directly experiencing these armed conflicts and that Libyan and Tunisian businessmen and political leaders have numerous ties.

It is therefore essential for the country to restrict the conflict of ideas in the country to the national sphere and do all it can to depoliticise the issue of terrorism. Firstly, the main political, trade union and civil society organisations should continue to seek a consensual approach to security, for instance within the framework of the national dialogue.⁷²

Secondly, the authorities would do well to alter their anti-terrorist discourse. The crisis unit requires a better communications strategy that would allow it to explain the legitimate security and legal basis for its decisions and that would also define terrorism as an economic and social question and show how these impact state security.

Thirdly, the government should approach this issue as a public security problem that can be tackled while respecting the constitution, through measures such as:

- ❑ pursuing the creation of a national intelligence agency, combining intelligence services and counter-terrorism forces;
- ❑ strengthening economic and security cooperation with Algeria along the border between the two countries (integrated development, public-private partnerships, increase in the number of joint patrols and greater information exchange); and
- ❑ increasing customs, police and military pressure on some cartels and negotiating with those that agree to collaborate on the intelligence front and stop the trafficking of dangerous products.

Likewise, despite the difficulties involved,⁷³ the government should use all pretexts other than security to consolidate its presence in the border regions and regain the trust of their inhabitants – for example, through visits by political leaders, decentralisation of institutions, support for industrial and agricultural projects, and carrying out feasibility studies on the creation of free trade zones.

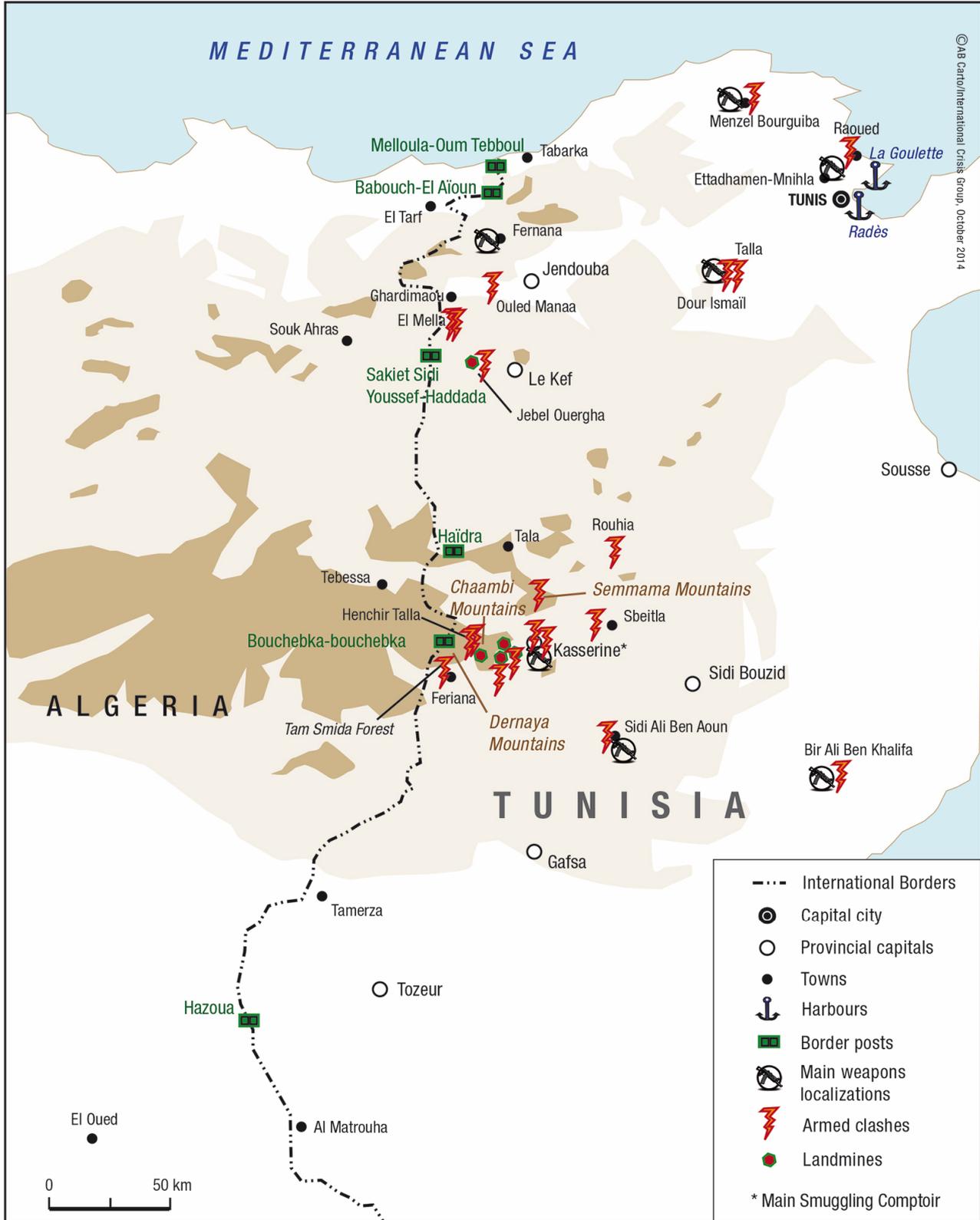
Finally, combating terrorism through a nuanced, practical and targeted response, neither exaggerating nor underestimating it, would help to depoliticise the issue – even if complete depoliticisation may be impossible. Together, these measures would remove some of its power to subvert, making the country better able to withstand a major attack designed to discourage foreign investors or disrupt the electoral process, which would have disastrous consequences as political, trade union and associative forces are all too aware.

Tunis/Brussels, 21 October 2014

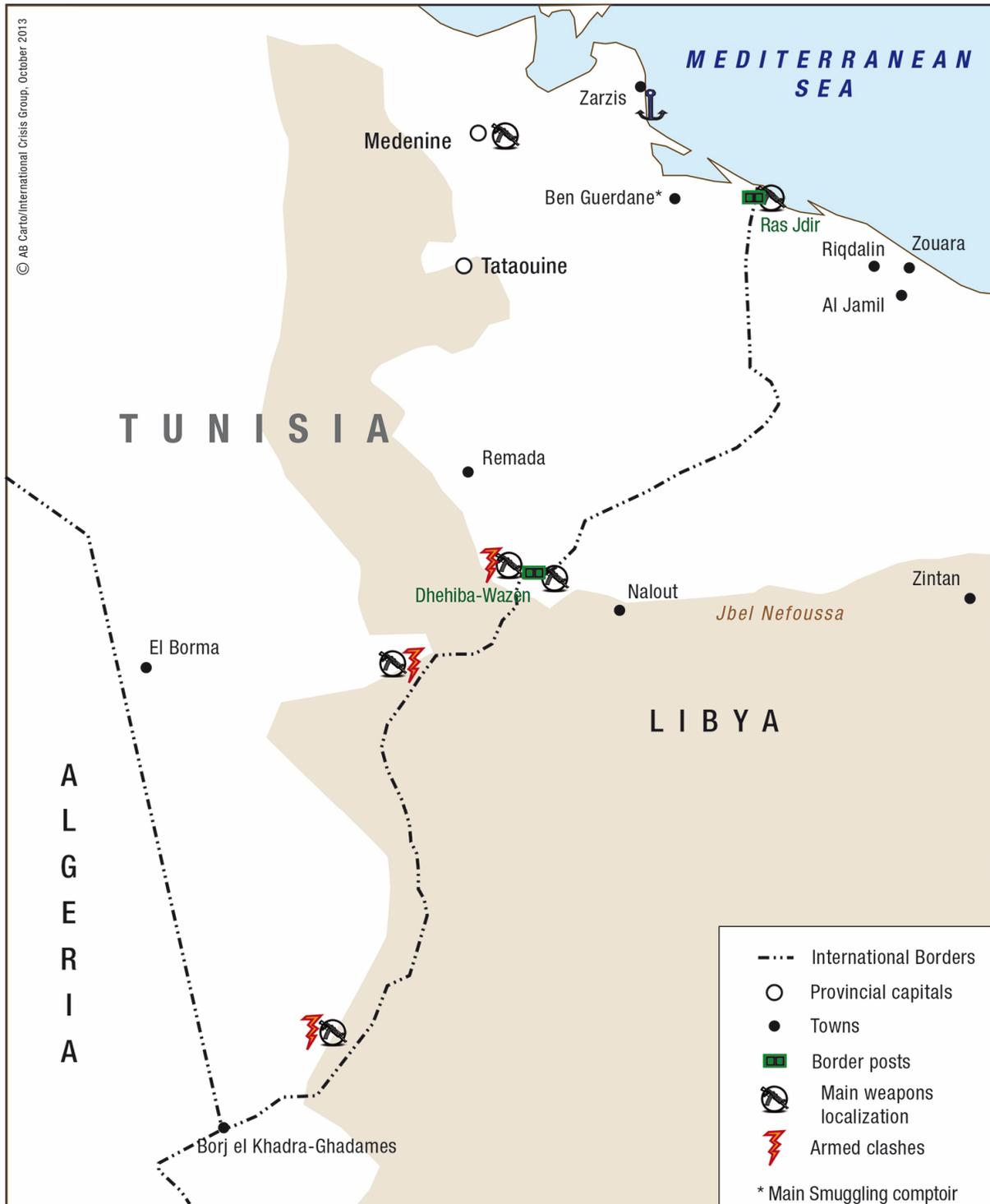
⁷² The main political, trade union and civil society forces joined a national dialogue in order to find a way out of the July 2013 political crisis. This dialogue accelerated constitutional change (drafting of the constitution was completed), the electoral process (the new independent authority responsible for supervising the forthcoming elections was created) and formation of a government (a new consensual prime minister was chosen to form an independent government of “technocrats”). It ended the prevailing political paralysis and reduced the risk of an Egyptian-like scenario and the exclusion of the Islamist An-Nahda party from power. The national dialogue meetings continued after the crisis was resolved but were held less frequently and attracted less media coverage. See Crisis Group Briefing, *The Tunisian Exception*, op. cit.

⁷³ See Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°124, *Tunisia: Confronting Social and Economic Challenges*, 6 June 2012.

Appendix A: Map of the west of Tunisia



Appendix B: Map of the south of Tunisia



Appendix C: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 125 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on the website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board of Trustees – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. Crisis Group is co-chaired by former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, and Dean of Paris School of International Affairs (Sciences Po), Ghassan Salamé.

Crisis Group's President & CEO, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, assumed his role on 1 September 2014. Mr. Guéhenno served as the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations from 2000-2008, and in 2012, as Deputy Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria. He left his post as Deputy Joint Special Envoy to chair the commission that prepared the white paper on French defence and national security in 2013.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices or representation in 26 locations: Baghdad/Suleimaniya, Bangkok, Beijing, Beirut, Bishkek, Bogotá, Cairo, Dakar, Dubai, Gaza City, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Kabul, London, Mexico City, Moscow, Nairobi, New York, Seoul, Toronto, Tripoli, Tunis, Washington DC. Crisis Group currently covers some 70 areas of actual or potential conflict across four continents. In Africa, this includes, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in Europe, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, North Caucasus, Serbia and Turkey; in the Middle East and North Africa, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Western Sahara and Yemen; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Venezuela.

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October 2014

Appendix C: Reports and Briefings on Middle East and North Africa since 2011

Israel/Palestine

Gaza: The Next Israeli-Palestinian War?, Middle East Briefing N°30, 24 March 2011 (also available in Hebrew and Arabic).

Radical Islam in Gaza, Middle East/North Africa Report N°104, 29 March 2011 (also available in Arabic and Hebrew).

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Curb Your Enthusiasm: Israel and Palestine after the UN, Middle East Report N°112, 12 September 2011 (also available in Arabic and Hebrew).

Back to Basics: Israel's Arab Minority and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Middle East Report N°119, 14 March 2012 (also available in Arabic).

The Emperor Has No Clothes: Palestinians and the End of the Peace Process, Middle East Report N°122, 7 May 2012 (also available in Arabic).

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Israel and Hamas: Fire and Ceasefire in a New Middle East, Middle East Report N°133, 22 November 2012 (also available in Arabic).

Extreme Makeover? (I): Israel's Politics of Land and Faith in East Jerusalem, Middle East Report N°134, 20 December 2012 (also available in Arabic and Hebrew).

Extreme Makeover? (II): The Withering of Arab Jerusalem, Middle East Report N°135, 20 December 2012 (also available in Arabic and Hebrew).

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The Next Round in Gaza, Middle East Report N°149, 25 March 2014 (also available in Arabic).

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Bringing Back the Palestinian Refugee Question, Middle East Report N°156, 9 October 2014.

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Now or Never: A Negotiated Transition for Syria, Middle East Briefing N°32, 5 March 2012 (also available in Arabic and Russian).

Syria's Phase of Radicalisation, Middle East Briefing N°33, 10 April 2012 (also available in Arabic).

Lost in Transition: The World According to Egypt's SCAF, Middle East/North Africa Report N°121, 24 April 2012 (also available in Arabic).

Syria's Mutating Conflict, Middle East Report N°128, 1 August 2012 (also available in Arabic).

Tentative Jihad: Syria's Fundamentalist Opposition, Middle East Report N°131, 12 October 2012 (also available in Arabic).

A Precarious Balancing Act: Lebanon and the Syrian conflict, Middle East Report N°132, 22 November 2012 (also available in Arabic).

Syria's Kurds: A Struggle Within a Struggle, Middle East Report N°136, 22 January 2013 (also available in Arabic and Kurdish).

Too Close For Comfort: Syrians in Lebanon, Middle East Report N°141, 13 May 2013 (also available in Arabic).

Syria's Metastasising Conflicts, Middle East Report N°143, 27 June 2013 (also available in Arabic).

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Flight of Icarus? The PYD's Precarious Rise in Syria, Middle East Report N°151, 8 May 2014 (also available in Arabic).

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