# Post-revolutionary Discontent and F(r)action-alisation in the Maghreb

## Managing the Tunisia-Libya Border Dynamics

**Clingendael Report**

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# Executive Summary

Since the 2011 so-called 'Jasmine Revolution' in Tunisia and the 2011 fall of Colonel Gaddafi in Libya, the two countries have experienced an unprecedented security deterioration. The spectacular attacks that took place in Tunisia against the Bardo museum, the Presidential Guard, the Sousse tourist resort and, more recently, the border city of Ben Guerdane are only the visible part of the iceberg and hardly hide the daily deterioration of human security in both countries. How might these two countries be able to address the root causes of their post-revolutionary instability and prevent further destabilisation of the buffer border regions in the near future?

For decades, Tunisia and Libya have had a long-established and mutually profitable interdependence. Despite some diplomatic skirmishes over the years, the two countries remained closely intertwined. In particular, the population from the border regions, due to their long marginalisation from central economic flows and power, had to create the conditions for their own economic survival. In that context, the informal cross-border economy has developed significantly, with tolerance from central states and local control by community leaders.

While the cross-border exchanges used to represent up to $1 billion a year and to provide a living to 10% of the Tunisian population, they have been significantly impacted by the outcomes of the revolutions. Beyond the decrease of economic exchanges during the last five years, regional turmoil has also led new 'Islamo-gangsterism' networks to enter these cross-border dynamics and has also led to community networks losing their historic *de facto* monopoly over formal and informal trade. This new situation is highlighted by a significant increase in terrorist attacks and other security incidents in both countries. While the international community is still treating Tunisia as a successful example of democratic transition, the situation appears to be more complex and nuanced. The economic deterioration that has followed the 'Jasmine Revolution' and the Libyan collapse, together with a new and disorganised religious vitality, have deeply changed the country's real nature. With allegedly 3,000 Tunisian fighters in Libya, clandestine training camps close to the border and numerous arms depots, regional instability is now at its peak.

While Libya is still struggling with endemic and grass-roots instability, security chaos and political disorders, successive post-revolutionary governments in Tunisia have tried to tackle the cross-border security challenges; however, they have met with little success. The lack of means available, together with socio-economic distress, have significantly hampered the efficiency of the measures taken. The unholy coalition between Islamist-oriented Ennahda and the secular Nidaa Tounes party,

the multiplication of protests (5,000 in 2015), the growing insecurity (more than 30 terrorist attacks since the revolution) and the forthcoming local elections in March 2017 are just a few of the numerous challenges the Tunisian authorities have to deal with. For decades, successive Tunisian governments also put a strong emphasis on repressive options rather than addressing the (economic) root causes of instability. This has considerably increased tensions within Tunisian society and deepened the gap between youth, who are the main victims of state suspicion, and official representatives.

To prevent any further destabilisation in the region, and considering also the high volatility in Libya that obstructs the implementation of any ambitious and comprehensive national stabilisation programme, this Clingendael report emphasises the need to continue focusing on the understanding of local needs and the enhancing of bottom-up initiatives able to address the multifaceted causes of instability. It chiefly identifies the current insecurity as being a result of both economic and security dynamics at regional level and highlights the possible entry points for local and international stakeholders to enhance stability. Most importantly, it insists on positive outputs to be expected in transitioning from 'top-down' strategies to 'bottom-up' approaches in order to directly support municipalities and local communities in their efforts to tackle the cross-border challenges. Considering their positive input on local stability, the work of domestic and foreign civil society organisations should be encouraged, supported and strengthened. Without being separate from a national comprehensive strategy, local efforts could be better tailored to community needs and cross-border issues. A dual-track approach appears to be the most viable strategy to effectively address post-revolutionary border dynamics and pave the way for long-standing stability in the Maghreb.

Bizerte

Menzel
Bourguiba

Tabarka

L'Ariana

TUNIS

Beja

Ben Arous

Jendouba

Nabeul

Zaghouan

Le Kef

Siliana

Sousse

Monastir

Kairouan

Mahdia

Thala

Kasserine

Sidi Bou Zid

Sfax

Gafsa

KERKENNAH
Is.

Tozeur

El Hamma

Gabes

Nefta

Kebili

Matmata

Medenine

Tataouine

Remada

El Borma

- - - - - Province Boundary

National Capital

Province Capital

Other Cities
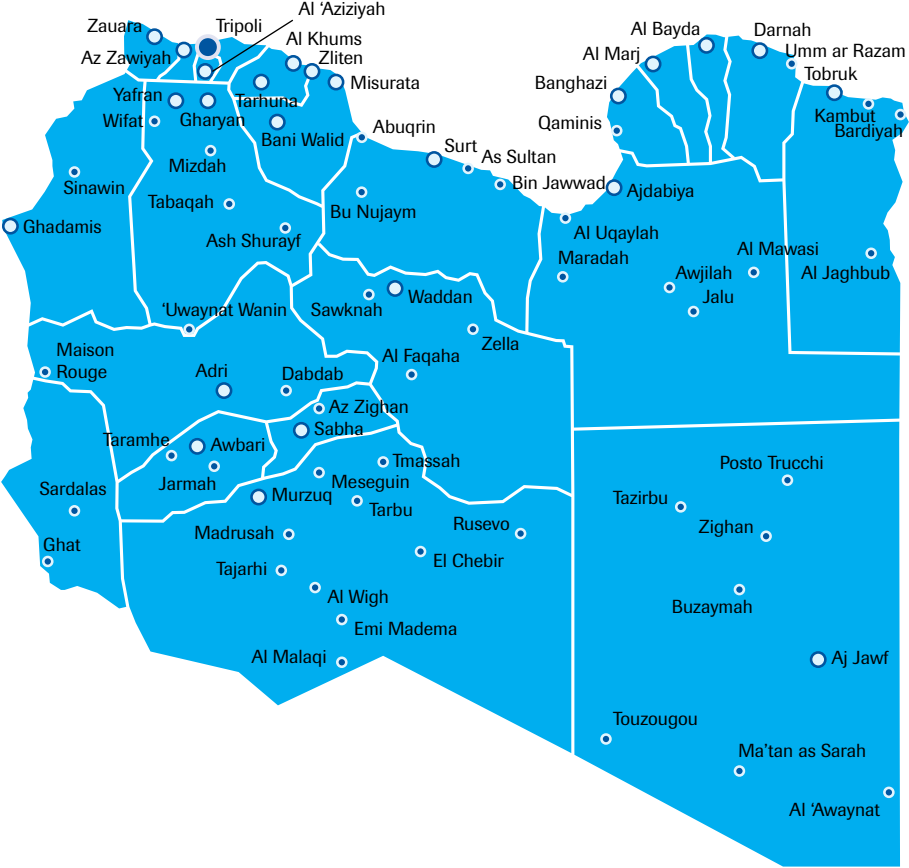
# Introduction

Since the Tunisian so-called 'Jasmine Revolution' (December 2010-January 2011) which overthrew the 24 year-long incumbency of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the country has been heavily supported by the international community. Its democratic pathways and stabilisation efforts are unanimously acknowledged, and the electoral victory of the Islamist-oriented party Ennahda in October 2011 did not question this foreign support. Despite a confused and sometimes even chaotic political democratisation process, some valuable progress was made and the absence of 'democratic backwardness'[1] made Tunisia a newly cherished country by foreign partners in the Maghreb region. However, as emphasised by Carnegie researcher Richard Youngs, "*the perception that Tunisia is a tranquil island of stability in a sea of violent North African and Middle Eastern geopolitics is only partly accurate*".[2]

With tens of security incidents and terrorist attacks, a reported 6,000-7,000 Tunisian foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, including 3,000 in Libya,[3] $4 billion invested by the Tunisian government for the war against terrorism and diverted away from the country's economy,[4] and more than 5,000 protests in 2015 alone, Tunisia is probably facing the most crucial time in its political history.

On the Libyan side, the international military intervention of March 2011[5] led to a very different post-revolutionary path. The mushrooming of the militias in 2011 (75,000 militiamen in 2012[6]), the split into two governments in 2014, the arrival of Islamic State that same year, and the creation of a new internationally-backed political entity by the end of 2015, have prevented the international community from investing in Libyan institutions as it did in Tunisia. In addition to that, numerous international organisations working in Libya for years had to leave the country, end their programmes and relocate to Tunis.

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1   O'Donnell, G., « Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes », *in* Mainwaring, S., O'Donnell, G., Velenzuela, J. S. (eds.), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, pp. 17-18.

2   Youngs, R., "A New Phase in Tunisia's Transition", Carnegie Europe, 2 March 2015, http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/?fa=59219

3   Interview with Western security representative, Tunis, 9 May 2016.

4   "Tunisia says its war on 'terror' has cost $4bn", *News24*, 19 May 2015, http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/tunisia-says-its-war-on-terror-has-cost-4-bn-20160519-3.

5   The multi-state NATO-led coalition intervened in Libya to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1973 which imposed a no-fly zone over the country and paved the way to military intervention.

6   Cole, P., and McQuinn, B. (eds.), The Libyan Revolution and its aftermath, Hurst: London, 2015, p. 139.

So far, the engagement of the international community in Libya has run along two tracks. On one side, top-down initiatives such as the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya have produced incomplete results.[7] The arms embargo, which was imposed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2011, is currently under scrutiny: its modification would allow the Government of National Accord (GNA) to obtain the weapons they need to fight Islamic State[8] alongside international forces already on the ground.[9] While these dynamics keep authorities occupied in both Tripoli and Tunis, bottom-up approaches on the other side seek to rebuild the Libyan social fabric.

The purpose of this Clingendael report is thus to propose viable and effective entry points for the international community to support in the most effective way the stabilisation process on both sides of the Tunisia-Libya border, especially regarding local security in bordering peripheral regions.

How does the instability in Libya affect the situation in Tunisia? Is the Tunisian government up to the task imposed by the post-revolutionary security deterioration? How can the international community and foreign partners of the two countries best support local plans to tackle cross-border insecurity and stop the destabilising flows?

To do that, the Clingendael research team focused on existing academic and non-academic literature available in both countries, press articles and Skype or face-to-face semi-structured interviews with official representatives from the region, security and academic experts, journalists, practitioners and actors involved in international operations/missions currently engaged on the ground (European Union and United Nations, mostly).

The report will firstly 'set the stage' and explore the current political and security situation in both Tunisia and Libya. It will then present the overview of their past and present relations, especially at the local border level, to understand the local and national dynamics that long existed outside the state and, most importantly, that could play a role in stabilising the situation in the near future. Lastly, this report will

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7   European External Action Service (EEAS), Interim Strategic Review of EUBAM Libya, 13 April 2015, http://www.statewatch.org/news/2015/jun/eu-eeas-interim-report-UBAM-7886-15.pdf.

8   As stated by UNSMIL's chief: there are still 10,000 weapons in Libya but they are small calibre and bad quality and they have no materiel to fight at night. Malo, A., "L'envoyé spécial de l'ONU confirme que des forces françaises combattent en Libye", *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 29 May 2016, http://www.lejdd.fr/International/Maghreb/Libye-Il-y-a-aussi-des-forces-speciales-francaises-qui-sont-sur-le-terrain-787979.

9   Malo, A., "L'envoyé spécial de l'ONU confirme que des forces françaises combattent en Libye", *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 29 May 2016, http://www.lejdd.fr/International/Maghreb/Libye-Il-y-a-aussi-des-forces-speciales-francaises-qui-sont-sur-le-terrain-787979.

analyse the national and international responses to post-revolutionary instability in both countries and their ineffectiveness in tackling the root causes of the problems so far. The conclusion will then argue that, given the current unstable situation, as well as engaging with national authorities and boosting the national political process, the international partners should continue investing in local initiatives. A dual-track approach today represents one of the most credible options for addressing Tunisian and Libyan cross-border challenges and paving the way for effective stabilisation in the region.

## 1.   Post-revolutionary snapshot of Tunisia and Libya

At first sight, Tunisia appears to be a relatively homogenous state with neither deep sectarian divisions nor natural resources which could  distort the economy or encourage foreign interferences, and with a long tradition of religious moderation and high educational standards. However, the country is now facing several challenges that are putting its stability and its whole post-revolutionary stabilisation phase in jeopardy.

### 1.1.  Tunisia: Jasmines on fire?

Jihadi infiltration, the growing popular distrust toward Tunis' political elite, social discontent and security deterioration are just a few of today's main Tunisian challenges. The local elections, postponed since 2014 and now scheduled for March 2017, could play a role in fostering local ownership.

On the other hand, if elections become extremely polarised between the presidential coalition and the rest of the political spectrum, they could also exacerbate tensions in the country and instigate violent actions from armed groups which have sprung up outside the political transition process.

### a.   A Post-Revolutionary Desencanto[10]

Despite its internationally-valorised image[11], the country's unresolved problems directly endanger national security. As noted by a 2015 report by FRIDE, Libya appears today as Tunisia's biggest dilemma: "*Permeable borders, militia rule, tribal divisions, contraband*

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10   The expression is taken from French anthropologist, Georges Balandier, in order to describe the wave of popular discontent naturally following a popular revolution, characterised by unsatisfied demands and expectations. See Balandier, G., Le détour: pouvoir et modernité, Paris, Fayard, 1985.

11   First Arab country to receive the rating of "Free" from the organisation Freedom House, Nobel Peace prize received last December 2015 by four Tunisian civil society organisations, CSO. See Packer, G., "Exporting Jihad. The Arab Spring has given Tunisians the freedom to act on their unhappiness", The New Yorker, 26 March 2016.

*and a war economy, the post-Gaddafi arms bazaar, and Libya's development into North Africa's hub for Islamic State are raising many questions for Tunisian security*".[12]

At the domestic level, Tunisia is also experiencing a post-transitional '*disenchantement*' since the 2011 revolution: "*Challenges facing the Tunisian society in 2016 include an economic downturn, regional disparities, a widening sense of insecurity, growing inflation, expanding informal-sector activities, rising unemployment levels, and increasing poverty, particularly among the youth.*"[13]

Economic indicators are morose: a 15% unemployment rate (and it is said to take graduates an average of six years to find a steady job) and public debts accounting for 54% of the GDP in late 2015. Proliferation of informal businesses (524,000 out of 616,000 in total; 85 percent) is representing an incommensurable loss for the Tunisian state of about $115 billion.[14] Regional disparities, including in terms of infrastructures, are still paramount and are playing a prominent role in feeding the gap between the central state and the Tunisian regions. Near the Algerian border, for instance, in the peripheral Kasserine region, relative poverty rose from 30.3% in 1990 to 49.3% in 2000. By 2012, Kasserine had the lowest human development rating among all of Tunisia's governorates. It had the highest incidence of poverty in the country at 32% as compared to a national average of 15.5% and 9% in the capital; a 25% unemployment level as compared with a national average of 17%; and an illiteracy rate of 32% compared with a 12% national rate.[15] In Sidi Bouzid (in the centre of Tunisia), the cradle of Tunisia's uprising, relative poverty also increased from 39.8% to 45.7%.[16] Because of the recent security deterioration in the country, and especially the attacks in Sousse in June 2015, tourism dropped by nearly 50%. Before that, it used to account for about 15% of the GDP and 14% of employment opportunities.[17]

This regional situation, together with Tunisia's own domestic tensions, sheds light on the current difficulty for Tunisian political officials in dealing with these multi-faceted challenges. The lack of effective socio-economic measures capable of addressing the long-rooted social discontent, especially in the border areas, could constitute a breeding ground for those actors who try to disrupt the fragile post-revolutionary path.

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12   Kausch, K., "Tunisia's Libya problem", FRIDE, Policy Brief, No. 214, December 2015, p. 2.

13   Yahya, M., "Great expectations in Tunisia", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace - Middle East Center, March 2016, p. 3.

14   Ibid., p. 9.

15   Ibid., p. 6.

16   Ibid., p. 6.

17   Packer, G., "Exporting Jihad. The Arab Spring has given Tunisians the freedom to act on their unhappiness", The New Yorker, 26 March 2016, p. 3.

All six successive governments in Tunis since 2011 have had to deal with a highly sensitive post-transitional context consisting of corporatist tensions, confused and potentially dangerous religious 'vitality' and popular expectations. They have had to do so during a very cathartic period, with an unprecedented level of popular defiance against the 'old elites'. Whilst some measures taken after Ben Ali's departure have had a short-term calming impact on popular excitement, they have also contributed to paving the way to new challenges and to weakening the trajectory of the democratic transition (see below).[18]

### b.   Tunisian violent extremism and the foreign fighter phenomenon: connections with neighbouring Libya

The three waves of post-revolutionary amnesties that occurred between January 2011 and February 2012 led to the release of more than 10,000 prisoners, including many jihadists.[19] Abu Iyadh al-Tunisi, the co-founder of the Tunisian Combat Group,[20] benefited from this amnesty process. Two months later, he founded the Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia.[21] In February 2012, some Salafis also formed the *Association de promotion de la vertu et de prévention du vice* (Association for Supporting Virtue and Discouraging Vice) which called on citizens to display moral rectitude and obey Sharia. The Association was granted legal status under the name of *Association centriste de sensibilisation et de réforme*. In December 2012, a new group appeared in the area, the Ubqa Ibn Nafaa Brigade. Soon, the insurgents, in co-ordination with the leaders of Ansar al-Sharia,

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18  Hence, the government decision to hire more than 90,000 new public sector workers has had a direct effect on short-term social tensions, but mainly contributed to an increase of 44% of the wage bill. Over 600,000 people are now employed by the government, including 180,000 more working for public companies. The public-sector wage bill almost doubled between 2010 and 2014, and now accounts for over 13% of GDP (one of the highest shares in the world). See, "Trouble in Tunisia. Dying to work for the government", *The Economist*, 30 January 2016, http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21689616-unemployment-undermining-tunisias-transition-dying-work-government.

19  "This wave of releases was part of a general amnesty for political prisoners announced on 20 January 2011 and officially promulgated on 19 February under pressure from human rights activists, including a certain number of Nahdawis", in International Crisis Group, "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge", Middle East/North Africa report No. 137, 13 February 2013, p. 14.

20  The Tunisian Combat Group (TCG) or Tunisian Fighting Group was a loose network of terrorists who aspire to install an Islamist government in Tunisia. Its personnel are said to be in Western Europe and, formerly, in Afghanistan, where it was affiliated with al-Qaeda. In the United States TCG has been designated as a terrorist group under the Patriot Act as of 20 December 2004.

21  "Abou Ayadh, whose real name is Seifallah Ben Hassine, is the leader of Ansar al-Sharia, which represents part of the jihadi Salafi movement. He is reported to have fought in Afghanistan and to be close to Abou Qatada, an ideologue of the al-Qaeda movement. Abou Ayadh was arrested in 2003 in Turkey and extradited to Tunisia. Sentenced to 43 years in prison, he was released under the terms of the amnesty for political prisoners after Ben Ali's fall." International Crisis Group, "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge", Middle East/North Africa report No. 137, 13 February 2013, footnote 66, p. 12.

were laying mines and ambushing Tunisian security forces. An unprecedented increase in religious violence in the country during 2011, 2012 and 2013 then arose, with "*Salafi hard-liners [who] took over mosques, assaulted liquor-store owners, enforced dress codes, attacked cultural events that they deemed blasphemous, desecrated Sufi tombs, and threatened secular activists*".[22] After the new Ennahda-dominated government took office in December 2011, violence increased significantly.[23] In February 2013, a secular political activist named Chokri Belaid was shot dead outside his house in Tunis. Five months later, another politician, Mohamed Brahmi, was assassinated in front of his family.

At the same time, connections between Tunisian and Libyan militants became increasingly evident, as illustrated by the multiplication of attacks against Tunisian facilities in Libya (once against the Tunisian Embassy and twice against the Consulate in June 2012) and the involvement of Tunisian fighters in the attacks on the US Consulate in Benghazi in September 2012 and, more recently, against the Corinthia Tripoli Hotel in January 2015. Since the 2000s, Libyan and Tunisian Salafis are suspected of working together.[24]

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22  Packer, G., "Exporting Jihad. The Arab Spring has given Tunisians the freedom to act on their unhappiness", The New Yorker, 26 March 2016, pp. 14-15.

23  "*On 25 March, for instance, during demonstrations in favour of integrating Sharia into the new constitution, Salafis climbed the clock tower on Habib Bourguiba Avenue, the capital's main road, and again hoisted the black flag, while their comrades violently attacked artists a few hundred metres away. (…) A series of riots between 12 and 15 June 2012 ended with the re-imposition of a curfew for two nights; the climate of fear was such that the three presidents (of the republic, of the NCA and the government) seemed to be afraid while addressing the nation. […] These riots followed a Salafi attack on a painting exhibition in a wealthy suburb of the capital. Some Salafis seemed to be galvanised by a message from al-Qaeda ideologue Ayman al-Zawahiri, distributed two days earlier. Twenty-one demonstrators burned down police stations, courts, opposition party and UGTT offices and other public buildings. Clashes with the security forces lasted for several days, until elite brigades intervened in the peri-urban areas of the capital and negotiations between Nahdawis and Salafis restored calm.*" in International Crisis Group, "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge", Middle East/ North Africa report No. 137, 13 February 2013, p. 9.

24  Tunisian national, Sami Essid bin Khamis, a future leader of Ansar al-Sharia, and Libyan Lased Ben Heni worked together to plan the 2000 Strasbourg Cathedral plot. Jihadis from both countries also collaborated under the banner of El-Fatah El-Moubine to 'administrate' the Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC)'s "Zone 5". Lastly, GSPC networks and remnants of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) provided logistics to fighters (including Tunisians) to get to Iraq. Many relationships were forged between Tunisian and Libyan jihadis and, after 2011, a number of veterans became involved with Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia and Ansar al-Sharia Libya. See Zelin, A., "The Tunisian-Libyan Jihadi Connection", ICSR Insight, 6 July 2015, pp. 1-2.

Between 6,000 and 7,000 Tunisians are suspected to have joined terrorist organisations abroad.[25] Most of these terrorist fighters originate from neglected Tunis suburbs, especially the working-class Hay Ettadhamen, or from peripheral and marginalised cities, eg Ben Guerdane.[26]

Several motivations are commonly highlighted to explain Tunisia's 'new' radicalism: (i) firstly, a domestic argument, which Tunisians describe as *Makhnouk*, which literally means 'suffocated', and which is linked to the economic situation in Tunisia and the financial benefits expected by marginalised youth in joining an armed group. According to El-Shorouk, "some Qataris are allegedly funnelling money to Tunisian NGOs to recruit jihadists: from a pot in Qatar, these networks obtain a pledge of $3,000 in exchange for every Tunisian who enlists."[27] '*Makhnouk*' particularly insists on the absence of viable perspectives for young people and the feeling of frustration and even rage that could result;[28] (ii) secondly, distrust towards the Tunisian political system, then: for Carnegie researcher Maha Yahya, "only 8.8% of rural youth and 31% of urban youth have any faith in the political system, while more than 80% of all youth have faith in their local imam and religious organizations". This distrust encourages the most vulnerable groups, and especially youths, to turn to 'alternative' figures and speeches;[29] (iii) the long-rooted friction between Islam and forced secularism imposed during both Bourghiba and Ben Ali's regime are a third argument that could explain today's radicalisation trends in Tunisia. Past nationalist policies indeed made a constructive debate over religious matters in society extremely difficult;[30] (iv) lastly, and in addition, one Western

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25  Interview with Western security representative, Tunis, 9 May 2016.

26  They "*are usually poorly educated young people, aged 15-35, living in peri-urban areas of major towns or small, neglected villages in the interior. Most are unemployed, have a criminal record and have been to prison*". International Crisis Group, "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge", Middle East/North Africa report No. 137, 13 February 2013, p. 6.

27  Cited in Githens-Mazer, J., Serrano, R., Dalrymple, T., "The curious case of the Tunisian 3,000", *Open democracy*, 19 July 2014, https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/jonathan-githensmazer-rafael-serrano-trahaearn-dalrymple/curious-case-of-tunisian-3000.

28  As emphasised in a 2015 report, "Marginalised communities and emerging elites (of the south and the interior), frustrated in their economic, social and political aspirations, tended to develop a subversive, anti-police discourse that has affinities with the anti-taghout jihadi discourse", in International Crisis Group, "Reform and Security Strategy in Tunisia", Middle East and North Africa Report No. 161, 23 July 2015, p. 21.

29  Yahya, M., "Great expectations in Tunisia", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – Middle East Centre, March 2016, p. 22.

30  For decades (1956 to 2011), Bourguiba and Ben Ali's *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* party (RCD or Democratic Constitutional Rally) ruled over Tunisia. The secular and centralised model they promoted has shaped Tunisian national identity and political community around the regional dichotomy between the country's capital and surrounding coastal zones, and the mostly agricultural hinterland (known as *Afaki* Vs. *Baldi-Saheli*). See Yahya, M., "Great expectations in Tunisia", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – Middle East Centre, March 2016, p. 5.

representative located in Tunis also highlighted the lack of strong government control
over mosques since 2011 and the absence of effective counter-narratives able to balance
the attractive discourse and/or resources of radical groups operating in Tunisia or
recruiting in Tunisia for other foreign theatres.[31]

With more than 30 terrorist attacks between the revolution and May 2016, including
the 2015-2016 assaults against the Bardo Museum (18 March 2015), the Sousse tourist
resort (26 June 2015), the Presidential Guard (24 November 2015), the city of Ben
Guerdane (7 March 2016) and on the National Guard in the Kasserine governorate
(30 March 2016), Tunisia's path toward peace and effective stabilisation is fragile and
will certainly need some strong regional and international attention.

As noted above, after years of neglecting the Muslim part of Tunisia's society, the 2011
revolution has deeply transformed Tunisian society. Islam now appears not only as
a 'safe haven' value for marginalised youth, but also as an appealing argument for new
political parties created in the wake of Ennahda's victory.[32]

## 1.2. Gaddafi's burden over post-revolutionary Libya

The five-year long deterioration of Libya since the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011
has many underlying factors and has provoked many consequences well beyond the
country's borders.

### a. The country struggles to overcome its f(r)actionalised legacy
As of June 2016, the situation in Libya is reportedly extremely precarious.

At the economic level, Libya's deficit ratio is 54% of GDP. Foreign currency reserves
could be exhausted by 2018 and 85% of the country's workforce are paid by the state,[33]
while oil production has plummeted from 1.7 billion barrels to 350,000 per day.[34]

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31  Interview with Western security representative, Tunis, 9 May 2016.

32  Rahma (legalised in July 2012); Asala (March 2012) which is led by Mouldi Ali, who has been convicted by
the former regime to 44 years in prison for terrorism; Jabhat al-Islah (or Front de la réforme, May 2012);
Hizb ut-Tahri, (legalised in July 2012), whose ideological platform calls for the restoration of the caliphate
and policies based on Islamic legislation. See International Crisis Group, "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi
Challenge", Middle East/North Africa report No. 137, 13 February 2013, pp. 21-22.

33  Zaptia, S., "Europe needs to embark on diplomatic offensive in support of Libyan political process – not
escalate armed conflict: ECFR", *Libya Herald*, 12 May 2016, https://www.libyaherald.com/2016/05/13/
europe-needs-to-embark-on-diplomatic-offensive-in-support-of-libyan-political-process-not-escalate-
armed-conflict-ecfr/.

34  Reuter, C., "The Next Disaster: Islamic State Expands as Libya Descends into Chaos", *Spiegel*,
16 March 2016, http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/libya-descends-into-chaos-as-islamic-state-
expands-a-1081874.html.

In addition to that, the Libyan political process appears extremely f(r)actionalised. A new internationally-backed government, the Government of National Accord (GNA), has started to work in Tripoli, after being authorised by the militias controlling the area. This government is the outcome of the negotiations held in December 2015 in Skhirat under the patronage of Morocco and the United Nations.[35] The new formation is meant to overcome the impasse created by the split of Libya's governments into two factions in the spring of 2014.[36] One is the General National Congress (GNC),[37] located in Tripoli, and the other is the House of Representatives (HoR),[38] formally recognised by the international community and located in Tobruk/Bayda.[39]

However, at the moment, the numerous militias and their leaders seem to be the real power brokers in the country.[40] They back political factions giving support and protection in exchange for money. 80% of the militias are paid by political factions in

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35   The Skhirat agreement, initialled in July 2015 by all parties except the GNC, seeks to form a Presidency Council (composed of a primary minister and two deputies). The HoR is supposed to remain the legislative body. Lacher, W., "Supporting Stabilisation in Libya: The Challenges of Finalising and Implementing the Skhirat Agreement", *SWP Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, July 2015, p. 2, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2015C36_lac.pdf. The GNA is the sovereign power according to international law and as such it has taken over the Central Bank, the National Oil Company and the sovereign wealth fund. Jason Pack on South Africa's Voice of the Cape Radio, 14 April 2016, http://www.libya-analysis.com/media/Libyan-Un-backed-government-moves-to-Tripoli.mp3.

36   Back in May 2014, General Khalifa Haftar, a Gaddafi-era defector, set up his own force called Operation Dignity in Benghazi to fight the Benghazi Revolutionaries' Shura Council which comprised Ansar al-Sharia. In June, Islamist candidates were defeated in the elections and fighting soon broke out. The object of contention was Tripoli International Airport, which had been in the hands of the Zintani armed groups since 2011. Libya Dawn had the upper end and defeated Haftar's "Libyan Army" and the Zintanis, who took control of Tripoli and forced the elected government to flee to the east. In November 2014, a ruling by Libya's Supreme Court in Tripoli declared the Tobruk-based House of Representatives illegal and unconstitutional.

37   In August 2014, factions in Tripoli resuscitated the HoR's predecessor, elected in July 2012. Lacher, W., "Supporting Stabilisation in Libya: The Challenges of Finalising and Implementing the Skhirat Agreement", SWP Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, July 2015, p. 1, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2015C36_lac.pdf

38   Formed by the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) elected in June 2014. Lacher, W., "Supporting Stabilisation in Libya: The Challenges of Finalising and Implementing the Skhirat Agreement", SWP Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, July 2015, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2015C36_lac.pdf

39   None of them having broad popular support, Lacher, W., "Supporting Stabilisation in Libya: The Challenges of Finalising and Implementing the Skhirat Agreement", SWP Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, July 2015, p. 2, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2015C36_lac.pdf

40   The initial "thuwwar" who rebelled against Gaddafi numbered 35. Rebels mushroomed once Gaddafi was dead and they started being paid by the new transitional government (interview with Libyan expert, Tunis, 9 May 2016).

Tobruk and Tripoli[41], they run oil and gas facilities (especially in the east; see below, but also the Sharara oil field in the south) and even control the border areas, where they are supposed to take an active part in the smuggling trade. The degree of Islamist affiliation within the numerous militias is, however, debatable and often changes due to the fighting on the ground. Alliances are forged and shift continuously, each faction pursuing its own particular interests.[42]

The apparently unresolved and inextricable political divides have long-rooted causes in Libya's past and its relations with the neighbours. The death of the former 'Guide' has showed decade-long structural problems. The security apparatus, left deliberately weakened by Gaddafi to prevent any coups against him, has turned after the revolution into a hybrid security system with outnumbered regular forces and proliferation of irregular militias.[43]

Gaddafi's legacy also meant that certain parts, like the Libyan coastal areas, were strategically privileged over others, while the desert and the scarcely populated areas were practically overlooked. As a consequence, Libya's vast and porous borders with Algeria, Tunisia, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Egypt have always been fertile ground for the blossoming of both informal economies and smuggling and trafficking activities.

In the eastern part of Libya, for instance, this has also led to the creation of the Barqa federalist movement, led by Ibrahim Jadhran, the leader of the Petroleum Facilities Guards (PFG),[44] who defected and froze oil exports for nearly a year to force the GNC government to grant easterners more control over oil revenues.[45] Jadhran is now the leader of the political bureau of the federalist movement, which seeks the autonomy of Cyrenaica-Barqa and at present is allied with the GNA.

### b.    A *terra nullius*: Libya as a heaven for smuggling and trafficking

Libya's southern and western borders were never sealed. The country is only one fragment of the wider Saharan continuum, and trans-Saharan traffic has always been a part of the local economy. During Gaddafi's era, the regime controlled the key trafficking

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41   Interview with Libyan expert, The Hague, 9 April 2016.

42   See Lacher, W., and Peter Cole, "Politics by other means: Conflicting interests in Libya's Security Sector", Small Arms Survey, October 2014.

43   Wehrey, F., and Cole, P., "Building Libya's Security Sector", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Outlook, August 2013, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/building_libya_security.pdf.

44   Military sub-division established in 2005.

45   Wehrey, F., "The Battle for Libya's Oil", *The Atlantic*, 9 February 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/02/the-battle-for-libyas-oil/385285/.

routes and used to reward and thus co-opt some groups over others.[46] As stated by Carnegie researcher Peter Cole, "no Libyan government ever fully controlled its own borders and the trafficking that passed across them. The incentives to do so simply never stacked up, for either local government officials or Libya's population."[47]

Trafficking and smuggling were thus part of the normal daily life. Gaddafi controlled some forms of trafficking but deliberately neglected others (in particular the migrant trade).[48] Since the fall of the regime, the overall value of this trade has grown to US$43-80m at most.

Libya's Saharan highways of smuggling stretch 600km from the Libya-Niger border to the town of Sebha.[49] The trafficking of counterfeit and contraband goods such as illicit cigarettes, pharmaceuticals and artefacts is unquantifiable, while the post-Gaddafi arms trade value only stands at US15-30m.

The traditional routes are currently shifting due to Algeria's sealed borders, the war in Mali and the enhancement of controls in Morocco, and the discovery of gold in Niger has provoked a congestion in Agadez.[50] For instance, due to Algeria's pressure on the border, it is now only possible to cross the Libyan border south of Ghat by foot.[51]

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46   "Under Gaddafi, the task of monitoring borders was spread across several ministries. The management of border posts and processing of visas and passports fell to the Interior Ministry's Immigration Department, while the customs regulator, the General Department for Combating Smuggling and Drugs, was part of the Finance Ministry. Patrol of maritime borders and border posts was equally fragmented between the navy, naval coastguard and Interior Ministry, with, for example, each of these bodies coordinating independently with European border forces". Cole, P., "Borderline Chaos? Stabilising Libya's Periphery", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2012, p. 4, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/stablizing_libya_periphery.pdf.

47   Cole, P., "Borderline Chaos? Stabilising Libya's Periphery", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2012, p. 4, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/stablizing_libya_periphery.pdf.

48   "Libya: a Growing Hub for Criminal Economies and Terrorist Financing in the Trans-Sahara", The Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime, 11 May 2015, p. 1, http://www.globalinitiative.net/download/global-initiative/Libya%20Criminal%20Economies%20in%20the%20trans-Sahara%20-%20May%202015.pdf.

49   Westcott, T., "Photo Essay: Libya's Highway of Smuggling", SADA, 23 February 2016, http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=62852.

50   "Contrôle des frontières et économie illicite dans l'espace sahélo-saharien: le cas du couloir migratoire Agadez/Côte Libyenne", Observatoire de l'Afrique, Brussels, 27 May 2015, http://observatoireafrique.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/COMPTE-RENDU-S%C3%A9minaire-27-mai-2015.pdf.

51   Shaw, M., and Mangan, F., "Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition: Profits and Losses", United States Institute of Peace, February 2014, p. 29, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW96-Illicit-Trafficking-and-Libyas-Transition.pdf.

As extensively explained later, the Tunisia-Libya border has always been part of this wider picture. Nomadic tribes and border communities have profited from both the open border and the actual lack of control from the central authorities, thus establishing a cross-border system of an informal economy and smuggling routes.

The following graph gives an overview of the main illicit flows that today cross the Tunisia-Libya border. Their volume has considerably increased since the collapse of Libya and now severely impacts the stability in the whole Maghreb region.

| Migrants | Weapons | Drugs | Fighters |
|---|---|---|---|
| The migrant smuggling trade skyrocketed from US$8-20m to an estimated US$255-323m per year.[52] | 10,000-20,000 firearms from post-revolutionary Libya have reached Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Tunisia.[54] | Both a transit country and a market for hashish. It comes from either West Africa or from Morocco to Tunisia and along the Libyan coast to Egypt. | Since the formal end of the French military operation in Mali, fighters relocated in Libya have refocused their activities on Tunisia. |
| The journey to Libya is supposed to cost US$800-1,000 per person for passage into Libya plus US$1,500-1,900 for the boat trip.[53] | The main flow comes from the north-west, in particular from Benghazi and Tripoli to the south-east.[55] | Libya was a transit country for cocaine and heroin but it now has become also a market in Tripoli, Benghazi and Misrata. | Tunisians trained in Libya were involved in terrorist attacks both in Libya and Tunisia. |

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52   "Libya: a Growing Hub for Criminal Economies and Terrorist Financing in the Trans-Sahara", The Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime, 11 May 2015, p. 2, http://www.globalinitiative.net/download/global-initiative/Libya%20Criminal%20Economies%20in%20the%20trans-Sahara%20-%20May%202015.pdf.

53   "Libya: a growing hub for Criminal Economies and Terrorist Financing in the Trans-Sahara", The Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime, 11 May 2015, p. 5, http://www.globalinitiative.net/download/global-initiative/Libya%20Criminal%20Economies%20in%20the%20trans-Sahara%20-%20May%202015.pdf.

54   "Libya: a Growing Hub for Criminal Economies and Terrorist Financing in the Trans-Sahara", The Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime, 11 May 2015, p. 4, http://www.globalinitiative.net/download/global-initiative/Libya%20Criminal%20Economies%20in%20the%20trans-Sahara%20-%20May%202015.pdf.

55   Shaw, M., and Mangan, F., "Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition: Profits and Losses", United States Institute of Peace, February 2014, p. 17, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW96-Illicit-Trafficking-and-Libyas-Transition.pdf.

| Migrants | Weapons | Drugs | Fighters |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9,600 migrants made the journey using this route in March 2016, four times as many as during the same period in 2015.[56] | Gaddafi's weapons cache included assault rifles, mines, shells and surface-to-air missiles.[57] | These drugs come from either the south-west from Sebha northward or along the southern border and northward to Egypt.[60] | |
| 9,000 people are currently detained in facilities operated by the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Combating Illegal Migration of the Ministry of Interior. | On the Libya-Tunisia border, due to enhanced controls, there is an important increase in arms deposits. In this area, "everyone is armed".[58] | The majority of cocaine in the EU comes now from Libya.[61] | |
| | The increase in smuggling opportunities has created a new security market where even smugglers, including from Tunisia, due to fierce competition, need to be physically protected by bodyguards.[59] | | |

## c.    Tunisia and Libya's two-way street dilemma

The chaos that prevails in Libya definitely affects Tunisia's stability on multiple levels. Firstly, Libya has a Tunisian problem in the sense that – reportedly – 3,000 out of the 6,000 estimated Tunisian foreign fighters joining terrorist organisations are currently fighting in Libya or came there to be trained.[62] Security volatility in Libya also directly affects Tunisian security in the medium term, as these groups – who cannot train or freely gather in Tunisia – represent a serious and persistent threat to the country,

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56   Gebauer, M., et al., "Failed State: Can a Unity Government Succeed in Divided Libya?", Spiegel, 20 April 2016,  http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/west-hopes-unity-government-can-pacify-libya-a-1087873.html.

57   Bakrania, S., "Libya: Border security and regional co-operation", (GSDRC Rapid Literature Review). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham, 2014, p. 4, http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/gsdrc_libya.pdf.

58   Skype interview with Western journalist based in Tunisia, 4 April 2016.

59   Shaw, M., and Mangan F., "Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition: Profits and Losses", United States Institute of Peace, February 2014, p.17, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW96-Illicit-Trafficking-and-Libyas-Transition.pdf.

60   Shaw, M., and Mangan F., "Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition: Profits and Losses", United States Institute of Peace, February 2014, p.15, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW96-Illicit-Trafficking-and-Libyas-Transition.pdf.

61   Interview with Western security representative, Tunis, 9 May 2016.

62   Interview with Western security representative, Tunis, 9 May 2016.

considering especially the lack of preventative measures[63] taken in Tunisia to tackle the FF challenge and the few effective measures taken to control the border.[64]
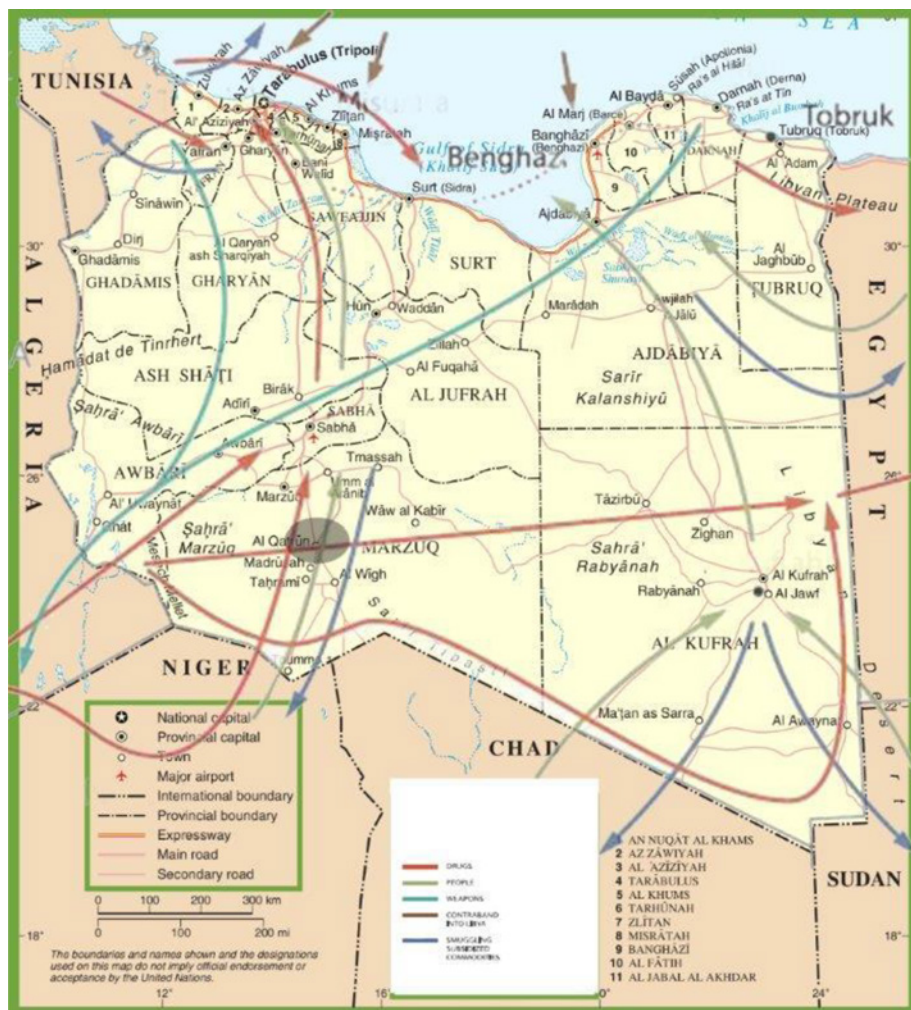
Secondly, both the security quandary in Libya and the post-transitional volatility in Tunisia have changed the dynamics in the border area. Historically, the border between Tunisia and Libya has always been characterised by constant, intense and tolerated cross-movements of people and goods. Communities on both sides (especially in towns like Ben Guerdane in Tunisia or Zwarah in Libya) have built long-standing relations and trading activities based on an informal economy in order to fill the lack of public services and provide for their own security. The contraband of subsidised Libyan goods to Tunisia has long been accompanied by the smuggling of other illegal goods such as weapons and drugs, and the trafficking of human beings. However, since 2011, patterns and actors in the trade/smuggling business have changed: the Tebu tribes have taken the place of the Tuareg as the main protagonists of the grey economy in the south of Libya;[65] militias and terrorist organisations have also infiltrated the border business and new routes have been established (see below).

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63   One interviewee in Tunis lamented the lack of willingness and ability of the Tunisian government to come up with a strategy. Interview with Western security representative, Tunis, 9 May 2016.

64   For instance, in November 2014 a kamikaze allegedly part of Islamic State blew himself up in front of the Presidential Guard. More recently, in March 2016, a hundred armed men proclaiming to be part of Islamic State launched an attack in Ben Guerdane on the border between Libya and Tunisia. In doing that, the attackers were clearly helped by Tunisians in their rank-and-files but also in the city itself. See: Bobin, F., "En Tunisie, huit morts dans des opérations antiterroristes", Le Monde, 11 May 2016, http://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2016/05/11/en-tunisie-huit-morts-dans-des-operations-antiterroristes_4917711_3210.html.

65   Nomadic tribes. The Tebu are originally from northern Chad and Niger while the Tuareg come from the west. Their main gathering/stationing points are Ghat, Ubari and Sebha in Libya; Agadez and In-Gall in Niger and Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal in Mali.

## 2.    Tunisia and Libya: Historic connections, constant flows

The present situation at the border level between Tunisia and Libya is directly inherited
from the historic relationships established between the two countries and the deep-
rooted connections among local communities on both sides of the border. As a
consequence, it appears paramount to understand past cross-border dynamics and
post-revolutionary developments. Together, they underlie the current (dis)order in the
border region and provide a fundamental overview for future actions, valid entry points
and efficient actors able to play a positive role.

With 459km of common borders (965km between Algeria and Tunisia), Tunisia and Libya never had any option other than co-operation, notwithstanding periods of diplomatic tension. This is true on both the Tunisian and Libyan sides when considering the border communities and their long marginalisation from economic and political circles. Decades of Habib Bourguiba and Ben Ali's political centralism in Tunisia have encouraged peripheral communities to develop their own survival strategy, including cross-border (informal) economies on the edge of the central state. In Libya, during Gaddafi's rule, certain areas were also deliberately left marginalised. The east was neglected, as well as the south, along with the Jebel Nafusa in the west and cities such as Derna, which hosted a huge Islamist population.

In the west of Libya, the Jebel Nafusa has always had difficult relations with the regime due to its natural configuration and its distance from the centre of power. From the 1980s, Gaddafi begun recruiting not only among its core constituencies (Warfalla, Qhadhafa, and Maqanla tribes) but also among smaller tribes in the Jebel Nafusa. The mountains are the home of the Zintani militias who had contacts with Warfalla and Qhadhafa, which Gaddafi considered to be his allies.[66]

### 2.1. Community proximity and division of labour

This section analyses in detail the level of economic and social interdependence in the border region. For decades, proximity and a sense of survival have boosted a high level of mobility of goods and people, cementing relations between the communities residing here. Understanding the role of the communities in both licit and illicit flows constitutes a striking starting point to figure out how each group could play a positive role in a grass-roots stabilisation phase.

For instance, as highlighted by international NGO Interpeace, there exist some communities in the south and the west of Libya that have indeed succeeded in avoiding the chaos and have been able to provide some services and security to their population. Our interviewee precisely stressed the need to better understand the way Libyan municipalities tackled post-revolutionary distress.[67]

Border communities, from Tunisia's Tatouine and Libya's J'farra regions, long used their historic proximity and, sometimes, their family connections to take advantage of

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66   Interestingly, the Zintanis and not the Amazigh, who actually had links to the regime through the afore-mentioned tribes, were the first to rebel in the west. The Amazigh, or Berbers, historically residing in this area had always been marginalised by Gaddafi, who preferred Arab constituencies.

67   Skype interview with Interpeace representative based in Libya, 8 June 2016.

the unchecked borders and existing national laws.[68] The great attraction of Libya for Tunisian workers and the diplomatic jolts between Tunis and Tripoli have encouraged the development of licit and illicit migration flows on both sides.

Thanks to the 1974 Union of Djerba between Tunisia and Libya,[69] the two countries established a number of measures that were aimed at facilitating, and even encouraging, cross-border flows. On the Libyan side, the bilateral agreement allows Libyan nationals to freely enter Tunisia without a visa and even grants them a number of privileges, such as the right to work and establish businesses. On the Tunisian side, the Ben Guerdane area quickly imposed itself at the heart of the regional (informal) economy. During the 1980s, for instance, around 80,000 Tunisians (including one-third of illegals) crossed the border.[70]

Before the Libyan breakdown in 2011, the majority of smuggled goods had a Tunisian origin. These products used to be exported to Libya, where they were subsidised by the Libyan 'government', to come back later in Tunisia at a cheaper price.[71]

The Tunisian researcher, Rafaâ Tabib, strongly emphasised the regional connections among Libyan and Tunisian communities. According to him, the Tunisia-Libya border has always been (more or less peacefully) shared among the nomad groups, mostly the Libyan Nouayels and the Tunisian J'farries, especially the Touazine tribes (or Twazin). He also describes a strong division of labour among communities between, for instance, the Touazines, who are known to play an intermediary and banking role for exile candidates, the Nouaiels and Zouaris who assume the wholesale functions, and the Ouerghemma (or Ouderna), who are more 'specialised' with respect to (il)licit convoys.

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68  The French colonialist penetration led to the military control of the Ben Guerdane region which became a colonial centre between 1902 and 1913. The introduction of monetary economy and formal borders strongly disrupted the relationships between local communities, but also contributed to punctually reinforcing tribal solidarity. The violent occupation of Libya by Italy in 1911-1912 strengthened these 'underground' solidarities.

69  Chena, S., « Le Maghreb après les indépendances: (re)définition, (re)composition, (re)construction », *L'Espace Politique*, No. 18, 2012-3, p. 4.

70  "*The migration flows have always been cyclical, with high amounts of cross-border flows in autumn (September-December) with the beginning of the agricultural season (especially the olive-harvesting season)*", in Natter, K., "Revolution and Political Transition in Tunisia: A Migration Game Changer?", 28 May 2015, http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/revolution-and-political-transition-tunisia-migration-game-changer.

71  One litre of Tunisian olive oil cost 3,850 Tunisian dirham, 1,700 in Libya (after being subsidised by the Libyan government) and then came back to Tunisia to be sold on the black market at 2,500 Tunisian dirham. See Tabib, R., Effets de la frontière Tuniso-Libyenne sur les recompositions économiques et sociales des Werghemmas, de la possession à la réappropriation des territoires, François Rabelais University, Tours, p. 299.

Nomads and 'warriors', the Ouderna are organised between the Ouled Abd El Hamid and Ouled Selim 'tribes'. At the bottom of the organisation are the drivers, called Tayouts, and the *Khawattas* or itinerary merchants, who operate as the most precarious daily workers.[72] The whole network is known as a *Duleb*: "*In the Duleb network, the cambists [ie the Touazine, mostly] play the most powerful role, as they are the main financiers and own large warehouses in Ben Guerdane*".[73] For Small Arms Survey's researcher Moncef Kartas, "*the dominance of the Twazin cambists from Ben Guerdane rests primarily on their financial resources, on which the traffickers from the Ouderna and other tribes depend*". He also particularly insists on cross-border community connections and strong solidarities among Tunisian and Libyan tribes: "*Even during the Libyan revolution, the Twazin cambists remain loyal to their Libyan allies, the Nwayel, who were staunch Gaddafi loyalists*".[74]

Libyan and Tunisian smugglers are strictly organised and have their own rigid hierarchy. Some are assisted by lookouts, young people who keep a watch on the movements of the security services, and drivers of commercial vehicles or 4x4s to escort convoys. Some work for an employer and therefore receive a wage (chauffeurs), while others own their own car. At the top of the *Duleb* pyramid are the wholesale trade bosses (*patrons-grossistes*). They own warehouses in the west, where goods are traded on the Tunisian-Algerian border, and are members of business cartels in Kasserine, Kef and Sakiet Sidi Youssef. In the south-east, they belong to tribal cartels from Ben Guerdane and Dhehiba, mainly controlled by the Touazine clan, which is part of the Ouerghemma confederation.[75]

Reports also point to a 'sectorial' division, or sharing, of the border among the various networks, especially among smugglers and illicit migration networks. On the one hand, "*while illicit migrants were used to cross the border between the "Kteff" and the "Jedlaouine" checkpoints (littoral and sub-littoral marshy areas), traffickers preferred southern itineraries, along the rough terrain and inaccessible areas. (…) [On the other*

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72   Tabib, R., Effets de la frontière Tuniso-Libyenne sur les recompositions économiques et sociales des Werghemmas, de la possession à la réappropriation des territoires, François Rabelais University, Tours, pp. 141 ss. and p. 288 ss., https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00662518/document.

73   Tabib, R., Effets de la frontière Tuniso-Libyenne sur les recompositions économiques et sociales des Werghemmas, de la possession à la réappropriation des territoires, François Rabelais University, Tours, https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00662518/document. See also Doron, A., « De la marge au monde : la structuration mouvementée d'une place marchande transnationale à Ben Gardane (Tunisie) », in Les Cahiers d'EMAM, No. 26, 2015.

74   Karthas, M., "On the Edge? Trafficking and Insecurity at the Tunisian-Libyan Border", Small Arms Survey, December 2013, p. 20.

75   International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders: Jihadism and Contraband", Middle East/North Africa report No. 148, 28 November 2013, p. 31.

*hand,] the area of desert between Dhehiba-Wazen and Borj el-Khadra-Ghadames, 900km to the north of Erg Marzouk, was an important point of access for Libyan military equipment on its way to Algeria and Tunisia, as well as Mali*".[76]

However, local tribes, clans and communities are not the sole active actors in this informal sector. Between 1990 and 2005, a Tunisian researcher described the role played by the Tunisian military in specialised smuggling of agricultural machinery and spare parts.[77] The police are also reportedly involved in the informal illicit trade.[78] When they are not active members of the contraband market, Tunisian officials and/or civil servants have been accused of being extensively tolerant regarding cross-border illicit activities. Tatouine or Médenine Lower Courts were, for instance, supposed to be particularly lenient toward arrested smugglers.

One of the main reasons for this political tolerance regarding illicit activities is the allegedly positive role played by these informal actors and local tribes in controlling and securing the border from negative interference or potentially dangerous flows. "*Whether under the regime of Ben Ali or today, these cartels (…) have an astonishing capacity to control movements across the borders. For example, in the north-west, on a narrow border track, neglected by the security services, a shepherd watches the vehicles go by and reports any strange vehicles to the local boss who will warn customs if the vehicle is unknown to him*".[79] The same observation was made by Rafaâ Tabib: "*When a tayoût [driver] brought back some dangerous medicine or a dangerous convict, the âamem [Touazine from the Sarrafa region and known as the "bankers" of illicit cross-border activities] are sentenced and the judgment is accepted by everyone, including the Tunisian authorities*".[80] Deeply disorganised and bypassed by new illicit networks since the revolutions, the border community Duleb could, however – if properly supported and incentivised – play a positive role in cross-border stability.

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76   International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders: Jihadism and Contraband", Middle East/North Africa report No. 148, 28 November 2013, p. 23.

77   Tabib, R., Effets de la frontière Tuniso-Libyenne sur les recompositions économiques et sociales des Werghemmas, de la possession à la réappropriation des territoires, François Rabelais University, Tours, https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00662518/document, p. 210.

78   Aliriza, F., "How Tunisia's Crooked Cops Are Undermining the Revolution", *Foreign Policy*, 9 February 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/09/how-tunisias-crooked-cops-are-undermining-the-revolution/.

79   International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders: Jihadism and Contraband", Middle East/North Africa report No. 148, 28 November 2013, p. 29.

80   Tabib, R., Effets de la frontière Tuniso-Libyenne sur les recompositions économiques et sociales des Werghemmas, de la possession à la réappropriation des territoires, François Rabelais University, Tours, pp. 273-274, https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00662518/document.

### 2.2. Economic intertwined relations or Tunisian's long dependence upon Libyan economy

For decades, Libya and Tunisia built a system of economic interdependence, sometimes outside the formal circuits. For Tunisia, Libya has long been the second trading partner after the EU. Until the Libyan crisis escalated in 2014, this country used for instance to provide more than 25% of Tunisia's fuel needs at subsidised prices. But now, Libyan oil exports are down to 200,000 barrels a day from the 1.3 million barrels exported daily in 2011.[81] In Tunis, more than 1,200 companies used to focus exclusively on the Libyan economic market (contributing up to 765 million dinars for Tunisian exports)[82] and 1,000 Tunisian companies were directly established in Libya before the revolution. In total, 95,000 Tunisians were working in Libya in 2010 and 300,000 Tunisian migrants were settled in Libya before the war.[83] Tunisians working on the other side of the border used to contribute almost 35% of the total money transfers[84] and one-third of Tunisia's gross domestic product.[85]

The formal economy is, however, only a small proportion of cross-border trade between Tunisia and Libya. According to Small Arms Survey experts, "*an estimated 1 million Tunisians have benefited directly or indirectly from informal trade with Libya, and the annual trade value reportedly surpassed $1 billion in 2010*".[86] Several factors play an aggravating role in this grey economy. Economic sanctions and the UN embargo imposed upon Libya in 1991-1992 played a great role in aggravating cross-border illicit flows. Economic disparities, then, between the two countries and Libyan traditional subsidies have encouraged the creation of "*a thriving black market in Tunisia and made*

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81   Karasapan, O., "The impact of Libyan middle-class refugees in Tunisia", *Brookings*, 17 March 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/future-development/posts/2015/03/17-libyan-refugees-tunisia-karasapan.

82   Santi, E., Ben Romdhane, S., Safouane Ben Aissa, M., « Nouvelle Libye, nouveau voisinage: Quelles opportunités pour la Tunisie? », Banque Africaine de Développement, Note analytique trimestrielle pour l'Afrique du Nord, No. 1, 2012, http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Santi%20quaterly%20f%C3%A9vrier%202012%20(bis)_Santi%20quaterly%20f%C3%A9vrier%202012%20(bis).pdf.

83   Bakrania, S., "Libya: Border security and regional co-operation", (GSDRC Rapid Literature Review). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham, 2014, p. 4, http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/gsdrc_libya.pdf.

84   Sayah, H. M., « Relations tuniso-libyennes: Solidarité interétatique ou relations de peuple à peuple? », Institut Kheireddine, December 2012, http://fr.institut-kheireddine.org/2012/12/relations-tuniso-libyennes-solidarite-inter-etatique-ou-relations-de-peuple-a-peuple/.

85   International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders (II): Terrorism and Regional Polarisation", Middle East and North Africa Report No. 41, 21 October 2014, p. 12.

86   Karthas, M., "On the Edge? Trafficking and Insecurity at the Tunisian-Libyan Border", Small Arms Survey, December 2013, p. 16.

*Ben Guerdane a shopping mecca for Tunisians*".[87] This informal trade has contributed to radically change the living conditions in Tunisian border cities, especially Ben Guerdane.

In Tunisia, the informal economy in the peripheral regions has always been tolerated by the central state which never had the means (and/or the political will) to invest in these remote areas: "*informal cross-border trade acts as a safety valve, helping to maintain social peace in regions that are neglected by the authorities*".[88]

Since 2011, cross-border trafficking has, however, significantly changed in nature (see next section), but impacts on Tunisia remain highly contrasted, from higher security risks to the economic boost engendered by the settlement of a Libyan middle class in the country.

While Tunisian and Libyan border communities had established long and mutually profitable relationships, the absence of the state from these peripheral regions had also encouraged the development of a grey economy. Well-organised and structured around traditional hierarchical lines, this border economy has played a great role in compensating for the central state's absence from these remote areas. With the Arab Spring and the Libyan collapse, however, these traditional networks have been marginalised and their ability to monitor the cross-border flows directly put into question.

## 2.3. The contrasting impact of Libya's collapse on Tunisia

With the collapse of the Gaddafi regime, 100,000 Tunisian workers had to come back to Tunisia, where they contributed to a significant increase in the unemployment rate, from 13% in May 2010 to 18.3% in May 2011. Their remittances represented 0.4-0.6% of Tunisia's GDP, which amounted to $276 million in 2011.[89]

On the Libyan side, between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Libyans crossed the border during the hostilities, while around 80,000 to 435,000 (from May 2014 to May 2015) were

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87  Packer, G., "Exporting Jihad. The Arab Spring has given Tunisians the freedom to act on their unhappiness", The New Yorker, 26 March 2016, p. 10.

88  International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders: Jihadism and Contraband", Middle East/North Africa report No. 148, 28 November 2013, p. 8.

89  Karasapan, O., "The impact of Libyan middle-class refugees in Tunisia", Brookings, 17 March 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/future-development/posts/2015/03/17-libyan-refugees-tunisia-karasapan.

internally displaced.[90] The Tunisian Red Crescent gives a figure of between 1 million
and 1.5 million, while other sources estimate that between 1 million (January 2014)
and 2 million (February 2015) Libyans have crossed the Tunisian borders.[91] Lastly,
according to open sources, Tunisia did not recognise the National Transitional Council
until August 2011, but was involved in supporting the 'revolutionaries' and welcoming
more than 600,000 refugees.[92] 200,000 of those Libyan refugees were directly housed
by Tunisian families, especially in the border regions where historic connections exist
among communities. Four refugee camps (Choucha, el-Hayet, Remada and Tatouine)
gave shelter to other tens of thousands. In total, the Libyan crisis is thought to have
precipitated the leaving of about one-third of Libyan citizens, with part of them now
settled in Tunisia, where they amount to 10% of the total population.[93]

Libyans who are residing in Tunisia can start businesses, but cannot enrol children in
public schools.[94] Middle-class Libyans are pouring money into the distressed Tunisian
economic system (€1 billion).[95]

Along with the licit and illicit migration flows coming from Libya, cross-border dynamics
also encompass the heavy presence and action of more disruptive streams that
negatively impact the situation at both the local and national levels. Without effective
measures and proper means to oversee the flows, these might in turn deeply affect
domestic security.

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90  "Investigation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Libya",
    Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 15 February 2016, p. 9,
    http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LY/A_HRC_31_47_E.pdf.

91  For details on these figures, see International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders (II): Terrorism and
    Regional Polarisation", Middle East and North Africa Report No. 41, 21 October 2014, pp. 12-13
    (including footnote 51).

92  Daragahi, B., "Libya and Tunisia strengthen ties", *Financial Times*, 4 January 2012, http://www.ft.com/intl/
    cms/s/0/1ce648c6-36e8-11e1-9ca3-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2dVrODtu7, and Sayah, H.M., "Libyan-Tunisian
    Relations – people-to-people relationships versus state-planned solidarity", Libya Herald, 12 December
    2012, http://www.libyaherald.com/2012/12/12/opinionlibyan-tunisian-relations-people-to-people-
    relationships-versus-state-planned-solidarity/.

93  For details on these figures, see International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders (II): Terrorism and Regional
    Polarisation", Middle East and North Africa Report No. 41, 21 October 2014, pp. 12-13.

94  Kausch, K., "Tunisia's Libya Problem", Fride, Nº 214 – December 2015, p. 4, http://fride.org/download/
    PB%20ingles%20214%20ok%201.pdf.

95  Kausch, K., "Tunisia's Libya problem", FRIDE, No. 214, December 2015, pp. 4-5, http://fride.org/download/
    PB%20ingles%20214%20ok%201.pdf.

### 2.4. The Tunisian-Libyan border: from state-tolerated contraband to under-the-radar and heavily armed smuggling

As was emphasised in a 2013 ICG report focusing on Tunisia's borders, "*it is the withdrawal of the police force [in the immediate aftermath of the Jasmine Revolution], especially in the [border] regions of Kasserine and Tala, that led to [a] massive increase in smuggling*".[96] However, the intensification of traffic between Tunisia and Libya also went together with a clear acceleration of 'negative' imports on the Tunisian soil, such as handguns or hunting rifles.

This 'equipment' was supposed to meet smugglers' demands for self-defence but, at the same time, it also illustrated the diminishing influence of the 'cartels' on contraband and other illicit flows coming from neighbouring countries, Libya especially: "*The circulation of drugs, arms and jihadis in the border regions is the main manifestation of this change*".[97]

According to a Western co-operation agency long settled in Tunisia, the March 2016 attack in Ben Guerdane occurred because the communities were in charge of their own security and there was no police/military presence. This system could have sufficed in pre-2011 Tunisia, but not any longer.[98]

The geography of the Tunisian-Libyan border represents a natural obstacle for both states, especially in terms of controls, patrols and check-points, and also a challenge for smugglers' networks for illicit transportation across the border. However, with 'only' 105 outposts for nearly 460km of border, many options still exist to cross the border without being noticed by either the Tunisian *Garde Nationale* or the military units that have been more recently deployed to reinforce the patrols.[99]

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96  International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders: Jihadism and Contraband", Middle East/North Africa report No. 148, 28 November 2013, p. 20.

97  International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders: Jihadism and Contraband", Middle East/North Africa report No. 148, 28 November 2013, p. 28.

98  Group interview with Tunisian and Libyan personnel working for a Western co-operation agency, Tunis, 5 May 2016.

99  The 459km Tunisian-Libyan border is mostly desert with a low population density and requires a certain familiarity with the area and all-terrain vehicles (powerful four-wheel drive cars) to find a way through it. After a marshy area that extends a few kilometres from the Mediterranean Sea to the Ras Jdir border post, a semi-desert area stretches south to the Jeffara Plain. The first 75km is sprinkled with shallow lakes (sebkhets) that dry up in summer, forming muddy terrain that only the powerful all-terrain vehicles used by experienced smugglers can pass through. It is sometimes easier to use the tracks that go around the sebkhets. After 85km of stony desert lies the village of Dhehiba, at which point the Jebel Nefoussa mountains appear on the horizon, extending in a semicircle for about 200km as far as the town of Gharyan in Libya. Finally, the 210km between Dhehiba and Borj el-Khadra runs through the south-eastern parts of the Tunisian desert, an area with restricted circulation and controlled by the army since independence", in International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders: Jihadism and Contraband", Middle East/North Africa report No. 148, 28 November 2013, pp. 13-14.

As a direct consequence of this security vacuum, arms depots are regularly discovered in Tunisian border regions. In January 2013, for instance, two large arms depots were discovered in the south-western town of Médenine in Tunisia, on the main route to Libya.[100] According to a Western journalist residing in the south of Tunisia, the arms depots are exploited by radical groups such as Islamic State and al-Qaeda affiliates.[101]

With the Libyan conflict, a sombre economy is developing, mixing old smuggled goods with drugs, firearms and Jihadi fighters. These 'modern' networks are today known as 'Islamo-gangsterism'. While this phenomenon certainly represents a new negative trend that directly impacts Tunisia's stability, it is also not to be overestimated, especially if one considers that this religious label is also used by a new generation of traders to ease their cross-border economic activities.[102]

The new Libya-Tunisia border landscape calls for immediate and effective responses, not only from the authorities of the two countries directly impacted, but also from other governments in the region, as well as their foreign partners, since smuggling/trafficking business appears today as a regional (Sahelian) problem and a direct threat to the whole region and beyond.

## 3.   Local and international responses to the cross-border threats

To tackle the threats that impact stability in the Maghreb in general and in Tunisian-Libyan relations in particular, local governments, together with their foreign partners, have implemented a series of measures designed to address the cross-border issues and pave the way to the return of stability. On the Tunisian side, for instance, all successive governments insisted on a legal repressive arsenal to discourage illicit flows and try to prevent violent extremism. Despite this focus on hard measures, the parallel work realised by Tunisian civil society organisations has led the Western

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100  Bakrania, S., "Libya: Border security and regional cooperation", (GSDRC Rapid Literature Review). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham, 2014, p. 6, http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/gsdrc_libya.pdf the presence of arms stocks on the Tunisian border was also confirmed by interviews with journalists on the ground, 4 April 2016.

101  Skype interview with Western journalist based in Tunisia, 5 April 2016.

102  "*The external signs of piety (beard, Salafi clothing) are sometimes used as a pretext to claim a share of the most lucrative trafficking in the neighbourhood. (…) The Salafi-jihadi identity seems to be increasingly used as a cover for crimes so much and so well that the existence of Ansar al-Sharia activists engaged in peaceful preaching, jihadi groups using violence against the security services but disguising themselves by not showing any visual sign of their religiosity and ordinary criminals who are sympathetic to religious extremism all form part of this mixture of Salafi-jihadism, violence and smuggling*", in International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders: Jihadism and Contraband", Middle East/North Africa report No. 148, 28 November 2013, p. 37.

international community to strongly support their efforts and even make the country one of the hugest donor recipients in the region. On the other side of the border, security deterioration and political chaos in Libya have led all the significant international stakeholders to decrease their portfolio activities or simply withdraw from the country. In the two countries, both the actions and strategies implemented have then remained partially unfitted to the current context and the growing security challenges. The following section will present a panorama of existing programmes and the main reasons for their (relative) ineffectiveness in addressing the structural causes of cross-border issues. It identifies the gaps between the national perception of the problems, grass-roots expectations and the actions implemented. By doing so, the ambition of this section is to identify the possible room for manoeuvre and the most viable entry points for local and international partners designed to effectively tackle the main factors of cross-border instability.

### 3.1. Tunisia's political and security responses:

For years, including during Ben Ali's time in power, the Tunisian authorities have been more inclined to develop the police apparatus and their repressive arsenal than to respond to the – mainly economic – root causes of insecurity. As noted by Béchir Ayari, "*The main problem in Tunisia is that the radicalisation of jihadist movements is faster than the political will and financial ability to address socio-economic issues at the country's borders*"[103] to the extent that, if not properly addressed, these issue could lead to Tunisia's 'implosion'.[104]

#### a.    The Tunisian defence and security apparatus
The Tunisian armed forces are the smallest in the Arab world (40,500 active personnel in a population of nearly 11 million); they have fought no major wars, did not play a major role in the ancient nationalist movement; are deeply underfunded, underequipped and sidelined; and have never developed the deep corporate interests that would tie them to the fate of Tunisia's autocratic rulers.[105]

Due to the absence of updated data on the exact size and scope of the Tunisian involvement in securing its own borders, the following section will focus on the nature and behaviour of the security and defence forces rather than their actions in a specific

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103  Béchir Ayari, M., "Tunisia's Grand Compromise Faces its Biggest Test", blog Crisis group, 19 March 2015, http://blog.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/2015/03/19/tunisias-grand-compromise-faces-its-biggest-test/

104  Interview with Western security representative, Tunis, 9 May 2016.

105  See Grewal, S., "A Quiet Revolution: the Tunisian Military after Ben Ali", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Regional insight, 24 February 2016, http://carnegie-mec.org/2016/02/24/quiet-revolution-tunisian-military-after-ben-ali/iucy.

area. This might provide an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Tunisian security apparatus and, in that context, a proper overview of Tunisia's available capabilities for tackling insecurity at the borders.

For decades, security services 'affiliated' to RCD's party and defence forces have been politically used and put into a competitive environment with the objective of preventing their possible interference in the political field. This did not significantly change after the revolution.[106]

The alleged collusion of the police forces with the overthrown political regime also strongly contributed to feeding the post-revolutionary distrust. The Transitional Minister of Interior, Ferhat Rahji (January-March 2011), for instance took the decision to put into early retirement 42 high-level FSI civil servants and to dissolve the *Inspection supérieure de la police nationale*, 'the police's police'. The Ennahda-led government (December 2011-January 2014) also tried to change this corps into a more 'friendly' entity. While hiring new 'accomplice' police officers, the government contributed to a significant deterioration in quality of the police apparatus. As noted, "*between 9,000 and 12,000 high school graduates joined the police force as constables or sergeants, after just one month of shared basic training and fifteen days of experience in the field. Badly trained agents, recruited in large numbers for social and electoral reasons.*"[107] Today, the *Garde Nationale* appears to be one of the most problematic corps. Accusations of corruption are numerous, as is the alleged complicity of these police units with some smuggler networks operating between the Libyan and Tunisian borders.[108] These allegations have contributed to an unprecedented increase in the level of suspicion towards the National Guard.

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106 "*Fearing an Egyptian scenario, the troika government pursued a series of measures designed to prevent a coup (appointments of officers who originated from outside of Tunis and the Sahel (…); they left vacant the position of chief of staff of the armed forces after [General Rachid] Ammar's resignation, [etc.]*", in International Crisis Group, "Reform and Security Strategy in Tunisia", Middle East and North Africa Report No. 161, 23 July 2015, p. 16.

107 International Crisis Group, "Reform and Security Strategy in Tunisia", Middle East and North Africa Report No. 161, 23 July 2015, p. 12.

108 "*In the regions adjoining the western border where armed jihadi groups operate, the corruption of some officers of the National Guard is a serious security concern: in certain circumstances a bribe is enough for a vehicle to be allowed to pass a checkpoint without being searched. The value of the bribe increases in direct proportion to the level of suspicion that the vehicle or truck provokes*", *in* International Crisis Group, "Reform and Security Strategy in Tunisia", Middle East and North Africa Report No. 161, 23 July 2015, p. 22.

### b.   A political use of the anti-terrorism legal arsenal

The first anti-terrorism law, enacted in December 2003 (law 2003-75), has been primarily used against dissident youth and (religious) opponents.[109]

Ben Ali jailed thousands of suspected Islamists, including members of Ennahda, and used this repressive arsenal to target youth without hearings. By doing so, the regime (in)directly encouraged some of them to join more active and radical fronts.[110]

Despite the rise of Ben Ali's former opponents to power, the issue of terrorism remains heavily politicised and anti-terrorist legislation is still primarily used as a legal instrument to tackle political and social unrest. In the first half of 2015, the anti-terrorism laws led to the arrest of a hundred thousand Tunisians – 1% of the overall population.[111]

In spite of the recurrence of terrorist attacks since 2012, the Tunisian government still appears strongly inclined towards tackling the violence through security means only, rather than adopting a strategically wider and more comprehensive approach able to address the political and socio-economic issues underlying this security conundrum[112]. In addition to this, the Tunisian government managed to build a rhetoric which scapegoated Libya as being the main source of regional instability. Blaming everything on Libya will play into the hands of the Tunisian government but only temporarily as, whilst this neighbour is a major source of instability, it is not the mother of all of Tunisia's problems. As emphasised by one interviewee, "*the continuing statements [from Tunisian officials] against Libya can only buy some time but [they] will never solve the root causes [of instability]*".[113] Heavy-handed measures adopted by the Tunisian government, such as the state of emergency, curfews, border closures, travel restrictions and widening the

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109  The "*terrorism threat is being successfully exploited by those political actors not interested in structural reforms*", in International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders (II): Terrorism and Regional Polarisation", Middle East and North Africa Report No. 41, 21 October 2014.

110  "*The government action was violence, the reaction was the same nature, and some Tunisian young people have been attracted to Al Qaeda and so on*", in Packer, G., "Exporting Jihad. The Arab Spring has given Tunisians the freedom to act on their unhappiness", The New Yorker, 26 March 2016, p. 9.

111  Figures cited in Packer, G., "Exporting Jihad. The Arab Spring has given Tunisians the freedom to act on their unhappiness", The New Yorker, 26 March 2016, p. 24.

112  "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 (…) 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", in International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders (II): Terrorism and Regional Polarisation", Middle East and North Africa Report No. 41, 21 October 2014, p. 7.

113  Interview with Libyan expert, Tunis, 9 May 2016.

power of the security forces, have been only partially effective in tackling the terrorist threat coming from Libya and, more importantly, have fuelled a strong popular dissent towards the regime's unchanged habits and anxiety regarding the possible further restrictions of civil liberties in the name of state security.[114]

### c.    The lack of comprehensive measures to tackle the security threats

The political use of Tunisian domestic and regional insecurity has had the collateral consequence of deepening polarisation within society, mostly over the debate on political Islam.

Beyond police repression against dissenting youth in Tunisia, the government also intends to better control the flow of young Tunisians tempted into joining armed groups abroad by barring citizens under the age of 35 from travelling abroad without parental consent: 6,000 young Tunisian men have apparently thus been prevented from travelling to Syria,[115] and 2,000 for the first trimester of 2016 alone.[116]

However, the Tunisian government has not yet adopted a comprehensive programme nor taken any political or legislative action to tackle the issue of Tunisians who have successfully joined armed groups abroad and then returned to the country. Tunisian passivity in the field of returnees' rehabilitation represents a clear risk for the country's stability in the near future.

At the military level, the most recent emblematic measure taken by Tunisian officials since the last major attacks was the building of a "wall" (which is in fact a moat) at the Libyan border. However, this wall appears more a way to reassure local populations than a real military obstacle able to stop, once and for all, cross-border illicit flows.[117]

Lastly, as part of the very few preventative measures, the launch in March 2016 of the 'Ghodwa Khir' campaign ('tomorrow will be better') to counter and prevent religious radicalism and communicate with respect to the true values of moderate Islam is an encouraging example. Parallel to that campaign, the Tunisian government also announced the opening of a national hotline and training sessions for imams and

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114  International Crisis Group, "Tunisia's borders (II): Terrorism and Regional Polarisation", Middle East and North Africa Report No. 41, 21 October 2014, p. 7.

115  Githens-Mazer, J., Serrano, R., Dalrymple, T., "The curious case of the Tunisian 3,000", Open Democracy, 19 July 2014, https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/jonathan-githensmazer-rafael-serrano-trahaearn-dalrymple/curious-case-of-tunisian-3000.

116  "Tunis: 2,000 stopped from going to war zones", Al Arabiya, 10 May 2016, https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/africa/2016/05/09/Tunisia-2-000-stopped-from-going-to-conflict-zones-.html.

117  Skype Interview with Western journalist based in Tunisia, 5 April 2016.

preachers to deliver specific lessons in mosques.[118] In addition to that, some radical imams were also expelled, including Houcine Laabidi, the self-proclaimed imam of the Medina Mosque in Zitouna.

### 3.2. International economic assistance: the Tunisian 'poster child'

Thanks to the regime's overthrow and the relative absence of popular violence during the revolutionary process, Tunisia became a major point of interest and attention for foreign partners. Unanimously acknowledged as an example of peaceful transition (Nobel prize for the Tunisian quartet), Tunisia is also strongly supported in its politically 'consensual' way of managing the post-revolutionary phase. Today, the Ennahda/Nidaa Tounes coalition is supposed to illustrate this unique formula. However, the country is still fragile and volatility on both the security and political sides is still capable of reversing the nascent process of democratisation.

However, thanks to a well-sustained good image (and to the absence of any credible competitor in the region), the country proposed itself as one of the main 'poster child' recipients of the international community in the Maghreb. As recently noted by a Carnegie expert, "*the international community has a tendency to shift its attention away from democratising states prematurely, at a time when trends can still deteriorate dramatically*".[119] This caveat is shared by Omer Karasapan, Regional Knowledge and Learning Co-ordinator at the World Bank Group, for whom "*Tunisia is surrounded by armed turmoil and extremist threats on its borders and within. The economic conditions that led to the 2011 revolution persist. Now is the time to double down on assisting the Tunisians*".[120]

In 2011, a couple of months after the 'end' of the revolution, the European Commission decided to double its financial assistance to Tunisia to €160 million. The country has already received nearly €200 million under one of the EU's first round of state-building contracts and has also been selected as one of the pilot projects for the EU's new democracy strategy. In May 2016, the World Bank Group officially ratified a five-year $5 billion plan with the country, while the International Monetary Fund has already approved Tunisia's request for a new $3 billion credit line.

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118  Maligorne, C., « La Tunisie en quête d'une stratégie antiterroriste », Le Figaro, 12 March 2016.

119  Youngs, R., "A New Phase in Tunisia's Transition", Carnegie Europe, 2 March 2015, http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/?fa=59219.

120  Karasapan, O., "The impact of Libyan middle-class refugees in Tunisia", Brookings, 17 March 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/future-development/posts/2015/03/17-libyan-refugees-tunisia-karasapan.

At the bilateral level, France has decided to support the country's efforts toward democratisation and is about to launch a new four-year democracy programme for the country costing up to €1 billion. At the same time, Italy has given €1 million to support Tunisian democracy through the UN Development Programme.

On the military side, the United States appear to be one of Tunisia's main partners in the fight against insecurity and terrorism. As noted in a recent foreign policy paper, "*the US has increased military assistance to Tunisia by 200% from 2014. $81.9-million worth of military and security gear in 2016, including 12 Black Hawk helicopters (eight of which are to be delivered this year), along with Hellfire missiles, machine guns, night-vision goggles, and much more. (…) [Analyst at the Security Assistance Monitor, Seth Binder] said that he believed most of the funds going to Tunisia are being directed toward the military, rather than the Interior Ministry, infamous for its corruption, and which oversees the country's hated police and internal security services and was used to crush political dissent under the former Ben Ali regime.*"[121] However, experts doubt that the small Tunisian military, "*historically marginalised and underequipped by Tunisian rulers afraid of a military coup – has the capacity to absorb all the aid.*"[122] Tunisia therefore appears to be the new North African interlocutor for the US and the new favoured recipient for their money and armaments after decades of Algerian *de facto* monopoly.

At the private economic level, however, international support and diplomatic confidence towards the Tunisian regime seem not to be shared by private investors. In 2014 alone, for instance, EU investment in Tunisia fell by 50% as reforms stalled.[123]

Security expectations and demands for international military support are growing. The country's needs are colossal, especially to better control and monitor the continuous flows of illicit goods and people coming from Libya, or from Algeria through the Chaambi mountains. Options for international support are numerous. It "*could be in the form of counter-terrorism advice; it could be training in command and control to assist the often poorly co-ordinated units of the military and security forces; or it could be technological help in monitoring the vast desert spaces on the Libyan border. The country also needs aid to ensure the socio-economic development and stability of communities living within the border areas*". However, Tunisia "*must [also] insulate itself from the regional interventions that we have seen in Libya, including, for instance, air force bombing raids by Egypt. At the same time, Tunisian parties should resist the temptation to invite outside powers to*

121  Kimball, S., "Tunisia's getting more guns than democracy", *Foreign Policy*, 21 April 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/21/tunisias-getting-more-guns-than-democracy/.

122  Kimball, S., "Tunisia's getting more guns than democracy", *Foreign Policy*, 21 April 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/21/tunisias-getting-more-guns-than-democracy/.

123  Youngs, R., "A New Phase in Tunisia's Transition", Carnegie Europe, 2 March 2015, http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/?fa=59219.

*support themselves or their causes, because this will just import Libya's violent polarisation into their own country*".[124]

### 3.3. Libya's mayhem: the difficulties of the international community in engaging Libya's authorities

In 2011, after six months of armed conflict and an international military intervention, the United Nations established the United Nations Support Mission for Libya (UNSMIL). Since then, the political process supported by the UN has yet to resolve the power vacuum.

The level of polarisation reached its acme in 2014 when new elections prompted a civil war, the formation of two parallel governments (one in Tripoli, the General National Congress, and the other the House of Representatives, in Tobruk/Bayda) and the transfer of all the international institutions to Tunis.

In December 2015, in Skhirat (Morocco), the UNSMIL achieved an agreement which sought the formation of a third new entity, the Government of National Accord,[125] which now enjoys the support of the international community. The need to form a legitimate government is considered pivotal by the international community. Since GNA's 'Premier', Fayez al-Serraj, set foot in Tripoli in March 2016, Western foreign ministers have rushed to the Libyan capital to show their support (eg foreign ministers from the UK, France, Italy and the Netherlands). Indeed, the new government has a full schedule. Amid the most urgent issues, it must (i) reunite all the regional fighting factions (especially Haftar's militia) under a sole umbrella, (ii) wage war against Islamic State and (iii) address the Europe-bound migrant crisis. The issues of border security and the threats stemming from cross-border illegal activities permeating all of Libya's borders does not appear to be one of the most pivotal issues. The only border that has been the object of attention is the maritime one and for that reason the European Union has extended and reinforced the mandate of *Operation Sophia* whose area of intervention, however, remains Libya's high seas.[126]

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124 Béchir Ayari, M., "Tunisia's Grand Compromise Faces its Biggest Test", blog Crisis group, 19 March 2015, http://blog.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/2015/03/19/tunisias-grand-compromise-faces-its-biggest-test/

125 UNSMIL, Libyan Political Agreement, 17 December 2015, https://unsmil.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=miXuJYkQAQg%3D&tabid=3559&mid=6187&language=fr.

126 In June 2016 the Security Council authorised member states to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya believed to be in violation of the arms embargo.

Firstly, the reintegration of hundreds of thousands of non-state armed fighters will be one of the major issues for Libya to face for years to come.[127] As of June 2016, as a first step towards forming a national force, the GNA has created the Presidential Guard. According to several interviewees, the building of a national army will co-exist alongside the work with the militias. According to one interviewee, the Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process in Libya will never be 100% complete, thus meaning that Libya might have an hybrid security apparatus.[128]

Secondly, the need to fight Islamic State may lead to a new military intervention by the international community, whose scope, mandate and configuration are however still largely unclear.[129] With Libyan forces entering Sirte in June 2016, it is foreseeable that, if weakened, Islamic State will have to relocate. The immediate move could then be to scatter in the Libyan desert and infiltrate neighbour countries, helped by the porous and unchecked Libyan borders. As a consequence, the increased pressure on the borders will require additional public means to prevent further threats and new attacks.

Thirdly, the solutions envisaged by the European Union to implement border security and stem the flow of refugees have proved insufficient, as the flows are far from being controlled in the past, as testified by the drowning of more than 700 people in the last week of May 2016.[130]

The EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) mission was created in 2013 to advise, mentor and train Libyan authorities in managing border controls. In 2014, due to the worsening security situation, the mission moved from Tripoli to Tunis and, in

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127 In 2012, attempts were made to deal with 75,000 militiamen through the MOI, MOD and Labour each reintegrating 25,000, but registration was a problem and at some point 200,000 people registered. Cole, P., and McQuinn, B., (eds.), The Libyan Revolution and its Aftermath, Hurst: London, 2015, p. 139.

128 Group interview with Tunisian and Libyan personnel working for a Western co-operation agency and Interview with Libyan expert, Tunis, 4 and 9 May 2016.

129 After months of talks, the United States, the European and Arab nations have yet to make concrete military commitments to what is known as the Libya International Assistance Mission. Italy has promised to provide at least half of the resources for that effort, which could bring thousands of Italian or other European troops to Tripoli to advise local forces on securing the capital. But, in a reflection of European nations' reluctance to get pulled into a risky overseas campaign, Rome has also laid out a series of conditions for sending troops, including a UN Security Council resolution (obstructed by Russia) and – most problematically – adequate security in Tripoli before Italian troops will be deployed. Ryan, M., and Raghavan, S., "Another Western intervention in Libya looms", Washington Post, 3 April 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/another-western-intervention-in-libya-looms/2016/04/03/90386fde-f76e-11e5-9804-537defcc3cf6_story.html.

130 Kingsley, P., "More than 700 migrants feared dead in three Mediterranean sinkings", The Guardian, 29 May 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/29/700-migrants-feared-dead-mediterranean-says-un-refugees.

October 2014, the capacity of the mission was drastically reduced.[131] As for UNSMIL, Dr. Younes Abouyoub, a political adviser to the mission, noted in 2014 that "*the mission's consultative and advisory mandate – and, no doubt, its model of parachuting in technical experts – has been of limited value in a country with few pre-existing institutions or a functioning government to implement its recommendations.*"[132]

Notwithstanding the conciliatory role of the UN, the technical and policing support of the EU, and the successful creation of a new recognised government, the situation in Libya remains extremely volatile and engaging Libyan authorities at the national level is still problematic, whilst this is doable in Tunisia.

The work with the municipalities in the border regions and communities in general is considered by the Clingendael research team to be paramount. This is because these communities have always been kept on the margins of metropolitan society, far from decision-making processes, economic flows and service delivery. They have thus built their own support system based on an informal economy and smuggling/trafficking. Now, in post-revolutionary contexts and at a time where national systems in both Tunisia and Libya have been infiltrated by militias and terrorist organisations, it is the duty of the international community (with the support of national authorities) and local governments to empower border communities in such a way that they can act as a counterbalance to negative influences. The path to doing so is not going back to the unchecked smuggling economy, nor is it to destroy all informal activities (thus leading to the collapse of numerous communities). Long-standing solutions are also not to be looked at: repressive arsenals developed, for instance, by Tunisian governments and which have so far proved inefficient in discouraging violent extremism from prospering or stopping illicit flows which hamper national stability. Cross-border flows need to be better monitored and authorities in the border region should be empowered with appropriate expertise, training, resources and equipment designed to support them in more effectively tackling the destabilising threats. Some viable options should then be explored in order to effectively support local and regional stakeholders directly confronted with cross-border instability. As part of the propositions emphasised in the report, the research team has stressed the importance of strengthening local institutions and beneficial practices, better service delivery to peripheral communities and the implementation of comprehensive counter-narratives targeting the most vulnerable groups. The shift from an illicit to semi-licit economy could a) stem the flow of people and goods, b) reduce the number of people engaged in smuggling and c) prevent people from joining criminal/terrorist organisations as a result of lack of opportunities.

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131  European External Action Service (EEAS), Interim Strategic Review of EUBAM Libya, 13 April 2015, p. 7, http://www.statewatch.org/news/2015/jun/eu-eeas-interim-report-UBAM-7886-15.pdf.

132  Snyder M. R., "As Peace Talks Resume in Libya, Is the UN's "Light Footprint" Up to the Task?", *International Peace Institute*, 12 February 2015, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2015/02/libya-peace-talks-resume-dialogue-unsmil/.

# Conclusions and policy recommendations

This Clingendael report aims to analyse the current complexity behind the Maghreb scene, especially between Tunisia and Libya; two countries which, in the eyes of their neighbours, increasingly appear to be two main sources of insecurity in the region. While exaggerated, the assertion is however highly representative of common diplomatic opinions in the region. While Libya is unanimously considered as a failed state, a black hole or, even worse, a sanctuary for armed groups and terrorist organisations, Tunisia is still perceived by its Western partners as a strong and committed actor against instability in the Maghreb. However, all the interviewees in Tunis stressed the precarious situation Tunisia is experiencing. Expressions used were 'at risk of implosion' and 'pressure cooker' to describe the current situation. They lamented the lack of a clear strategy for the future and the daily disputes between Tunisian elites, which directly affect the situation in the southern regions. The country indeed has invested a lot of resources in repressive measures aimed at tackling the border security threat and preventing other destabilising attacks against the country or its economy. These efforts are, however, significantly counter-balanced by other inherent difficulties on the ground (border geography, mostly), the numerous socio-economic challenges to tackle, the political uncertainties and the absence of viable and legitimate partners on the other side of the border.

As discussed in the course of this report, the UN mission in Libya (UNSMIL) is struggling with the formation of a legitimate and recognised government, while EUBAM's efficacy in strengthening Libya's security has been questioned. In order to encourage/maximise greater effectiveness of international aid at a border level, the Clingendael research team stressed the understanding of local needs and bottom-up approaches as viable entry points for long-standing stabilisation. Central states and governments generally appear as traditional entry points for international assistance, while municipalities and local communities, which are supposed to be the final recipients of aid are, in fact, regularly dispossessed. However, since these local entities are located at the forefront of regional destabilising influences and do not have the proper means to protect themselves nor to anticipate the threat, the international community urgently needs to identify the options to better target the groups and institutions that need immediate support.[133] Among the positive outcomes to be

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133  For a detailed discussion on the local needs and grass-roots projects currently running and partly funded by the international community see Annexe 1.

expected from a new assistance paradigm focused on local entities and populations are: (i) a greater effectiveness of international assistance in the Tunisian-Libyan border region and a better match between foreign aid and local needs; and (ii) a limitation of economic 'line-drops' and charged intermediaries.

## 1. Shifting from the state to municipalities: a preferred paradigm for international assistance

In the course of this report, the Clingendael researchers have outlined the factors and actors characterising Libyan and Tunisian post-revolutionary landscapes. The authors have also highlighted the long-standing relations between Libya and Tunisia at both the local and national levels, and the need for foreign donors to deal with this interconnection/intertwining challenge. We insisted on bottom-up strategies to address the root causes of instability and to efficiently deal with illicit and destabilising cross-border flows. In that context, the following section will firstly present the local context the stakeholders from the region and elsewhere will have to deal with, the efforts that need to be implemented to tackle current instability and prevent any further deterioration and, lastly, the preferred and most viable options for co-ordinated and comprehensive action.

Both Libya and Tunisia have historically centralised political power and 'selective' development policies towards the coastal regions, in particular, where elites from both countries originated. This means that decision-making and service delivery have always been highly dependent on the capitals' decisions and central (mal)functioning. Similarly, but with various degrees and motives, both regimes left large swathes of their periphery under-ruled, with weak public services and lacunas in goods delivery, infrastructures and, of course, portions of national territories under the influence of non-state actors/groups. Coupled with the security deterioration engendered after 2011 by both the Libyan collapse and the Tunisian revolution, this has led to a considerable deepening of the gap between capitals and peripheral cities or suburbs. In Tunisia, the local expression of 'Makhnouk' clearly depicts this feeling of peripheral abandonment. Urgent action should now be taken in order to properly address those disparities and gaps. If not, these border regions could permanently escape government authority and become permanent hubs of instability, thus isolating even further the local populations from national support.

Following the "Arab Spring", the revolution in Tunisia and the civil war in Libya, the subtle equilibrium upon which communities in border peripheral areas used to live in the absence of the state has been challenged. New and less monitored/darker networks struggled to replace the ones established for decades in the border region and weakened the traditional controls that long prevented the total collapse of the peripheral regions. For this reason, it is paramount for the international community to assist central

governments' initiatives and efforts to empower the peripheral communities through a) decentralisation of power and service delivery to the municipalities and b) support for international CSOs working in the field.

Hence, and due to the national volatile situation in Libya, the Clingendael research team stressed that the most efficient and straightforward way for foreign partners and local actors to support long-standing regional stability runs through bottom-up solutions. Even in the Tunisian context, political and security dynamics still remain partially volatile and the forthcoming local elections in March 2017 could aggravate local uncertainties. Political use of popular distress or community tensions cannot be totally excluded, and nor can the security sensitivity related to electoral contexts and events that could directly impact local or national stability. The next elections will be of paramount importance, as they might or might not end the enforced administration of special delegations and thus give (or not give) legitimacy to local actors.

Also, and contrary to common perception and Western postures in times of security dilemmas, the report and its policy recommendations place emphasis on non-strictly military options for tackling the current security conundrum. Military options are necessary, but they need to be part of more inclusive and comprehensive approaches that are solely able to address the root causes of instability.

Local entities, such as municipalities, active civil society organisations, community leaders or religious representatives should then be put at the centre of post-revolutionary reconstruction and stabilisation programmes. They should be empowered with means, valuable expertise and targeted training in order to make them able to act and effectively address cross-border problems.

## 2. Implementing local programmes in Tunisia and Libya: observations and recommendations

To overcome decades-long centre-periphery disparities which benefit the coastal areas and the capitals in both Tunisia and Libya, decentralisation should be immediately boosted, in particular concerning the provision and allocation of services (and to foster local ownership) to provide local authorities with the proper means to tackle the cross-border destabilising dynamics.[134]

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134 In 2012, the General National Congress (GNC) adopted Law 59, which 'delegates' functions of state authority to local administrative units (LAUs). Although the law gives a greater role to LAUs, they still remain financially dependent on central government (which still delivers services through state-owned enterprises).

Strengthening community resilience in both Tunisia and Libya – either by providing economic opportunities to the populations and local networks or assisting local authorities to better tackle the cross-border threats – may stem the massive flow of illicit trafficking especially of migrants, drugs and weapons back and forth across the Tunisian-Libyan border. On the other hand, building a more cohesive and conducive environment may prevent young people from joining the armed groups and/or terrorist organisations as a solution to social stagnation, unemployment and the lack of opportunities and general perspectives.

### a) In Libya

The work through municipalities, fostered by local actors or by international stake-holders in co-operation with local stakeholders, is paramount. Libyans are not used to foreign interference and even appear to be highly suspicious of the current foreign aid presence. The political stabilisation process supported by the UN is seen as something unavoidable, but that helps to manage Libya's foreign obligations. However, when it comes to domestic affairs, international support, which is very much needed, should be carefully channelled.

The international aid and support programmes to Libya are currently co-ordinated by UNSMIL with the logistical assistance of the German Embassy in Tunis, where active International NGOs working in the field of development gather in order to co-ordinate the massive donor funding Libya is receiving.

Libya and Tunisia, whilst being historically connected, have different expectations and also express different needs to support their own domestic stabilisation trajectory. In Libya, political authorities need, first and foremost, technical assistance to strengthen their historically weak institutions[135] and services.

As of June 2016, several organisations are operating in Libya and new projects have begun, following the chaotic year of 2014. So far, the projects running in Libya mostly focus on local government support and help the municipalities in many fields: capacity building, service delivery, job creation and support to local Civil Society Organisations.

It is important to note that, in Libya, due to the volatile situation at both the political and security levels, and the presence/proliferation of militias and community vigilantes, none of the international NGOs contacted during this study is working in the security field, but only in the development sphere. Some interviewees even stressed the need to refrain from politically-sensitive activities in order to be tolerated by both the population and/or the armed groups operating on the ground. As the militias will maintain their power in

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135  Skype interview with Spark's representative, 20 May 2016.

the foreseeable future, the issue of *how* to deal with them will be at the centre of policy for every international actor working in the country.

### b) In Tunisia

Even before the revolution, the international community had been present and active in supporting the Tunisian state, at both national and local level, through decentralised co-operation. Since 2011 and the "Arab Spring" waves in the region, Tunisia appears to be the sole successful example (on paper) of a peaceful and truly democratic transition. This positive image has encouraged the growing involvement of foreign sponsors.

Due to a less unstable situation than in Libya, the long-standing history of Tunisian public institutions and political culture and the presence of a central government, there exist programmes engaging national authorities (see Annex 1). In Tunisia, foreign Western forces also assist and train the local security and defence forces to allow them to better tackle the growing threats coming from neighbouring countries and from the inside. However, as well as in Libya, foreign presence in the country is not unanimously accepted and could even be sometimes strongly rejected, especially for sovereignty-sensitive matters such as military training, for instance. While local, technical training for communal police or customs agents will be well accepted and is even requested by some Tunisian representatives interviewed by the authors, the defence sector appears too sensitive to be part of foreign and multi-lateral stabilisation programmes (except when it comes to asking for 'equipment', and even if bilateral initiatives exist and appear to be generally accepted). Apart from visible US military co-operation in building the 'wall' at the Libyan border, all the interviewees agreed on the fact that a mission along the lines of EUTM (military training), EUBAM (border control) or EUCAP (comprehensive stabilisation, including strategic training) could hardly take place in Tunisia. Contacts interviewed laid stress on local perceptions that mostly see these operations and missions as being too intrusive.

The southern Tunisian city of Ben Guerdane, 25km from the Libyan border, is a clear illustration of shifts and changes induced by the Tunisian and Libyan post-revolutionary security evolutions. While the city used to be one of the main centres for (informal) trade and cross-border relations with Libya,[136] both the 'Jasmine Revolution' follow-up and the Libyan security conundrum have heavily destructured and disorganised the prevailing cross-border networks and community equilibriums.

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136  See Tabib, R., Effets de la frontière Tuniso-Libyenne sur les recompositions économiques et sociales des Werghemmas, de la possession à la réappropriation des territoires, François Rabelais University, Tours, p. 289, https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00662518/document. He describes the consequence of the 1970s oil boom in Libya which had been the main cause of cross-border smuggling and contraband between Tunisia and Libya. "Ben Guerdane, a Twazin fiefdom, emerged as a central hub for contraband of much-appreciated or unaffordable goods in Tunisia".

The terrorist attack in the city in March 2016 shone a light on the new dynamics that need to be locally addressed: porous borders, local existing connections and the support necessary to plan and conduct the assault. Old hierarchies and community roles are now perturbed by the new nature and volume of illicit flows coming from Libya and the new influence recently gained by non-state actors on both sides of the border. Action needs to be urgently taken in order, firstly, to prevent any other massive security destabilisation coming from the other side of the border and, secondly, to discourage – through both the repressive (legal arsenal and security/military actions) and preventative (counter-narratives, economic opportunities) means – local collusion with domestic and foreign armed groups and terrorist organisations.

## 3.    Policy recommendations

Due to:
(i)  the political and security volatility in Libya and the difficulty, in that context, for international actors to work with clearly identified, locally and globally accepted legitimate counterparts: and
(ii) the historical lacunas of the Tunisian central state in developing its peripheral regions and engaging the local population in an inclusive way

The Clingendael research team focuses on local entry points as a viable and effective option to tackle cross-border insecurity in both countries. However, these local options should not be exclusive of national strategies designed to address the global security issues that both Tunisia and Libya are facing. On the contrary, 'top-down' strategies and local stabilisation efforts should be part of the same dual-track approach, designed to address at the same time the root causes of cross-border instability and pave the way for a comprehensive action plan.

**For the Tunisian government:**
–  To create the material conditions for a 'free and fair' scrutiny in anticipation of the forthcoming local elections in March 2017, which have been postponed several times since 2014 and which have left the municipalities in the hands of special delegations instead of local mayors. This scrutiny is calling for urgent preventative security measures aimed at (i) preventing the risk of major attacks during the electoral campaign and (ii) making sure that Tunisians all over the country will be free and secure to vote.
–  To foster the decentralisation process by giving to all municipalities the political responsibilities and economic means they urgently need to tackle the local threats coming from neighbouring countries and from within the country.
–  To engage as soon as possible with the local authorities and the community leaders in order to foster a fruitful and constructive dialogue with vulnerable and marginalised groups, especially the youth. The Tunisian government needs to

mobilise all interested parties and influential organisations in elaborating effective counter-narrative strategies, able to prevent radicalism from winning hearts and minds and radical organisations prospering in peripheral and neglected areas.

– To pave the way to a long-term restructuring of the Tunisian defence and security forces in order (i) to recreate a sense of cohesion after the post-revolutionary integration of new military and police officers, (ii) to give them the appropriate means (training and equipment) to efficiently tackle the security threats and (iii) to foster co-operation between them.

– To encourage the Tunisian authorities to articulate their needs in terms of assistance, intelligence, training and/or equipment for their defence and security forces in order to address the cross-border threats and to prevent any further destabilisation coming from Libya. To do so, a comprehensive White Book on Defence and National Security, gathering inputs from all the corps and actors involved in the stabilisation process (police, customs, military, judicial, etc) would certainly help the Tunisian authorities to assess their 'vital' priorities, while being at the same time a powerful instrument to maximise their strategic relationships with their foreign sponsors.

**For the Tunisian government, with the support of the international community:**
– To create conditions conducive to sustainable grass-roots development in order to effectively address Tunisia's youth unemployment which today represents one of the most urgent challenge to stability.

– To continue the mapping out of CSOs and their work at the local level and especially in the border regions, with particular attention paid to Islamic relief organisations operating in the south.

– To foster the local empowerment of actors and civil society organisations involved in local projects and programmes that directly benefit the population.

– In the medium term, to articulate and invest in a comprehensive programme aimed at tackling the threat posed by Tunisian foreign fighters who could decide to return, in close co-ordination with local leaders, civil society organisations and foreign partners.

**For the internationally-recognised Libyan authorities:**
– To continue the internationally-backed political process with the purpose of establishing a cohesive and stable environment for Libyan citizens and fostering national unity after years of divisive behaviour.

– To refrain from resorting to regional powers and foreign national interests and strategic agendas to exacerbate an already divided situation.

– To work closely with internationally-funded non-governmental organisations to support those projects aimed at repairing the social fabric. In that context, those civil society organisations working on peripheral areas and issues that directly concern grass-roots stabilisation should be urgently supported.

**For the international community in Libya:**
– To continue supporting the national political process in the most inclusive way, thus overcoming regional and tribal divisions.
– To boost support at a technical level, emphasising the strengthening of Libyan central and peripheral institutions.
– To continue supporting international CSOs working with local actors, Libyan universities and local associations active in the field of reconstruction or assistance to vulnerable groups, such as youth, women and minorities.
– To boost regional initiatives with the purpose of understanding and tackling the illegal flows in the Sahel, not only in Libya.
– To initiate, together with identified/legitimate actors on the ground, a broader reflection on future DDR programmes aimed at addressing the future threat posed by the presence of several militias and the negative impact their actions could have on long-standing stability.

**For the Dutch government:**
– To confirm/renew/update and boost its support to international NGOs, in particular international civil society organisations working in Libya and Tunisia and engaged in cross-border activities.
– To engage with Tunisian authorities and other interested parties on stability issues in the Maghreb region and support Tunis' efforts to draft a comprehensive strategy able to tackle, in the long run, the conducive cross-border factors of insecurity.
– Depending on Tunis' interest, bilateral or multilateral training modules for Tunisian local corps (elected officials, customs, municipal police) would significantly help to strengthen border-control capabilities and increase awareness of regional threats.
– To enlarge the scope of attention and priority to other potential cross-border sources of instability elsewhere in the region, especially those connected to other unstable environments in the Sahel. For instance, the Salvador Triangle in Niger should be included as a core element of regional stabilisation and addressed as such by the international community.[137]
– And thus to co-operate with local actors in both the mapping of migration dynamics in the Sahel and the designing of regional strategies together with the countries affected, in particular with Libya as the main departing country, and with Niger as the main transiting country.

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137  Niger and French military presence in Madama, near the Salvador Triangle and close to the Libyan border, represents today the unique security fingerprint in the area.

# Annex one: Overview of International Civil Society Organisations active in Libya and Tunisia

The information in this table was kindly provided by the representatives of the CSOs referred to below:

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **American Bar Association**[138] | USA | Libya | 1. Capacity building of local council officials on public finance management.<br>2. Supporting local community dialogue events on constitutional issues in locations across Libya.<br>3. Examining possible further assessment of Law 59. | | | | |
| **ACTED**[139] | France | Libya<br>Tunisia | **For Libya:**<br>– Humanitarian affairs since 2015 with the support of both the EU and the UN. The actions undertaken focus on Eastern Libya and aim at financially supporting IDPs in the region.<br>– Since 2012, ACTED has also supported the Libyan civil society organisations, with the support of the EU. This project focuses on training (several training centres in Benghazi, Tripoli, Misrata, etc) and local development. ACTED works with Libyan CSOs and several universities.<br>ACTED's programmes in Libya are implemented under the Civil Initiative Libya's umbrella (multi-donor programmes). | | (figures only for Libya) €800,000 for six months for the 'humanitarian' programme. €4m for two years for the CSO project. | EU<br>UN<br>France<br>Sweden<br>Switzerland | |

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **For Tunisia:** In partnership with the university of Tunis, ACTED supports the training of local executives. In Sousse, ACTED also develops a project for youth mobility. | | | | |
| **Aktis Strategy**[140] | UK | Libya & Tunisia | 1: SSR national level. 2: Community engagement/ Kasserine region. 3. In Libya Libyan municipalities and CSOs on developing zones of security and improved local governance in co-operation with the National Safety Authority and Ministry of Interior. | Active in Tunisia for 2½ years | Pr. No 1; first year was £600,000/ second year was £2m | UK Gov | |
| **Crown Agents**[141] | UK | Libya | Running a programme providing experts to develop the capacity of civil servants in national level institutions. | | | | |
| **Deutsche Welle Akademie**[142] | Germany | Libya | Three projects, the main one being 'citizen service', where Libyan citizens can send their questions which are then answered by different civil sector experts located by DW | | | | |

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **GIZ**[143] | Germany | Libya mostly & Tunisia | In Tunis, work with the Centre de Formation et d'Appui à la Décentralisation and the Ministry for Local Affairs to organise training and work on the curriculum. In Libya, work with municipalities on local governance and decentralisation. | Libya : (October) 2015–2018 | Libya: €4m | German MFA | Capacity Building/Development for five Libyan municipalities and support in planning processes (Soft Skills Training course targeting municipal council members and municipal staff, training courses on Strategic Planning, Project Management and Local Administration, supporting the provision of basic municipal services, visioning exercises with partner municipalities to define concrete actions for improving the waste management process, participation in regional dialogues and among municipalities, working/study visits to municipalities in the Maghreb region and/or to German municipalities or municipal services). |
| **Hanns Seidel Foundation**[144] | Germany | Libya | Work with Libyan municipalities on local governance and migration issues. Support to two local partners to work on an asylum law (as one example) in order to improve the situation of the migrants in Libya. HSS is trying to support the refugee camps in Libya | | | | |

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **UNFPA**[145] | Interna-tional | Libya | UNFPA Humanitarian & Early Recovery Program Framework (four projects). The four proposed projects are substantively and operationally interlinked, and are directly related to four outcomes of UNFPA SP **2013–17**. | | | | |
| **UNFPA** | | | 1. RH services for Women at Reproductive Age. 2. Protection of Women (Prevention and Response). 3. Youth Participation & Life Skills. 4. Data to inform humanitarian and development planning. | | | | Reproductive health. Protection of women: youth vulnerabilities and aspirations. Data for monitoring humanitarian and early recovery plan. |
| **Chemonics/ USAID Libya Public Finan-cial Manager Project**[146] | USA | Libya & Tunisia (for training) | Activities aimed at revenue generation, budgeting, accounting and reporting. | Next 18 months (counting from March 2016) | | | Two main activities aimed at strengthening local government: (16 partner municipalities). - 20 Libyans with a background in finance will be identified and trained in Tunis on public financial management. They will then be embedded in the 20 municipalities as advisors. - Building capacities in targeted municipalities in revenue generation. |

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **USAID/Libya Transiton Initiative**[147] | USA | Libya | Activities to support increased credibility and confidence in national and local level governance. | | | | Support to the Municipal Councils and civil society to foster participatory and inclusive local governance, increase government capacity to effectively communicate with and provide basic tangible responses to citizens. LTI 2 is also supporting local organisations in strategic communications focused on increasing the positive public perception of, building consensus for, and promoting confidence in democratic national governance. LTI 2 continues to implement various research tracks to inform evidence-based programming; current research is focused on the drivers of violent extremism in Western Libya and the public perceptions of the GNA. |

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **CILG/VNGi**[148] | Nether-lands | Libya & Tunisia: 12 munic-ipalities in Tunis (north/west: Béja, Jendouba, Siliana, Le Kef, Le Sers/ Centre-West: Kasserine, Thala, Sidi Bouzid et Regueb/ south-west: Medenine, Ben Guerdane and Dhehiba) + four muni-cipalities in Libya: Nalout, Wazen, Zouara, Zolton. | PAGUDEL: Programme d'Appui à la Gouvernance Urbaine Démocratique et au Développe-ment Economique Local. | PPA: projets pilotes associa-tifs/ PPM DEL: projets pilotes municipaux Developpement economique local/PPM GUD: projets pilotes municipaux Gou-vernance urbaine democratique. The actions focus on supporting local democratic governance, local economic development, job creation. 47 projects in total. | 2011-2014 | Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs | Support to women, youth and cross-border population starting from social leverage (organi-sation of ateliers, diagnosis of municipalities, training sessions on democracy, youth, women, etc). VMG also supported the projects of civil society operating in Tunisian municipalities, and focused for instance on leader-ship issues and electoral munici-pal process. In total, 47 initiatives have been chosen and 75 asso-ciations funded. Ateliers have also been organised to identify ideas and common projects among Tunisian associations in Ben Guerdane, Dhehiba and Medenine and Nalout, Wazen Zoltan and Zouara on the Libyan side. Other ateliers have worked on a project for a municipal electoral law in Ben Guerdane, Beja and Sbeitla. |

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | CILG-VNGi's first local govern-ance programme in Libya ran from mid-2013 to mid-2015, and was funded by the Netherlands and Denmark. VNG provided general capacity building to 13 municipalities, and also pro-duced three or four City Develop-ment Strategies (CDS), at a cost of €20,000 each for these small cities. The EU intends to fund an extension of this programme, commencing mid-2015 and run-ning to mid-2018, for €3million. VNG will commence this new programme with an assessment of 20 municipalities. In addition to capacity building the project also includes small pilot projects (€15,000) to improve visibility to the communities. |
| **Creative Associates International**[149] | USA | Libya and Tunisia | | STARTED IN SEPTEMBER 2014, finished in February 2016. | | | Supporting civil society organi-sations in Libya by issuing small grants to the selected CSOs which responded to the RFA which was published back in early 2015; this program was funded by MEPI. |

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Interpeace**[150] | Switzerland | Libya | Some Libyan communities in Libya succeeded in avoiding the chaos and were able to provide some services and security etc. Six of these communities have been selected to organise individual interviews, group discussions with representatives of municipalities, representatives of militias and member of civil society organisations. The second phase will build on the lessons learnt from these communities and the implementation elsewhere. | 1. 2012-2014 project in the south of Libya, closed due to fighting. 2. 2015-ongoing. | | Switzerland | |
| **USAID**[151] | USA | Libya, Tripoli, Benghazi and Zawia | Libya Women Economic Empowerment (LWEE). To release the unrecognised economic potential of women's entrepreneurship and thereby contribute to Libya's economic growth and political stability. | October 2013 – September 2016 | $2.89m | | Women entrepreneurs trained in fundamental business skills, provided with mentoring and specialised training and follow-up, and given matching grants to start businesses; capacity building given to local partners that provide services to better meet the needs of women business owners. |

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Spark**[152] | Netherlands | Libya and Tunisia: cities of Kef and Kairouan (Tunisia) and Beida and surrounding areas (Libya) | To support private sector development and entrepreneurship education. | 3-year project | | Dutch MFA | Support new and existing entrepreneurs in core sectors of food processing, agriculture and sustainable tourism (Tunisia) renewable energy, services related to the oil industry and fisheries (Libya). The project will also work with higher education and vocational institutes to introduce entrepreneurship in education as well as introducing new apprenticeship programmes in higher education. Although they are new in Tunisia, they have been in Libya since 2012 and have worked with various local partners and government bodies in the areas of youth, entrepreneurship and education. Additionally, they also had a programme in Libya focusing on DDR and reintegrating ex-combatants into civilian life. |

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **International Republican Institute**[153] | USA | Libya | It now works with 14 municipalities, and conducts training and general capacity building. IRI is also funded to support the development of municipal associations; they supported a meeting of 40 mayors in Sabrata and an association of women councillors. IRI has a memorandum of understanding with Chemonics, which is implementing infrastructure projects of around US$100,000, for example paving roads, and IRI conducts training to support the management of these projects. | | | | |

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **UNDP**[154] | inter-national | Libya | The Stabilisation Facility for Libya | May 2016–April 2018 | 30,774,570 | | The Stabilisation Facility for Libya (SFL) is an immediate stabilisation initiative to support the Government of National Accord to build legitimacy among the Libyan population through provision of quick rehabilitation of critical infrastructure, by enhancing the capacity of municipalities and the engagement between the central government and municipalities and supporting local authorities in taking a more active role in peacebuilding. The programme will be implemented by UNDP, in partnership with Libyan municipalities, key NGOS, other UN agencies and other relevant stakeholders. Deployment of Libyan personnel to target municipalities will support more effective capacity development and local ownership. Civil society organisations will be able to benefit from grant scheme opportunities to contribute more effectively to local peacebuilding and recovery dynamics. Finally, the private sector will be expected to play a key role in the rehabilitation efforts. |

| Name of the organisation | Country of origin | Works in | Focus of the project | Timetable for each project | Budget for each project | Source of funding | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **UNDP** | | Libya | AMEL (Hope): Advancing Libyan Women's Participation During the Transition | March 2016–February 2018 | Budget required: 2,521,843 Secured: 250,000 | | UNSMIL and UNDP aim to support the Women's Empowerment and Support Unit at the Presidency Council for it to play an active role in ensuring that women's rights are integrated in the transitional policies and legislations developed during the lifetime of the GNA. The project will also support key women's organisations in Libya to enable them to participate in the transitional process and to provide an effective lobby for women's rights. |
| **UNDP/ STRENGTH-ENING LOCAL CAPACITIES FOR RESIL-IENCE AND RECOVERY** | | Libya | | 2016–2018 | Budget required: 27,145,761 Secured: 1,000,001 | | Strengthening Local Capacities for Resilience and Recovery is a three-year programme to develop capacities of munici-palities and other key state and non-state stakeholders at the local level in Libya. |

138  Minutes from the Co-ordination Meeting on Local Governance Support in Libya, Tunis, 18 March 2016.

139  Skype interview with ACTED representative, 20 May 2016.

140  Interview with Aktis Strategy representatives, Tunis, 5 May 2016.

141  Minutes from the Co-ordination Meeting on Local Governance Support in Libya, Tunis, 29 April 2016.

142  Minutes from the Co-ordination Meeting on Local Governance Support in Libya, Tunis, 29 April 2016.

143  Skype interview with GIZ representative, 11 May 2016.

144  Minutes from the Co-ordination Meeting on Local Governance Support in Libya, Tunis, 18 March 2016.

145  "UNFPA Programme Framework for the Republic of Libya", provided by UNFPA representative, 8 June 2016.

146  Minutes from the Co-ordination Meeting on Local Governance Support in Libya, Tunis, 18 March 2016.

147  Minutes from the Co-ordination Meeting on Local Governance Support in Libya, Tunis, 18 March 2016.

148  Interview with CILG-VNGi representatives in Tunis, 5 May 2016. See also: "Appui á la société civile, á la
     promotion de l'égalité entre femmes et hommes et á la participation des jeunes dans la vie publique locale",
     Rapport de documentation et de capitalisation, Tunis 2015, provided by CILG-VNGi representatives.

149  Written response by Creative Associates representative, 9 June 2016.

150  Skype interview with Interpeace representative, 8 June 2016.

151  Written response provided by USAID representative, 27 May 2016.

152  Written response provided by Spark representative, 8 June 2016.

153  Minutes from the Co-ordination Meeting on Local Governance Support in Libya, Tunis, 18 March 2016.

154  Written response provided by UNDP representative, 18 June 2016.

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