CSS STUDY

Islamist Actors: Libya and Tunisia

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Executive Summary

While much attention has thus far understandably been focused on jihadi actors in Libya and Tunisia, other Islamist actors, who are not focused on armed jihad, deserve greater scrutiny. The latter emerged as key actors in the post-uprising environments of these countries. In the immediate transitional period, mainstream Islamist actors, such as the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood's Justice and Construction Party (JCP) and Ennahda in Tunisia were, along with their allies, able to exert considerable influence, bringing them into conflict with non-Islamist actors. How they now adapt and position themselves within their national contexts will be important for stability in a post-conflict Libya and for the democratic transition in Tunisia, both of which are not only essential for regional stability, but also for European security, given the myriad of security challenges that fragile and conflict-afflicted countries can generate.

Though the environments in which Islamists in Libya and Tunisia operate are considerably different, some similarities may be observed. Mainstream Islamists in both countries have lost ground since 2012, though they remain politically relevant. While the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya has seen its influence diminish significantly since the outbreak of civil war in mid-2014, the UN political process has provided channels of continued, albeit reduced, political influence. Moreover, the movement's association and potentially shared agendas with powerful brigades that support the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) may also provide it and its party with sympathizers in Libya's future security structures. The influence of Ennahda in Tunisia has also contracted since the 2013−14 political crisis that shook the country. Its continued importance is largely due to a further recognition of the secular nature of the Tunisian state and a recognition that its continued political sway depends on its acceptance by non-Islamist political parties and societal forces.

If mainstream Islamists may still be considered significant political actors, the same cannot be said of the more conservative Salafi political actors. The latter have failed to gain any real political relevance in their own right. In Libya, several Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)/Libyan Islamic Movement for Change (LIMC) veterans formed Salafi political parties, though their almost complete absence in Libya's first elected parliament, the General National Congress (GNC), radically circumscribed any political ambitions they might have had. Nevertheless, their links to important brigades do give them influence on the ground in several parts of the country. Salafi parties in Tunisia have also fared poorly. Whilst they enjoyed the support of Ennahda early on in the transition, Ennahda has since distanced itself from them, increasing their political isolation. Their lack of political traction appears largely due to a failure to appeal either a more moderate Islamist audience or a large enough ultra-conservative constituency. In particular, their message has been lost on ultra-conservative youth.

Quietist Salafi actors, who usually shun political engagement, could make gains at the expense of Salafi political parties, especially in Libya. Quietist Salafis have been under pressure in Tunisia since the start of the political crisis in 2013, which has limited their capacity to expand and institutionalize their networks. This could result in more ultra-conservative youth gravitating towards jihadi Salafism. In Libya, by contrast, nominally quietist Salafism, notably Madkhalism, has been gaining a greater foothold. The GNA in the West and General Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) in the East both rely on Madkhali brigades. This could eventually lead to their integration into future police and security structures, thereby boosting Madkhali influence in state structures. Madkhalis have also increased their presence within the religious sphere in eastern Libya, providing Madkhali clerics with channels through which to expand their support base in this already more conservative part of the country that has traditionally been a hotbed of radicalization.

Introduction

Islamists[1] have emerged as key actors in the post-uprising environments of Libya and Tunisia. Their agendas and relative importance are likely to have implications for the evolution of the political landscapes and stability of these countries. Tunisia's democratic transition remains fragile and vulnerable to tensions between Islamist and non-Islamist political forces. Post-Qaddafi Libya has yet to fully emerge from the civil war that broke out in mid-2014, itself partially caused by polarization between Islamist and non-Islamist actors. How Islamist actors adapt to and position themselves within their new and evolving environments will be vital to the success of the democratic transition in Tunisia and stability in a post-conflict Libya, both of which are essential for regional stability, as well as security in Europe. The latter, not least because fragile and conflict-afflicted contexts provide opportunities for the growth of violent extremism and can contribute to acute irregular migratory flows.

Libyan Islamist actors, notably the Muslim Brotherhood and the now fragmented Libyan Islamic Movement for Change (LIMC) - formerly the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) – had played a significant role in the uprising against the Qaddafi regime.[2] After Qaddafi, they became involved in the political transition process, either through the establishment of political parties - the Muslim Brotherhood established the Justice and Construction Party (JCP) and former leaders of the LIFG/LIMC set up the Salafi parties Al-Watan and Al-Umma Al-Wasat – or through their members' involvement in transitional governance structures.[3] When the second civil war broke out, the Muslim Brotherhood, the JCP, the Salafi parties and Salafi-leaning independents aligned themselves with the General National Congress (GNC) and its government in Tripoli, forming the Libya Dawn coalition. The less organized and supposedly quietist Madkhali Salafis found

themselves on both sides of the conflict[4], some aligning themselves with the GNC and its government and others with the House of Representatives (HoR) and its government in Bayda/Tobruk. While some of Libya's Madkhalis are still aligned with General Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA), who is close to many politicians in the HoR, others cooperate with the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), headed by Fayez Al-Sarraj.

While Tunisian Islamists did not play a significant role in the removal of Ben Ali, they have played an important role in the transitional process, with the Muslim Brotherhood-derived Islamist party Ennahda emerging as a major political actor and participating in successive governments. Ennahda has even attempted to remodel itself in order to be more acceptable to non-Islamist political forces and the population at large. Following the departure of Ben Ali, a small percentage of Salafis also established political parties, notably Jabhat Al-Islah, Hisb Ut-tahrir, Al-Asala and Al-Rahma.[5] Quietist Salafis also adapted their behavior to the altered domestic situation in Tunisia, operating more openly, engaging in preaching and charitable work, forming associations and even lobbying politically for issues of concern to them[6], tough they have come under pressure since 2013.

The contexts in which Libyan and Tunisian Islamists operate is very different, therefore. In Libya, Islamists are struggling to ensure their place in the country's future, without the parameters of a sustainable political settlement having been finalized and in a situation in which armed groups continue to wield influence in the absence of strong governance structures. How they and associated brigades are positioning themselves will, consequently, affect their future influence in the country. In Tunisia, by contrast, Islamists are working within the established political parameters of a fledgling democracy. How Islamists actors relate to the young democratic order will affect their survival within the political system and their traction within society as a whole.

To-date, much attention has understandably been on jihadi Islamist actors in Libya and Tunisia, who seek to impose their views about the centrality of Islamic practice for social and political life through violent means. However, Islamists, who are not focused on armed jihad, deserve greater scrutiny. The latter are likely to help shape the future of Libya and Tunisia. This study looks at several

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1 Although the boundaries between Islam and Islamism are to some extent blurry, it is worth making a distinction between them. Islam may be thought of both a corpus of ideas about religion in its spiritual form and a set of ideas about politics, economics, society and war. Islamism is a project of political mobilization of Islam. In broad terms, Islamism may involve the promotion of beliefs, laws or policies that are considered religious in character. Sunni Islamism contains several currents of Islamism. Some Islamists embrace political Islamism, which places greater emphasis on engagement in politics than on preaching, and generally advocates obtaining power by political rather than armed means. Other Islamists may be quietist and reject involvement in politics. Others still may be jihadi and condone violence as a means of achieving their aims. See Ahmad Tufail, "Towards a Definition of Islam and Islamism," *MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis Series,* 8 September 2017; Margot Badran, "Understanding Islam, Islamism, and Islamic Feminism," *Journal of Women's History,* Vol. 13, No. 1 (2001), p. 47; International Crisis Group, "Understanding Islamism," *Middle East / North Africa Report,* No. 372, 2 March 2005, pp. 1 – 3.

2 Noman Benotman, Jason Pack and James Brandon, "Islamists," in: *The 2011 Libyan Uprisings and the Struggle for the Post-Qaddafi Future,* ed. Jason Pack (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 193.

3 Omar Ashour, "Between ISIS and a Failed State: The Saga of Libyan Islamists," Brookings Institute Working Paper, August 2015, p. 6.

4 Palwsha L- Kakar and Zahra Langhi, "Libya's Religious Sector and Peacebuilding Efforts," United States Institute for Peace, 2017, p. 13.

5 Stefano M. Torelli, Fabio Merone and Francesco Cavatorta, "Salafism in Tunisia: Challenges and Opportunities for Democratization," *Middle East Policy* XIX, No. 4 (2012), pp. 146 – 7; Georges Fahmi, "The Future of Political Salafism in Egypt and Tunisia," Carnegie Middle East Center, 16 November 2015; Monica Marks, "Youth Politics and Tunisian Salafism: Understanding the Jihadi Current," *Mediterranean Politics* 18, No. 1 (2013), p. 109.

6 International Crisis Group, "Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge," *Middle East / North Africa Report,* No. 137, 13 February 2013, pp. 14 – 15; Anouar Boukhars, "The Politics of North African Salafism," *Orient II* (2016), p. 55.

types of key Islamist actors. Among the political Islamists,[7] it examines mainstream Islamists, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya and Ennahda in Tunisia, who have gone the furthest in terms of accepting democratic norms and principles, and are the most pragmatic with regards to the application of sharia law. Within the more conservative Salafi current[8], it looks at post-Jihadis, some of whom have embraced political Islam, even though they remain more conservative in their approach to politics and religion than mainstream Islamists, as well as quietist Salafis, who generally eschew political engagement and reject armed resistance against Sunni Muslim regimes.

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7   Political Islamists place greater emphasis on engagement in politics than on preaching, and generally advocate obtaining power by political rather than armed means. See International Crisis Group, "Understanding Islamism," pp. 1 – 3.

8   Adherents of Salafism seek to model their behavior on the pious practices of the first three generations of Muslims after the Prophet Mohammed.

1 Islamism in Libya

During and after the uprising, Islamist actors re-emerged in Libya, playing politically and militarily important roles. The outbreak of civil war in the country in mid-2014 led most to coalesce within the Libya Dawn coalition, with the exception of Madkhalis, who joined competing sides in the conflict. The collapse of the Libya Dawn coalition against the backdrop of the UN political process has seen Islamists fragment further.

1.1 Mainstream Islamists (The Muslim Brotherhood)

Background and Objectives

The Muslim Brotherhood first established a presence in Libya in 1949, when three Muslim Brotherhood members fled to Libya from Egypt after having been accused of involvement in the assassination of former Egyptian prime minister Mahmoud Al-Nuqrashi Pasha in 1948. They were followed by Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Islamic scholars, and several years later by members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, who took refuge in Libya following the 1952 Free Officers' coup in Egypt. This small constellation of like-minded individuals disseminated Muslim Brotherhood ideas in the country. Disillusionment with Arab nationalism after the Arab defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War generated enough interest in Islamism in Libya to lead to lead to the establishment in 1968 of Muslim Brotherhood branches in Tripoli and Benghazi. However, when Qaddafi came to power in 1969, the movement was banned and many of its members fled abroad.[9]

The Muslim Brotherhood experienced a revival or sorts in the 1980s. Following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Muslim communities in the West became increasingly interested in Islamism. Libyans living and studying in the US established a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, called Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiyya. Some of its members returned to Libya in the early 1980s and attempted to revive the movement domestically. However, many among them were either imprisoned or executed. Despite regime repression against Islamists in the 1980s and 90s, the movement did continue to operate clandestinely, with its influence boosted by Qatar's promotion of the Muslim Brotherhood via Al-Jazeera and popular Muslim Brotherhood websites, many of which were connected to the high-profile Qatar-based Muslim cleric Yousef Al-Qaradawi.[10]

In the mid-2000s, the movement's attitude towards the regime shifted as a result of the reform initiatives of Qaddafi's son, Saif Qaddafi, which were aimed at neutralizing opposition forces in Libya through cooptation. Reconciliation with Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood, was offered in return for its recognition of the regime, renunciation of violence and official revision of its aims. The Muslim Brotherhood took up Saif Qaddafi's offer. As a result, it replaced active opposition to the Qaddafi regime with tacit cooperation, which included praise for Saif Qaddafi's reform efforts. Despite the movement's reconciliation with the regime, its presence within Libya remained limited.[11]

When the revolution began, the Muslim Brotherhood's leadership was dispersed, with some senior figures in Libya and many abroad. The overseas leadership met in an Islamic cultural centre in Zurich, Switzerland, on 30 and 31 January 2011 to discuss the upcoming "Day of Rage" in Libya, which was planned for the 17 February and the likelihood that the population would follow the Egyptian and Tunisian examples and call for the departure of Qaddafi. When momentum behind the protests accelerated, they met again in Switzerland on 19 February, at which time they decided to side with the rebels.[12]

The Muslim Brotherhood leadership subsequently ordered their cadre based abroad to prepare to return to Libya. Those already in Libya were instructed to participate socially and politically in the uprising. The movement was notably supportive of the creation of the National Transitional Council (NTC), the body that politically represented the revolutionary forces and would later govern Libya in the immediate transitional period. At the same time, it sought to boost its limited domestic presence, by organizing the distribution of aid and establishing media outlets.[13]

After Qaddafi was killed in October 2011, senior figures of the Muslim Brotherhood returned to Libya and the movement set about creating an organizational structure with which to expand its domestic presence. The movement elected Bashir Al-Kibti as its general supervisor. Al-Kibti had been in exile in the US for 33 years and

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9 B. Chemitsky, "Libyan Muslim Brotherhood on the Rise," *MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis Series,* No. 828, 24 April 2012.

10 Ibid.; Mary Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place: Libya's Islamists During and After the Revolution," in *The Libyan Revolution and Its Aftermath,* eds. Peter Cole and Brian McQuinn (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2015), p. 178; "Islamist Movements in Libya: Chances and Challenges of Political Power," Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Libya Office, 2015, p. 5; Ashour, "Between ISIS and a Failed State"; Benotman, Pack and Brandon, "Islamists," pp. 196 – 7.

11 Robin Wright, *The Islamist Are Coming: Who They Really Are* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2012), p. 51; Ashour, "Between ISIS and a Failed State," p. 3; Mehran Kamrava, *Beyond the Arab Spring: The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 125.

12 Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," p. 181.

13 Benotman, Pack and Brandon, "Islamists," p. 217.

had returned during the uprising in Libya. The movement's shura council (consultative committee) then appointed two deputy general supervisors, a general secretariat and created an executive committee and a number of departments.[14]

Several months later, in March 2012, the movement announced the creation of the Justice and Construction Party (JCP). Muhammad Sawan, who was imprisoned under the Qaddafi regime and was previously head of the Muslim Brotherhood's shura council (consultative committee) became leader of the party. The movement presented the party as organizationally independent from the movement and open to all those who wished to join. The party declared its aim to be the establishment of sharia law as the main source of legislation. However, it has also stated that the state should be civic, suggesting a separation between religion and the state. Such ambiguity may have been due to the party's desire to gain domestic and international acceptance, while at the same time appealing to a conservative domestic support base.[15]

Alliances

National

From the beginning of the post-uprising period, the Muslim Brotherhood enjoyed the support of former Brotherhood member and influential cleric, Ali Al-Sallabi. The movement initially participated in Al-Sallabi's National Gathering, which sought to bring together Islamists under a broad umbrella movement that had a nationalist orientation with an Islamic reference. However, internal differences led the Brotherhood to pull out of the National Gathering, which also allowed it to publicly distance itself from post-jihadis within it, notably former members of the LIFG, which was perceived as important for the movement's domestic and international acceptance.[16]

During the initial transitional period, the Muslim Brotherhood was represented in the NTC, which presided over the country before elections were held in 2012. Within the NTC, the movement found common cause with other NTC members, who believed that sharia law should inform legislation. These included individuals such as Ali Al-Isawi, Vice Chair of the NTC's executive committee, Jalal Al-Dghaili, the NTC's defence minister, and An-

war Fituri, who was in charge of transport and communication.[17]

In Libya's first parliament, the GNC, the JCP did not hold the largest number of seats. Nevertheless, it was able to wield considerable influence over the legislative process by deftly forming coalitions with independent deputies, particularly those in the Salafi-leaning Loyalty to the Martyrs Blood bloc, which was led by the only former LIFG/LIMC deputy in the GNC, Abdul Wahhab Al-Qaid of the Al-Umma Al-Wasat party, and Misratans who supported Sawan.[18]

When a rift emerged in the GNC and degenerated into civil war in mid-2014, the JCP joined forces with the Salafi-leaning Loyalty to the Martyrs Blood bloc and GNC deputies, who represented localities and tribes that had played an important role during the uprising. Together, they formed the Libya Dawn coalition. Brigades that backed this loose political coalition included the Libya Shield Forces in the West, comprised largely of Misrata brigades. In order to counter Haftar's Libya Dignity Operation in the East, Brotherhood-allied brigades, including the powerful 17th February Martyrs Brigade and the Raffalah Al-Sahati Brigade, established by LIFG/LIMC veteran and brother of Ali Al-Sallabi, Ismail Al-Sallabi, banded together with Ansar Al-Sharia to form the umbrella armed group the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council (BRSC), of which Wissam bin Hamid, a senior Brotherhood figure, would become a commander.[19]

International

The JCP appears to have connections to other Islamist parties, including Tunisia's Ennahda and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey.[20] The Muslim Brotherhood movement in Libya also has ties to Brotherhood branches in other countries. Historically, as mentioned, it had especially strong links to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Such international linkages, particularly those to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, have generated negative publicity for the JCP, especially during the 2012 parliamentary elections. This has led the movement to downplay its relations with other Muslim Brotherhood movements and to claim that its ties to the Egyptian

14 Chemitsky, "Libyan Muslim Brotherhood on the Rise."

15 B. Chemitsky, "Libya on Eve of General National Congress Elections – A Political Review," *MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis Series,* No. 853, 4 July 2012; Omar Ashour, "Libya," in *Rethinking Political Islam,* eds. Shadi Hamid and William McCants (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 105 – 6.

16 Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," p. 195; J. Millard Burr, "Libya – Ali Al-Salabi and the Re-Emerging Muslim Brotherhood," American Center for Democracy, 13 October 2014, "Partnership in Terrorism: Muslim Brotherhood-Qatar Role in Libya," *Egypt Today,* 4 July 2017; Ashour, "Libya," p. 105.

17 Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," p. 195.

18 Mary Fitzgerald, "Libya's Muslim Brotherhood Struggles to Grow," *Foreign Policy,* 1 May 2014; Vijay Prashad, "Libya: The Battlefield of the New Arab Cold War," *Mada Masr,* 23 February 2015; Ecaterina Cepoi and Marius Lazar, "Democracy vs. Islam," in *Democracy and Security in the 21ˢᵗ Century: Perspectives on a Changing World,* ed. Valentin Naumescu (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), p. 410.

19 "Qatar, Muslim Brotherhood, Libyan AQ-Affiliated Militias," *The Qatar Insider,* 4 July 2017; Tom Stevenson, "Gulf hands in Libya," *Middle East Eye,* http://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/in-depth/features/gulf-hands-lib-ya-955435705; "Developments of the Libyan Scene between the Internal Crisis and the External Intervention," Middle East Observer, 2 November 2016; Ronald Bruce St. John, *Libya: Continuity and Change,* second edition (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 95.

20 "AKP Hosts Dignitaries from All Over the World," *Hurriyet Daily News,* 30 September 2012.

Muslim Brotherhood are purely ideological.[21] Indeed, there is a debate going within the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood about whether the movement should separate itself from the broader transnational movement.

The movement is also reported to be close to actors in Qatar and Turkey. Former member of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, Ali Al-Sallabi, is known to have strong ties with the Qatari royal family, as well as Yousef Al-Qaradawi, head of the Qatar-based International Union of Muslim Scholars. Al-Sallabi is reported to have channeled Qatari assistance to brigades in Libya during the uprising, including the Brotherhood-allied Misrata brigades and 17th February Martyrs Brigade. Turkey is also reported to have provided support to these brigades. Qatari and Turkish support for them is alleged to have continued during the civil war.[22]

Vectors of Influence

National

Due to successive regime crackdowns against the movement, the Muslim Brotherhood was unable to build up a broad support base during much of the Qaddafi era. It, therefore, set about doing so throughout the uprising and early transitional period in order to boost its relevance in Libya. In 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood established a charitable organization called Nida Al-Khayr. The latter organized the delivery of aid from the Gulf in coordination with a number of charitable organizations on the ground in Libya. It became a key vector for creating a broader support base within Libyan society. The linkages it formed with local charities also helped to increase the movement's relevance in the country. The Muslim Brotherhood also created a number of media outlets, including Sabil Rahid, Shabab Libya and Libya Lion in order to diffuse its message to the general public.[23]

When the NTC became Libya's transitional governing body, the movement was able to exert considerable influence within it. Approximately, one fifth of NTC seats were held by Muslim Brotherhood members, with several members holding cabinet seats under its executive committees, which functioned like cabinets, first under the leadership of Mahmoud Jibril and then under that of Abdul Raheem Al-Keib. These individuals included Abdullah Shamia, a former university professor at Beng-

hazi University, who was imprisoned under Qaddafi and appointed economy minister, as well as Salim Al-Shaykhi, who was exiled in Britain and held the post of minister of religious affairs.[24]

Their representation in the NTC provided the Muslim Brotherhood with a means of influencing developments in ways that would help to consolidate the movement's traction in Libya's emerging public institutions, particularly those related to security. The Brotherhood used its presence in the NTC to push hard for the creation of parallel security structures through which it could incorporate Brotherhood-linked brigades into the country's security institutions. Abderrezak Al-Aradi, a leading Brotherhood and NTC member, helped to create the Supreme Security Committee (SSC), originally conceived as a parallel police force comprised of members of brigades, whose mandate was initially restricted to Tripoli and then later expanded to other cities. The SSC was nominally under the authority of the Interior Ministry, where Brotherhood member Omar Al-Khadrawi, was deputy interior minister. Its command structure also included Muslim Brotherhood members, such as Fawzi Wanis Al-Qaddafi, deputy head of the Benghazi SSC.[25]

Another parallel security structure that was set up under the NTC was the Libya Shield, conceived as a reserve army. It incorporated powerful brigades, many of which were close to the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood-allied Misratan brigades formed the backbone of the Central Shield Force and commanded the Western Libyan Shield Force. The Libya Shield Force in the East incorporated elements of the 17th February Martyrs Brigade, the Raffalah Al-Sahati Brigade, both of which have strong ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.[26]

During this period, the Muslim Brotherhood also worked to increase its influence in local councils that had been set up to govern liberated cities during uprising. The movement came to dominate the Tripoli Military Council (TMC), a grouping of brigades that captured Tripoli from pro-Qaddafi forces, and the Benghazi Local Council. It also had sizable influence in the Misrata Local Council.[27] The creation of the Dar Al-Ifta (now closed down), the religious authority responsible for interpreting Islamic law, during this time also boosted the Muslim Brotherhood's influence. Prominent cleric and head of this body,

21 Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," pp. 196 – 7; Chemitsky, "Libyan Muslim Brotherhood on the Rise."

22 "Qatar, Muslim Brotherhood, Libyan AQ-Affiliated Militias"; Stevenson, "Gulf hands in Libya"; Aaron Stein, "Turkey's Proxy War in Libya," *War on the Rocks,* 15 January 2015; Vijay Prashad, "Libya: The Battlefield of the New Arab Cold War," *Mada Masr,* 23 February 2015; Marc Lynch, "In Uncharted Waters: Islamist Parties Beyond Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2016, p. 11.

23 Ashour, "Between ISIS and a Failed State," p. 4; Karim Mezran, Fadel Lamen and Eric Knecht, "Post-revolutionary Politics in Libya: Inside the General National Congress," *Atlantic Council Issue Brief,* May 2013, p. 2; Benotman, Pack and Brandon, "Islamists," p. 217.

24 Benotman, Pack and Brandon, "Islamists," p. 217.

25 Wolfram Lacher, "Fault Lines of the Revolution: Political Actors, Camps and Conflicts in the New Libya," *SWP Research Paper,* May 2013, p. 16.

26 Amanda Kadlec and Hassan Morajea, "The Dawn Divides: The Islamic State and Libya's Inter-Islamist War," *War on the Rocks,* 11 February 2015; Joseph Walker-Cousins, "Security Sector Transformation in Arab Transitions: Working for Change," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Beirut, 17 – 18 December 2012, pp. 22 – 3.

27 Sari Arraf, "A Short Guide to the Conflict," *The War Report 2017,* Geneva Academy, June 2017, p. 8; "Developments of the Libyan Scene between Internal Crisis and the External Intervention"; Mattia Toalda, "Libya and Egypt: Analogies, Differences and Regional Factors," *Aspen Online,* 4 June 2014; Lacher, "Fault Lines of the Revolution," p. 16.

Sadiq Al-Ghariani, is also reported to have ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.[28]

Although the JCP did not win a plurality in the 2012 parliamentary elections, it, nevertheless, held five cabinet positions in the GNC's first government under Ali Zeidan, including those for oil, electricity, housing, economy and sport, as well as the post of deputy prime minister. In January 2014, these ministers resigned from the government in an effort to weaken Zeidan, who was an NFA ally. After having successfully forced his departure, the JCP eventually found a more accommodating prime minister in Ahmed Maiteg, a Muslim Brotherhood ally, who was appointed in May 2014.[29]

The party was not only able to wield influence in Ahmed Maiteg's government, but was also able to dominate the GNC as a result of the alliances it built with independents, which proved more cohesive than those of the non-Islamists in the GNC, giving the JCP even greater sway in the governing body. In May 2013, the JCP and its allies were able to push through the Political Isolation Law that banned Qaddafi era officials from participating in politics for 10 years. This legislation weakened its opponent, the nationalist-leaning National Forces Alliance (NFA), by forcing a number of the latter's deputies to resign.[30]

When the GNC's mandate ended in mid-2014 and new elections were held to elect its successor, the House of Representatives (HoR), the JCP won even fewer seats than in 2012. Fearing a backlash against Islamists, the JCP and its allies, refused to cede power to the HoR and continued to hold sessions in the GNC.[31] In the context of the civil war that followed, brigades that had connections to the Muslim Brotherhood and JCP politicians, sided with the GNC. These brigades including those from Misrata that formed the bulk of the Libya Shield forces, and Libya Shield East as part of an umbrella group called the BRSC, which also comprised the Muslim Brotherhood-linked 17th of February Martyrs Brigade and the Raffalah Al-Sahati brigade. The LROR, which was created in 2013 by the GNC to perform law and order functions in Tripoli and later in Benghazi, again close to the Brotherhood, also joined the Libya Dawn coalition.[32]

Although the Muslim Brotherhood has since lost a great deal of influence, the UN political process that led to the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) has, nevertheless, provided it with a means of continued influence in several governing bodies established under the Agreement. The High State Council, which acts as an advisory body to the GNA, comprises some JCP politicians, given that it is made up of a pool of politicians that were elected to the GNC in 2012. The new president of the High State Council, Khlaid Al-Mishri, is also a JCP member. HoR politicians are, however, uneasy about Islamist influence in the High State Council, which has led to discussions about its composition, which could have future implications. The Muslim Brotherhood and the JCP currently have allies within the GNA's Presidency Council (PC), including Ahmed Maitig, who serves as vice president of the PC, and Abdessalam Kajman, who is a member of the PC. However, overcoming the current deadlock in the UN political process is likely to lead to modifications to the LPA. This is likely to lead to a reduction in the number of members in the PC from nine to three, which, in turn, is likely to mean that in the future there will be fewer members within it whose agendas might overlap with the Muslim Brotherhood.[33]

Although the Muslim Brotherhood does not control any brigades as such, its influence may also be boosted by its connections to brigades that have clout with the GNA. This is particularly the case with regards to Misratan brigades that formed most of the Libya Shield forces. While these brigades may not contain a high number of Muslim Brotherhood members, they are likely to be sympathetic to the movement due to their alliance with it in the Libya Dawn coalition.[34] They have since fought under the banner of the GNA to drive Islamic State (IS) forces out of the city of Sirte in 2016 and are still loyal to the GNA. While the structure of future security forces in Libya remains to be defined, it is possible that these brigades could be integrated into a future unified Libyan army, given their importance and as a means of incentivizing them to disband. Should this occur, it could provide the Muslim Brotherhood with support from within Libya's future security structures. In Tripoli, the Muslim Brotherhood also has traction through its ties to the TMC. In the East, its links to the BRSC give it some influence on the ground[35], even though the BRSC has been largely decimated.

28 "Islamist Movements in Libya," pp. 9 – 10; "Libya's National Accord Govt Shuts Down Office of 'Mufti of Qatar'," *Al-Arabiya English,* 1 June 2017.

29 "Muslim Brotherhood Party Quits Libya's Government," *Al-Arabiya English,* 21 January 2014; "Libya: Muslim Brotherhood's Tenuous Hold," *IISS Strategic Comment,* Vol. 20, Comment 21, June 2014.

30 Benotman, Pack and Brandon, "Islamists," p. 218; Cameron Glenn, "Libya's Islamists: Who They Are - And What They Want," The Wilson Center, 8 August 2017; "Libya: Muslim Brotherhood's Tenuous Hold"; Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," p. 200.

31 Glen, "Libya's Islamists: Who They Are"; "Mohammed Sowan," Counter Extremism Project, https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/mohamed-sowan.

32 "Libya Revolutionaries Joint Operations Room (LROR)," *Terrorism, Research & Analysis Consortium,* https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/libya-revolutionaries-joint-operations-room-lror.

33 "Roundtable: The Crisis of the Muslim Brotherhood," CSIS, https://www.csis.org/events/roundtable-crisis-muslim-brotherhood; "A Quick Guide to Libya's Main Players," ECFR, http://www.ecfr.eu/mena/mapping_libya_conflict; Interview with Rhiannon Smith, Managing Director, Libya Analysis, Managing Director, Eye on ISIS in Libya, 7 December 2017.

34 Interview with Smith, 7 December 2017.

35 "Developments of the Libyan Scene between Internal Crisis and the External Intervention"; Moutaz Ali, "Bunyan Marsous Derides Ghwell Coup as LROR Declares Support," *Libya Herald,* 18 October 2016.

International

The JCP's international profile has benefited from positive coverage on Al-Jazeera. Within the context of the civil war, so too have brigades with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, such as the former Libya Shield forces and the LROR. Support for the UN-backed GNA, which is backed by the majority of the international community, has enabled it to maintain its political relevance internationally. Its associates in the former Libya Shield forces have also gained positive media coverage and international praise for the role they have played in the GNA-led fight against IS.[36] This could increase calls for them to be integrated into a future Libyan army.

1.2 Post-jihadis (LIFG/LIMC Veterans)

Background and Objectives

The LIFG has its roots in a clandestine jihadist movement led by Emir Awatha Al-Zuwawi that was formed in the 1980s. After it was discovered by the Qaddafi regime in 1989, many of its members fled the country to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan, including key leaders, such as Abdel Hakim Belhadj, the overall leader of the group, and his deputy, Saami Al-Saadi. There, its militants, including Belhadj, developed relations with their Al-Qaeda counterparts, though the movement itself is not thought to have been officially allied with Al-Qaeda. Indeed, its objectives were primarily national, rather than transnational. Some of the Libyan "Afghans", as they became known, returned to Libya and officially establishing the LIFG in 1990. Its aim was the removal of Qaddafi through violent means and the establishment of sharia law in Libya.[37]

The LIFG initially operated clandestinely. However, it was discovered by the authorities in 1995, which forced it to publically declare its existence. This had disastrous consequences for the group. A brutal crackdown by the regime followed, which resulted in the LIFG waging a three-year insurgency in eastern Libya, where the group's

support base was strongest.[38] Open conflict with the regime reduced the group's domestic capacity considerably. A number of the group's leaders including Al-Saadi and Belhadj fled abroad, though they were eventually extradited to Libya, with the help of US and the UK. Those leaders who remained in the country, were imprisoned.

In prison, LIFG leaders formed a tight-knit group. They gradually began to rethink the group's strategy. This process of reflection coincided with an amnesty initiative launched by Qaddafi's reformist son, Saif Qaddafi, facilitated by the former Brotherhood member and Qatar-based Islamic scholar, Ali Al-Sallabi, who acted as intermediary between imprisoned LIFG leaders and the regime. This dialogue process led members of the group's shura council to issue a document in 2009 in which the group publicly renounced armed jihad against the regime. As a result, a number of LIFG members, including Belhadj, Al-Saadi and another of Belhadj's deputies, Khalid Al-Sharif, were released from prison.[39]

The reconciliation process helped the group to present itself as a credible opposition force at a time when political reform seemed possible in Libya, due to Saif Al-Qaddafi's reformist agenda. Abroad, it gave exiled LIFG members greater room to organize. However, not all LIFG members embraced reconciliation with the regime. LIFG militants in the UK and Switzerland, who had by the mid-2000s become fairly independent from the LIFG leadership in Libya, continued to oppose the Qaddafi regime. In 2009, they formed the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change (LIMC), which rejected reconciliation with the regime.[40]

Although LIFG leaders in Libya distanced themselves from the LIMC during the reconciliation process, this would change once the uprising began in 2011. LIFG members based in Libya and associated with Belhadj, decided to accept the non-reconciliatory stance of the LIMC and to support the uprising against Qaddafi. Against the backdrop of potentially momentous change, the LIFG reincarnated itself as the LIMC. The latter elected a shura council comprised of most of the LIFG shura council members, including Belhadj, Al-Saadi, Al-Sharif, as well as Abdul Wahhab Al-Qaid, Abdel Basit Abu Hliqa and Miftah Al-Dhuwadi. While the LIFG had been opposed to democracy throughout most of its existence, the LIMC shura council expressed support for the democratic process. The group's apparent moderation appeared to be informed by the conviction that Islamism and democracy were not necessarily incompatible and, moreover, that democratic mechanisms could serve the objectives of Is-

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36 "Libya: Muslim Brotherhood's Tenuous Hold; Naji Abou-Khalil and Laurence Hargreaves, "Libyan Television and Its Influence on the Security Sector," *USIP Special Report* 364, April 2015, p.3; "Justice & Construction Party Condemn Ghariani," *Libya Herald,* 19 August 2017.

37 "Libyan Islamic Fighting Group," Mapping Militant Organizations, Stanford University, http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/675#cite; David Witter, "Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)," *ISW Fact Sheet,* 8 April 2011.

38 Ashour, "Between ISIS and a Failed State," p.5.

39 Frederic Wehrey, "The Struggle for Security in Eastern Libya," *Carnegie Papers,* September 2012, p.9; Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," p.179.

40 Benotman, Pack and Brandon, "Islamists," pp.204–6.

lamists, as appeared to be demonstrated by the AKP's experience in Turkey.[41]

Those LIFG/LIMC members, who fought against forces loyal to Qaddafi, brought with them considerable paramilitary experience. Indeed, some would play a significant military role during the uprising. Belhadj became commander of the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade, which was one of the first brigades to form during the uprising and played an important role in the liberation of Tripoli. In eastern Libya, Abu Hliqa and several of his associates formed the Umar Al-Mukhtar Battalion, comprised of defectors from the Libyan army and LIFG/LIMC members. The Umar Al-Mukhtar Battalion joined the powerful, eastern-based 17th February Martyrs Brigade, which was itself led by Ismail Al-Sallabi, senior figure in the LIFG/LIMC and brother of Ali Al-Sallabi. Former LIFG member, Abdul Hakim Al-Hasidi, formed the Derna Brigade, which was later renamed the Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade [42]

However, the fall of the regime caused LIFG/LIMC to fragment. Some LIFG/LIMC veterans retained military roles. A number of the brigades commanded by LIFG/LIMC members continued to play an important role in Libya's fractured security sector, making their commanders influential figures in the country. Other more radical former LIFG/LIMC members among the brigade leaders, such as Al-Hasidi, joined the jihadi Salafi current.[43] A number of leading LIFG/LIMC figures entered the political arena, securing roles in NTC executive committees. Al-Sharif was appointed deputy defence minister in two of the interim governments of the NTC. Sadiq Al-Ghaithi Al-Ubaidi, a former LIFG prisoner, was also made a deputy defence minister and Al-Dhuwadi became deputy minister for the martyrs and the missing. Under the second interim government headed by Ali Zeidan, Abu Hliqa was made deputy interior minister.[44]

When the first parliamentary elections were held in 2012, several LIFG/LIMC veterans participated in the electoral process. Belhadj left the TMC that year in order to run as a candidate for the party that he founded, Al-Watan, though the party failed to win any seats. Al-Saadi founded his own party, Al-Umma Al-Wasat, which a number of former LIFG/LIMC leaders joined, including Al-Sharif, Al-Dhuwadl and Al-Qaid. Al-Qaid was allocated Al-

Umma Al-Wasat's only seat in the GNC[45], which he used to good effect.

Alliances

National

In the GNC, Al-Qaid led the Salafist-leaning Loyalty to the Martyrs Blood bloc, which was allied in the governing body with the JCP, and continued to be allied with it within the context of the civil war as part of the Libya Dawn coalition. Following the collapse of the Dawn coalition and the establishment of the UN political process, Belhadj's Al-Watan party now supports the GNA, along with its allies the Muslim Brotherhood and the JCP, while Al-Saadi's Al-Umma Al-Wasat rejects national reconciliation.[46]

Against the backdrop of the civil war, brigades comprising LIFG/LIMC veterans formed alliances with armed groups that comprised Muslim Brotherhood and Ansar Al-Sharia members. Following the uprising, Ismail Al-Sallabi had formed a new group with some members of the 17th February Martyrs Brigade, called the Raffalah Al-Sahati Brigade. When the civil war broke out in mid-2014, the Raffalah Al-Sahati Brigade, as mentioned in the previous section on the Muslim Brotherhood, came together with the Muslim Brotherhood-allied 17th February Martyrs Brigade and Ansar al-Sharia to form the umbrella group the BRSC to counter Haftar's LNA in the East. The BRSC counted among its commanders several high profile figures from both the Muslim Brotherhood and Ansar Al-Sharia, including Wissam ben Hamid (now deceased), a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Ali Al-Zahawi, Ansar Al-Sharia's now deceased leader.[47]

The BRSC's links to Ansar Al-Sharia were further reinforced though its close ties to the Benghazi Defence Brigades (BDB), which was formed in June 2016 to oppose the LNA in the eastern city of Benghazi.[48] Given the fluid nature of Libya's armed groupings, a number of BDB commanders are also commanders within the BRSC, including Ismail Al-Sallabi, who was a commander in the BRSC, Ahmad Al-Tajuri, who was a BRSC commander in West Benghazi, and Faraj Shiku, commander in the BRSC's 17th February Martyrs Brigade. Through their membership of the BDB these commanders are associates figures with ties to

41 Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," pp. 179, 182−3, 198−9.

42 Ibid., pp. 190−1; Nicholas A. Heras, "On the Front Lines in Eastern Libya," *Militant Leadership Monitor,* Vol. 7, Issue 5, June 2016; Abigail Hauslohner, "With Libya's Ascendant Islamists: 'Don't Get the Wrong Idea'," *Time Magazine,* 30 March 2012.

43 Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," pp. 188, 202; "Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade," *Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium,* https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/abu-slim-martyrs-brigade.

44 Walker-Cousins, "Security Sector Transformation in Arab Transitions," p. 23; Andrew McGregor, "Qatar's Role in the Libyan Conflict: Who's on the Lists of Terrorists and Why," *Aberfoyle Security,* 14 July 2017; Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," pp. 197−8.

45 Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," p. 200; Jamie Dettmer, "Brother of Al-Qaeda Commander Killed in Drone Strike a Major Candidate for Presidency of Libya's Parliament," *Fox News World,* 1 June 2013; Kwasi Kwarteng and Leo Docherty, "Inside Libya: Chaos in the Mediterranean," Conservative Middle East Council, March 2017.

46 Mohamed Eljarh, "After ISIS Defeat in Sirte Challenges Remain," The Atlantic Council, 11 July 2017.

47 Heras, "On the Front Lines in Eastern Libya"; "Wissam Ben Hamid Dead Says Arrested Ansar Spokesman; 13 Militants Reported to Have Blown Themselves Up," *Libya Herald,* 6 January 2017; "The Nine Entities Added to the Qatar-backed Terror List," *Al-Jazeera English,* 25 July 2017.

48 The BDB has recently expressed a readiness to disband.

Ansar Al-Sharia, including Ahmed Al-Shaltani, now deceased, but once a leading figure in Ansar Al-Sharia.[49]

LIFG/LIMC veterans also have links to Ansar Al-Sharia through the Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade. Sufyan bin Qumu, a former LIFG/LIMC member, who was a member of the Brigade and an associate of Osama bin Laden in Sudan, is also reported to have been a leader in Ansar Al-Sharia, for example.[50]

International

Several LIFG/LIMC veterans have ties to a number of countries. Qatar, in particular, appears to have been an especially important organizational hub for the movement during the uprising. Qatari authorities seem to have developed relations with BRSC commander Ismail Al-Sallabi. The latter is believed to have been associated with Ghanim Al-Kubais, head of the Qatari intelligence.[51] Qatar also fostered links to Belhadj.

In addition to ties to Qatar, Belhadj is also thought to have significant linkages to Turkey. In 2013, he was reported to have reached out to the AKP to seek assistance with laundering money looted during the overthrow of Qaddafi and in gaining refuge in Turkey. While there is no evidence to suggest that the AKP provided such assistance, Belhadj does now divide his time between Libya and Turkey. He has significant financial and real estate investments in Turkey, allegedly made possible thanks to the looted money.[52]

As well as their links to various countries, former members of the LIFG/LIMC have also been accused of having ties to jihadi groups in other countries, notably in Tunisia. Belhadj was accused in 2013 of having been implicated in the murder of two leftist politician in Tunisia, which the Tunisian government claimed were carried out by the Salafi organization Ansar Al-Sharia Tunisia (AST). In addition, Belhadj was accused of having sheltered AST leader, Abu Iyad Al-Tunisi, in Libya following the assassinations. He is also alleged to have trained AST militants in Libya. However, Belhadj has denied involvement in the murders, as well as any connections to AST. Proof of the exact nature of the relationship between Belhadj and AST is ultimately lacking.[53]

Ties to transnational jihadi groups, such as Al-Qaeda, also appear to exist. Abdul Basit Azuz, who fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan, spent several decades in the UK before relocating to the Pakistani-Afghan border area in the late 2000s, is reported to have been associated with the LIFG/LIMC influenced Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade. He was allegedly sent by Ayman Al-Zawahiri to Libya in order to help Al-Qaeda gain a foothold in the country following the death of Qaddafi. The BRSC, in which Ismail Al-Sallabi was a commander, also contains Al-Qaeda-linked individuals, such as Mohammed Ali, who was convicted in Jordan of plotting suicide attacks in the name of Al-Qaeda against the airport in Amman in 2007. In addition, the BDB, of which Ismail Al-Sallabi is also a commander, is allegedly backed by Al-Qaeda. The precise nature of BDB's connection to Al-Qaeda remains unclear, though.[54]

While both the BRSC and BDB have apparent links to Al-Qaeda, this does not seem to preclude cooperation with fighters loyal to IS. The BRSC has fought alongside Islamic State (IS) against the LNA in Benghazi and the BDB has cooperated with IS militants during an operation against the LNA in late June 2016. Indicative of such collaboration, senior member of the BDB, Ahmed Bakir, was arrested by the Misrata Counter Terrorism Unit for cooperation with IS.[55]

Vectors of Influence

National

A number of brigades formed or led by LIFG/LIMC veterans have retained influence on the ground in several areas across the country following the uprising. This includes the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade, which, along with a number of other brigades, controls much of the capital.[56] In the East, the Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade maintains considerable influence in Derna, engaging in smuggling activities. It was also reported to have trained would-be foreign fighters for the Syrian conflict.[57]

Belhadj remains a prominent political figure and still wields influence in Tripoli as a result of his former connections to the TMC. Although he now presents him-

49   "Saraya Defend Benghazi (BDB)," *Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium,* https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/saraya-defend-benghazi; Abdul Kadder Assad, "Benghazi Defense Brigades Explains Its Political Vision in Black and White," *The Libyan Observer,* 12 March 2017; Nathaniel Barr and Madeleine Blackman, "A New Threat to Libya's Stability Emerges," *Terrorism Monitor,* Vol. 14, Issue 16; "Benghazi Defence Brigades Admit Deaths of Leading Members," *Libya Herald,* 12 December 2016.

50   Wehrey, "The Struggle for Security in Eastern Libya," p. 11.

51   Lamine Ghanmi, "Qatar-backed Jihadist Group in Libya Disbands" *The Arab Weekly,* 2 July 2017; Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Qatar and the Arab Spring: Policy Drivers and Regional Implications," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 24 September 2014; "What You Need to Know About the Five Libyans on the Terror List," *Al-Arabiya English,* 9 June 2017.

52   "Turkish WikiLeaks Cache Links AKP and Libya's Al-Qaeda Chief Belhaj," *NSNBC International,* 20 July 2016; Sudarsan Raghavan, "These Libyans Were Once Linked to Al-Qaeda. Now They Are Politicians and Businessmen," *The Washington Post,* 28 September 2017; "Turkey, Qatar Accused of Delivering Weapons to Libyan Militants, *Egypt Today,* 17 June 2017.

53   Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Kathleen Soucy, "Abdelhakim Belhadj and Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia," Foundation for Defense of Democracies, 8 October 2013.

54   "The Nine Entities Added to the Qatar-backed Terror List"; Wehrey, "The Struggle for Security in Eastern Libya," p. 10; Barr and Blackman, "A New Threat to Libya's Stability Emerges."

55   "A Quick Guide to Libya's Main Players"; "Other Jihadi Actors," *Eye on ISIS in Libya,* 5 September 2017; "Saraya Defend Benghazi (BDB)."

56   Dettmer, "Brother of Al Qaeda Commander Killed."

57   "Abu Slim Martyrs Brigade"; Wehrey, "The Struggle for Security in Eastern Libya," pp. 10–11; Christopher S. Chivis and Jeffery Martini, *Libya after Qaddafi: Lessons and Implications for the Future* (RAND Corporation, 2014), p. 18.

self as a business man – his political career not having been very successful – many Libyans say that he is influential behind the scenes, pulling the strings with LIFG/LIMC veterans. He is also well-respected by the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as in other Islamist circles.[58]

The civil war has also enabled Ismail Al-Sallabi to increase his influence in the East as one of the most powerful commanders in the BRSC and the BDB. While the BRSC and its constituent parts have been decimated in clashes with the LNA, there is no doubt that fighters in the East continue to support the brigades that make up the BRSC. Ali Al-Sallabi is also an associate of GNA Defence Minister Colonel Mahdi Al-Barghathi. In theory, he would be well-positioned to play a role in any future Libyan army. However, his links to jihadi actors and the decline of both the BRSC could work against this.[59]

The profiles of former LIFG/LIMC members, notably Ismail Al-Sallabi and Belhadj, have also been boosted through control of various media outlets. The BRSC has several media outlets of its own, including Al-Saraya Media Centre, which it uses to publicize its activities and also to diffuse its agenda, and Bushra Media Establishment, a pro-BRSC online media group, which also became that of the BDB. Belhadj, in turn, has his own TV channel, Nada TV, which has been used to promote the operations of the BRSC and the BDB. It also re-diffuses reports featured by the Al-Saraya Media Centre.[60]

International

The successes of LIFG/LIMC militants during the uprising were not only attributed to the movement's ability to adapt its message and image to the changed national context, but also to the movement's relations with Qatar. The military roles of LIFG/LIMC veterans, which translated into political influence for some, was aided by arms supplies and other forms of support from Qatar.[61] As commander of the 17th February Martyrs Brigade, Ismail Al-Sallabi is believed to have received aid and arms from Qatar, channeled, as noted earlier, through Al-Sallabi's brother, Ali, who was at that time of the uprising based in Doha. When Ismail Al-Sallabi formed the Raffalah Al-Sahati Brigade, this support is thought to have continued in the form of funding and arms.[62] Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade, when led by Belhadj, received infantry training from Qatari Special Operations Forces in the Nafusa

Mountain area, where it was based during the uprising. Qatari Special Operations Forces were even reported to have been on the ground during the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade's assault on Qaddaf's fortress, the Bab al-Azizya Compound. Qatar's support for Belhadj also appears to have continued beyond the uprising. The TMC, which Belhadj led following the death of Qaddafi, is also reported to have received funds from Qatar. Following Belhadj's resignation from the TMC, Qatari support for him could have continued. His Al-Watan party is notably rumoured to receive Qatari financial support.[63] However, his perceived links to Qatar may be a liability for any future political ambitions he may have.

1.3 Salafi Parties (Al-Watan and Al-Umma Al-Wasat)

Background and Objectives

As indicated, those LIFG/LIMC veterans, who entered the political arena following the fall of the Qaddafi regime, fractured into two main political parties, one more moderate than the other. Former LIFG/LIMC leader, Belhadj, as mentioned, resigned from the TMC in order to run in the parliamentary elections in 2012 as a candidate for the party that he had formed, Al-Watan. The latter is comprised of a wide range of figures, some of which are not Islamist. Among its members are business people, members of the Muslim Brotherhood and more liberal-leaning Libyans, who had been implicated in civil society activities during the course of the uprising.[64] Reflective of its diverse composition, Al-Watan presents itself as a broad-based political party with an Islamic reference. As such, it claims to accept the civic nature of the state[65] and does not seek to make sharia law the basis of legislation.

The other, more ideologically conservative, party to emerge in 2012 was Al-Umma Al-Wasat. The latter was founded by Al-Saadi, one of Belhadj's deputies and former head of the LIFG's religious committee. A significant number of LIFG/LIMC veterans followed Al-Saadi and

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58   Interview with Smith, 7 December 2017.

59   Raghavan, "These Libyans Were Once Linked to Al-Qaeda."

60   "The Nine Entities Added to the Qatar-backed Terror List"; Barr and Blackman, "A New Threat to Libya's Stability Emerges."

61   Benotman, Pack and Brandon, "Islamists," p. 226; Alastair MacDonald, "Analysis: As Libyans Wrangle, Qatar in Wings," *Reuters,* 8 November 2011.

62   Lamine Ghanmi, "Qatar-backed Jihadist Group in Libya Disbands" *The Arab Weekly,* 2 July 2017; Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Qatar and the Arab Spring: Policy Drivers and Regional Implications," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 24 September 2014; "What You Need to Know About the Five Libyans on the Terror List," *Al-Arabiya English,* 9 June 2017.

63   Mary Fitzgerald, "The Syrian Rebels' Libyan Weapon," *Foreign Policy,* 9 August 2012; Ian Black, "Qatar Admits Sending Hundreds of Troops to Support Libya Rebels," *The Guardian,* 26 October 2011; Stevenson, "Gulf Hands in Libya"; Jonathan Schanzer, "Qatar's Support of The Worst of the Worst In Libya Must End," *Newsweek,* 4 June 2017; "Qatar's Role in the Libyan Conflict: Who's on the Lists of Terrorists and Why," Jamestown Foundation, 14 July 2017.

64   Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," p. 200.

65   Frederic Wehrey, "The Brave New World of Libya's Elections," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 26 June 2012.

joined his party, resulting in the party being dubbed the "LIFG political wing" in local media. Among them were Al-Sharif, another of Belhadj's deputies, Al-Qaid, senior member of the LIFG and brother of the high-level Al-Qaeda militant Abu Yahya Alibi, and Al-Dhuwadi. In line with its more conservative agenda, Al-Umma Al-Wasat seeks to establish sharia law in Libya. Consequently, it does not accept the idea of a civic state.[66]

Alliances

National

On the national stage, Al-Watan has links to several prominent actors, including former Muslim Brotherhood member and leader of the Hisb Al-Watan (formerly the National Gathering and not to be confused with Belhadj's Al-Watan party), Ali Al-Sallabi. Belhadj and Ali Al-Sallabi formed particularly close ties when the latter assisted in securing the release of Belhadj and other LIFG members from prison in the mid-2000s. During the uprising, this relationship would prove crucial to Belhadj's military role, especially during the capture of Tripoli by rebel forces. Other key figures in the party are also known to have links to Ali Al-Sallabi, including Ismail Gritli, an Al-Jazeera journalist, who returned to Libya from the UK in 2002 and co-authored a book with him.[67] Al-Watan's composition and ideological orientation has also led the party to find common cause with the Muslim Brotherhood, whose members are present in Al-Watan and with which the latter allied during the Libyan civil war as part of the Libya Dawn coalition. As part of this coalition, Al-Watan could rely on the support of the Muslim Brotherhood-tied Libya Shield forces, which include the Tripoli Revolutionary Brigade, which Behadj once commanded.[68]

Not surprisingly, Al-Umma Al-Wasat has ties with more conservative figures in Libya's political and religious spheres. As a member of the GNC, Al-Qaid was afforded ample opportunity to forge ties with other conservative members within the body, especially independent Salafi-leaning GNC deputies within his Loyalty to the Martyrs Blood bloc. This parliamentary bloc was itself allied with the JCP.[69] The party's leader, Al-Saadi, is also al-legedly connected to Sadiq Al-Ghariani, an influential cleric within Libya's religious sphere, who was appointed Libya's first director of Dar Al-Ifta and is reported to have links to the Muslim Brotherhood[70]

International

Al-Watan is reported to maintain close relations with Qatar and is even alleged to be financed by Qatar.[71] Al-Saadi and his Al-Umma Al-Wasat party may also have had similar links. Al-Saadi's name appears on a terror list issued by the HoR following the publication of the Arab states' terror black list of Qatari or Qatari-allied individuals, which is suggestive of potential links to Qatar.[72]

Vectors of Influence

National

During the 2012 parliamentary elections, which allowed political parties to run in conjunction with independent candidates, both Al-Watan and Al-Umma Al-Wasat faired extremely badly. Al-Watan suffered a stunning defeat. It failed to win any seats in the GNC, even Belhadj, who was a high profile figure, failed to win a seat in his constituency of Tripoli's 13th district. The poor performance of the party may have been due to Belhadj's connections to Ali Al-Sallabi, and the perception that the party was under the influence of Qatar.[73] Al-Umma Al-Wasat did slightly better, winning one seat, which was allocated to Al-Qaid, who used his position well. During his time in the GNC, Al-Qaid was leader of the Salafi-oriented Loyalty to the Martyrs Blood bloc. This bloc was able, in alliance with the JCP, to wield considerable influence in the GNC. In addition, Al-Qaid was head of the GNC's National Security Committee.[74]

International

During the 2012 elections, Belhadj and his Al-Watan party received a great deal of attention in the international press. El-Watan's support for the UN-led political process, in which it has participated, has also led to a more posi-

66 Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," p. 200; Wehrey, "The Struggle for Security in Eastern Libya," p. 10; Wehrey, "The Brave New World of Libya's Elections"; Omar Ashour, "Libya's Defeated Islamists," *The Straits Times,* 19 July 2012.

67 Karim Mezran and Eric Knecht, "Actors and Factors in Libya's Revolution," in *Political and Constitutional Transitions in North Africa: Actors and Factors,* eds. Justin O. Frosini and Francesco Biogi (London & New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 89; "Documents Provided to the Select Committee on the Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi," US Government Printing Office, 2012, p. 1418.

68 "Is the Balance Changing in Libya?" *Orsam Foreign Policy Analyses,* 31 July 2015.

69 Karim Mezran and Alice Alunni, "Libya: Negotiations for Transition," in *Arab Spring: Negotiating in the Shadow of the Intifadat,* ed. I William Zartman (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2015), p. 278.

70 McGregor, "Qatar's Role in the Libyan Conflict"; "Documents Provided to the Select Committee," p. 1420; Lacher, "Fault Lines of the Revolution," p. 15.

71 Schanzer, "Qatar's Support of The Worst"; "Qatar's Role in the Libyan Conflict: Who's on the Lists of Terrorists and Why," Jamestown Foundation, 14 July 2017.

72 Interview with Smith, 7 December 2017.

73 Benotman, Pack and Brandon, "Islamists," p. 216; "It's Political Party Time in Libya: The Key Players," *France 24,* 2 July 2012.

74 "Jihadism's Foothold in Libya," The Washington Institute, 12 September 2012; Dettmer, "Brother of Al Qaeda Commander Killed."

tive international image than that of Al-Umma Al-Wasat, which has been a staunch opponent of reconciliation.[75]

1.4 "Quiestist" Salafis (Madkhalis)

Background and Objectives

The quietist Salafi strain in Libya is largely composed of followers of the Saudi sheikh Rabi bin Hadi Al-Madkhali. The latter shuns participation in parliamentary democracy, as well as armed resistance, in favour of strict loyalty to rulers and observance of Islamic practice. In the 1990s, the Saudi government promoted Al-Madkhali's teachings in the Kingdom as a means of discrediting the domestic Muslim Brotherhood-inspired Sahwa movement, and jihadi Salafism. While his influence has declined domestically over the years, with the religious establishment distancing itself from him, he is likely still viewed by the Saudi government as useful thanks to his unquestioning support for the established rule in Saudi Arabia. His position within a government-funded Islamic university in Medina is indicative of this.[76] Al-Madkhali has also developed a following abroad, including in Libya. Advocates of Madkhalism were invited to Libya by Qaddafi in the 1990s to counter the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood and the LIFG. Over the years, the movement has gained traction in the country.[77] Support for Madkhalis in Libya was channeled through Qaddafi's son, Saadi Qaddafi, who was the point man between Madkhalis and the regime.[78] Not only did Madkhalism take root during Qaddafi years; its adherents managed to infiltrate the security services.[79]

When the uprising began in 2011, Al-Madkhali urged his followers not to join the rebels and to stay at home, declaring that participation in the uprising would cause fitnah (chaos). As a result, many of his followers did not side with the rebels, although some did participate in the uprising in Tripoli, which began on 20 August 2011.

After Qaddafi, Madkhalis formed "anti-vice" squads aimed at enforcing Madkhali moral precepts. They also destroyed Sufi shrines and mosques, due to their opposition to Sufism's veneration of saints and the dominant Maliki School of jurisprudence. Within the context of the civil war, Madkhalis joined opposite sides in the conflict, with some aligning with the Libya Dawn coalition and others joining the Libya Dignity coalition.[80] Their subsequent alliances with the UN-backed GNA and Haftar's LNA has increased their influence in the country.

Alliances

National

Several armed groups that are influenced by Madkhalism are allied with the GNA. The powerful RADA Special Deterrence Force, led by Abdel Raouf Kara, a key Madkhali figure in Tripoli and based in the capital, is the most prominent of the western-based Madkhali brigades. RADA began life as one of the anti-vice squads set up following the uprising. It falls under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior and operates out of a base at Tripoli's Mitiga airport, where it runs its own prison. The force is thought to count approximately 1,500 in its ranks, amongst which are former army officers opposed to General Haftar. RADA not only opposed Haftar and the LNA, but also the cleric Sadiq Al-Ghariani, who backs the National Salvation Government in Tripoli and is reported to have ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.[81] A RADA sub-unit, the Crime Fighting Apparatus (CFA), which is also based in Tripoli and has ties to Madkhalis, was believed to be responsible for the 2016 kidnapping of Sheikh Nadir Al-Omrani, a member of Al-Ghariani's now closed Dar Al-Ifta and critic of Al-Madkhali's fatwas.[82]

Another Madkhali-leaning and Tripoli-based brigade is the Abu Salim Central Security Force, led by Abdul Ghani Al-Kikli. It controls a detention centre in the Abu Salim neighbourhood of Tripoli. Like RADA, it is loyal to the GNA. It is also allied to another powerful Tripoli Brigade, the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade, once led by Belhadj and now commanded by Haitham Al-Tajuri, which also backs the GNA and recently expelled El-Ghwell's Na-

75 "It's Political Party Time in Libya: The Key Players"; "Libya's Abdulhakim Belhadj: 'We Are Working to Find a Solution to End This Crisis'," *Euronews,* 14 February 2015; Andrew Engel, "Libya's civil War: Rebuilding the Country from the Ground Up," *The Washington Institute Near East Policy Research Notes,* No. 25, April 2015, p. 5

76 Jamie Dettmer, "Ultraconservative Salafists Destroy Sufi Landmarks in Libya," *Daily Beast,* 9 April 2012.

77 Ahmed Salah Ali, "Libya's Warring Parties Play a Dangerous Game Working with Madkhali Salafists," Atlantic Council, 3 November 2017; Andrew McGregor, "Radical Loyalty and the Libyan Crisis: A Profile of Salafist Shaykh Rabi' bin Hadi al-Madkhali," *Aberfoyle Security,* 19 January 2017.

78 Wolfram Lacher, "La fragmentation de la Libye se produit autour de la répartition des ressources," *Le Monde,* 22 May 2017.

79 McGregor, "Radical Loyalty and the Libyan Crisis".

80 Ali, "Libya's Warring Parties Play a Dangerous Game"; Frederic Wehrey, "Quiet No More?" Carnegie Middle East Center, 13 October 2016; McGregor, "Radical Loyalty and the Libyan Crisis"; Fitzgerald, "Finding Their Place," p. 187.

81 McGregor, "Radical Loyalty and the Libyan Crisis"; Wehrey, "Quiet No More?"; "A Quick Guide to Libya's Main Players"; Emily Estelle, "A Strategy for Success in Libya," American Enterprise Institute, November 2017, footnote 90, p. 59; McGregor, "Radical Loyalty and the Libyan Crisis."

82 McGregor, "Radical Loyalty and the Libyan Crisis".

tional Salvation Government from its headquarters at the Rixos hotel in Tripoli.[83]

The 604th Infantry Battalion is another Madkhali influenced armed group allied with the GNA. It was formed following the murder of a Salafi cleric, Khaled bin Rajab Al-Firjani, who was killed by IS militants for condemning the group. Al-Firjani's brother fled to Tripoli and established the group, with the support (including the provision of arms) of RADA. The group is estimated to comprise some 450 fighters (as of the end of 2015) made up largely of Misratans, although it also includes fighters from other parts of the country, such as Sirte, Bani Walid, Tripoli, Zintan and Sabah. The 604th Infantry Battalion participated in Operation Al-Bunyan Al-Marsous, the anti-IS operation launched in 2016 against IS in Sirte by brigades loyal to the GNA. Despite the group's cooperation with the GNA, its leader does have ties to Haftar, who hails from the same Firjan tribe[84], raising questions about the group's long-term loyalties.

Following a 2016 fatwa calling on Madkhalis to join Haftar's campaign against the BDB, due to its perceived closeness to the Muslim Brotherhood and jihadi Salafis, some Madkhalis have allied themselves with Haftar and the LNA. Many of the Madkhalis who have backed Haftar militarily, as a result of their anti-Muslim Brotherhood and anti-jihadi Salafi stance, are former members of the Salafist Tawhid Brigade, initially led by the now deceased Izz Al-Din Al-Tarhuni. Following the latter's death in early 2015, the Brigade disintegrated. Its members have since joined several units of the Haftar's LNA, including the 302 Special Forces Battalion, the Marine Special Forces and the 210 Mechanized Infantry Battalion.[85] Another, less prominent Madkhali leaning armed group that is allied with the LNA is the Tariq ibn Ziyad Brigade.[86]

International

Saudi support for Madkhalis has been reported. The ability of the Madkhali brigades to increase their manpower by offering attractive salaries and to build up significant military capacity is alleged to be at least partly due to funding from Saudi sources. However, this remains speculative. Saudi government support may take other forms, though, such as support for Madkhali preachers. Saudi Arabia has sent Madkhali clerics to eastern Libya, with the approval of General Haftar, for example.[87] Madkhali clerics operating in the East include Salem Al-Wissari, Hamed ben Issa, Abdel Al-Qwarsha, Faraj Al-Maliki, Al-Mabrouk Al-Qadi, Massoud Al-Nadhuri and Ezzedine Mouhammad.[88] Moreover, following the abduction of Al-Omrani, Al-Ghariani claimed that Madkhalis had been directed by their counterparts in Gulf States to murder Libyan clerics. However, the abduction was reported to have been carried out on the orders of the Egyptian Madkhali Mohammed Said Raslan[89], suggesting that Egyptian Madkhali networks may also have influence with their counterparts in Libya.

Vectors of Influence

National

Madkhalis appear to be using their alliance with Haftar to increase their influence in the East, where they are reported to be gaining support in some sections of society. Madkhalis not only control many mosques in the East, but are also reported to control the General Authority of Awfaq and Islamic Affairs, the religious authority set up of the Bayda government. Indeed, locals have expressed concern that a state institution is propagating an extremist ideology.[90] Integration of Madkhalis into LNA units may also be serving to extend Madkhali influence in eastern Libya, which could have implications for a future Libyan army, should LNA units that comprise Madkhalis be integrated into any such unified structure.[91]

In the West, Madkhalis have significant traction on the ground in Tripoli, particularly through RADA, as well as other brigades led by Madkhalis, including the Abu Salim Central Security Force. Together with the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade, the Madkhali brigades largely control much of Tripoli.[92] The Abu Salim Central Security Force's influence with the GNA may have been further boosted in March 2017, when it ejected the National Salvation Government from its headquarters at the Rixos hotel in Tripoli.[93] Indeed, the GNA depends on support from these brigades in the capital. In Misrata, where the

83 UN Security Council, "Letter Dated 4 March 2016 from the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Addressed to the President of the Security Council," 9 March 2016, p. 20; Valerie Stocker, "How Armed Groups Are Plundering Libya's Banks," *Middle East Eye,* 10 April 2017.

84 Ali, "Libya's Warring Parties Play a Dangerous Game"; Wehrey, "Quiet No More?"; UN Security Council, "Letter Dated 1 June 2017 from the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Addressed to the President of the Security Council," 1 July 2017, p. 13.

85 "HoR approves Salamé's Action Plan," *Libya Herald,* 21 November 2017; McGregor, "Radical Loyalty and the Libyan Crisis."

86 "Video Circulates of Purported LNA Execution of IS Member," *Libya Herald,* 25 February 2017.

87 Karim Mezran and Arturo Varvelli, "Libyan Crisis: International Actors at Play," in *Foreign Actors in Libya's Crisis,* eds. Karim Mezran and Arturo Varvelli (Atlantic Council; ISPI, 2017), p. 53.

88 UN Security Council, "Letter Dated 1 June 2017," p. 95.

89 McGregor, "Radical Loyalty and the Libyan Crisis"; "Grand Mufti Accuses Madkhali Followers of Being Foreign Agents and Planning to Kill Libyan Clerics," *Libya Herald,* 23 November 2016.

90 Jamie Prentis, "East Libyans Protest Against Order Curtailing Travel Abroad," *Middle East Eye,* 26 February 2017; Ahmed Salah Ali, "Haftar and Salafism: A Dangerous Game," Atlantic Council, 6 June 2017; Abdulkader Assad, "Haftar Makes Way for Saudi Extremist Clerics to Preach in Eastern Libya," *The Libyan Observer,* 14 January 2017.

91 Estelle, "A Strategy for Success in Libya," p. 44

92 Stocker, "How Armed Groups Are Plundering Libya's Banks."

93 Ahmed Alumami, "Tripoli Armed Factions Take over Rival's Compound in Heavy Fighting," *Reuters,* 15 March 2017.

604th Infantry Batallion is based, Madkhalis are also said to exert influence over the Misrata Muncipal Council.[94]

Were Madkhalis to come together to form a bloc, they could wield more influence. However, the fact that not all of them followed Al-Madkhali's fatwa to unite with Haftar's LNA, as well as their presence on opposing sides of the civil war, suggests that their local allegiances predominate for the time being. Although they are not a united force, their alliances with Haftar and the GNA may serve to strengthen an ultra-conservative Salafi strain within Libyan security structures and within the religious and societal spheres in Libya. Madkhalis also have the advantage of being able to present themselves as security providers, as well as uncorrupt, which could be appealing to a population in dire need of security and good governance. Their growth is potentially concerning, since Madkhalis are against mainstream Islamists, who are likely to continue to have an important role in Libyan politics. Madkhalis unquestioning support for rulers could also have implications for stability in Libya over the long run,[95] should undemocratic forces become pre-eminent in the country and seek to gain religious legitimacy by aligning themselves with Madkhalis.

International

Madkhali support for the GNA in Tripoli and their participation in the fight against IS does help to boost international acceptance of Madkhali brigades. In the East, Madkhali support for Haftar's LNA raises Libyan Madkhalis significance in Saudi Arabia as a potential channel of influence in North Africa.

1.5 The Importance of Libya's Islamists

Political support for the uprising, as well as the role of Islamist-linked revolutionary brigades, helped to grant the Muslim Brotherhood influence in post-Qaddafi governance and parallel security institutions. Although its political weight has waned since 2014, the UN political process and the institutions created under the UN-brokered LPA have provided vectors of continued influence for the movement. This influence is likely to diminish further, if modifications to the LPA are implemented. Brotherhood-associated brigades that are loyal to the GNA, especially those in the former Libya Shield forces, also serve to give the Muslim Brotherhood influence. Should they become

incorporated into future police and army structures, this would give the movement associates within these structures, who are sympathetic to its agenda.

LIFG/LIMC veterans never reached the same degree of political relevance as the Muslim Brotherhood, though a few did gain political relevance following the uprising, largely due to aligning with the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the importance of some former LIFG/LIMC members has been boosted by the significance of powerful brigades commanded by LIFG/LIMC veterans, particularly in Tripoli and eastern Libya. These brigades have lost some of their weight recently, though. Whether the prominence of LIFG/LIMC veteran commanders will translate into influence within future security structures is likely to depend on how their links to jihadi Salafi actors are perceived.

While Madkhalis, for the most part, did not play a significant role in the uprising, they have taken sides in the civil war. As such, they have succeeded in making themselves relevant to both the GNA and Haftar's LNA. This could translate into a future presence within police and army structures. As a result of the political fragmentation of Libya and Haftar's tolerance of Madkhalism, the latter is also gaining a firmer foothold in the religious sphere in the East, giving its adherents channels through which to continue to increase their following in this party of the country.

In sum, then, the political influence of Islamists, particularly that of Muslim Brotherhood, has declined since 2014. However, the UN political process has provided a channel through which they may remain politically relevant, albeit to a much reduced degree. Moreover, the importance of brigades associated with Islamist actors has provided them with vectors of influence in the West and the East, which could translate into influence in Libya's future security structures. Should such brigades become integrated into a unified army structure, their opposing agendas could affect unity within it. The growth of Madkhalism in the East could also pose challenges to a revived democratic transition in Libya, if undemocratic forces are predominant at any time. It could also reinforce ultra-conservativism in this already more conservative part of the country.

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94   Emadeddin Zahri Muntasser, "Libya's New Menace: Madkhalism," *International Policy Digest*, 3 February 2017.

95   Ali, "Libya's Warring Parties Play a Dangerous Game."

2 Islamism in Tunisia

After the uprising that removed Ben Ali from power and enabled a democratic transition to begin in Tunisia, a number of Islamist actors entered the political arena, including the mainstream Islamist party Ennahda and more conservative Salafi parties, such as Jabhat Al-Islah and Hisb Ut-tahrir. At the same time, the quietist Salafi current within society grew, represented above all by Ansar Al-Sahria Tunisia in the early phase of its evolution, although the latter later became a jihadi organization.

2.1 Mainstream Islamists (Ennahda)

Background and Objectives

Ennahda has its roots in the Jamaa Al-Islamiyya, which began as a student movement in the 1970s with the aim of bringing Islamist thought linked to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt to Tunisia. It sought to do so through preaching at university campuses and in mosques. In a similar way to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, it recruited at the grassroots level and financed the movement through membership payments. The group was banned in 1973, though it continued to operate clandestinely.[96]

A split within the movement between those members wedded to the intellectual heritage of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and those, like Rachid Ghannouchi (later the leader of Ennahda), who believed it was not compatible with the Islamic traditions of Tunisia, emerged. This led the latter faction to form the Mouvement de la tendance islamique (MTI) in 1979. The MTI was committed not only to social activism, but also political action aimed at challenging the secularization of Tunisia under former president, Habib Boughuiba. Although its creation was an expression of the desire to develop a type of Islamism that would have traction within Tunisia, the MTI is believed to have maintained links with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The precise nature of their relationship

was unclear, though. Some analysts believe that MTI was initially formally associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, though intellectually independent. At the very least, individual members of MTI are thought to have sworn allegiance to the Muslim Brotherhood.[97]

The MTI announced its existence in 1981 and applied for a license to operate as a political party within the context of a political opening initiated by Bourghuiba prior to parliamentary elections that year. MTI's political programme included a call for the revival of Tunisia's Islamic heritage and a commitment to the democratic process. However, MTI was not granted a license to operate as a political party and the public announcement of its existence led the government to ban the movement. The ensuing crackdown against the movement saw Ghannouchi imprisoned until he was released in 1984 under a general amnesty granted to MTI militants. Following the general amnesty, the movement was able to function somewhat openly until attacks in Sousse and Monastir in 1987, for which MTI was blamed, led to another period of repression against the movement and Ghannouchi's imprisonment and death sentence.[98]

In 1988, the incoming president, Zine El-Abadine Ben Ali, released Ghannouchi and other MTI members. As Ben Ali moved to establish a multiparty system, Ghannouchi changed the movement's name to the Ennahda (Renaissance) Mouvement in order to remove the reference to Islam in its name and make it eligible to apply for a license as a political party. While Ennahda was not granted a license to operate as a party, members of the movement did run as independents in the 1989 parliamentary elections. Although they won 14.5 per cent of the vote, none were allowed to take up seats in parliament and the election results prompted another crackdown against the movement, this time leading to Ghannouchi's exile and the movement's disappearance from the public arena in Tunisia. Some of its underground structures did remain, though. During his exile, Ghannouchi's became convinced that an Islamic form of democracy could be advanced through participation in the democratic process.[99]

When the removal of Ben Ali in 2011 enabled Ennahda's legalization as a political party, the need for societal acceptance and inclusion within the political system, particularly against the backdrop of the political crisis in 2013/14 and the ouster of Morsi in Egypt, led to a radical reorientation of Ennahda. Ennahda no longer seeks to establish sharia law, which means that it accepts the civic nature of the Tunisian state and, moreover, can embrace human rights without those rights being cir-

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96 Alaya Allani, "The Islamists in Tunisia between Confrontation and Participation: 1980−2008," *The Journal of North African Studies,* Vol. 14, No. 2 (2009), pp. 258, 260; Anne Wolf, *Political Islam in Tunisia: The History of Ennahda* (London: Hurst & Company, 2017), p. 37; Azzam Tamimi, "Rashid Al-Ghannushi," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics,* eds. John L. Esposito and Emad El-Din Shanin (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 214.

97 Wolf, *Political Islam in Tunisia,* pp. 42, 46, 50.

98 Ibid., pp. 55, 57, 61−2.

99 Tamimi, "Rashid Al-Ghannushi," pp. 217−8; Wolf, *Political Islam in Tunisia,* pp. 71, 107.

cumscribed by Islamic law.[100] In 2016, to further reduce the perception that Ennahda was too close to the jihadi Salafi current in Tunisia, another important milestone was reached towards becoming a civic party. Ennahda sought to distance itself from political Islam by redefining itself as a national democratic party based on Islamic values, justified by the separation of its political and religious activities.[101]

Alliances

National

Ennahada has entered into formal political alliances with non-Islamist parties. Following the 2011 parliamentary elections, Ennahda entered into an alliance with two non-Islamist parties that had not campaigned on a strong anti-Islamist ticket, notably the social democratic Ettakatol and the centre-left Congress for the Republic (CPR). However, their alliance with Ennhada caused serious ruptures within them. During the course of the so-called troika government, almost 50 per cent of Ettakatol and CPR's parliamentarians resigned from their parties to protest the alliance with Ennahda.[102]

Whilst leading the troika government, Ennahda also maintained close ties to Salafi parties, especially with Jabhat Al-Islah, which it considered an ally. Relations with Salafi actors at this time also extended to AST, whose leaders had spent time in prison with those of Ennahda. In the early phase of the transition, Ghannouchi met with AST leader, Abu Iyad Al-Tunisi, and provided advice on how AST could increase its influence in Tunisia.[103]

However, Ennahda's links with AST during its leadership of the troika government led to repeated accusations of it being too lenient with Salafis, particularly members of AST. Its tolerant stance towards AST was apparently due to a desire not to push them further into the fringes or to lose their potential political support, as well as a result of Ennahda's own partially conservative support base. However, distance between Ennahda and AST would grow when ties to the latter became a liability, particularly after AST was allegedly implicated in the 2012 attack on the US Embassy in Tunis. The rupture between Ennahda and AST would become even more serious fol-

lowing the assassination of two leftist politicians in 2013 for which AST was deemed responsible.[104] At the same time, Ennahda's political survival increasingly depended on acceptance by non-Islamist political parties and society at large as opposition forces called for the troika government to step down for allegedly having failed to do enough to curb the growth of Salafi violence in the country.

Ennahda was forced to cede power in early 2014 and to enter into a dialogue process with opposition parties. The elections that followed that same year, saw Nidaa Tounes, a broad-based non-Islamist party, form a coalition government that included the populist Free Patriotic Union and the liberal Afek Tounis, as well as Ennahda. Inclusion of the latter was not initially sought, though it proved necessary in order for Nidaa Tounes to secure a parliamentary majority. Ennahda seems to have understood that compromise with Nidaa Tounes was essential for its long-term survival. Even though Ennahda is now the largest party in parliament, due to the resignations of Nidaa Tounes parliamentarians in 2016, Ennahda would not be able to form a governing majority without Nidaa Tounes in the event of a vote of no confidence for the Nidaa Tounes government. Both parties, therefore, need each other for the time being[105], suggesting that Ennahda will continue to work with Nidaa Tounes.

International

Ennahda maintains ties with a number of other Islamist parties abroad. Relations with Morocco's Justice and Development Party (JDP) appear to be particularly close. Both parties have shared their experiences with one another. The PJD was recently a source of inspiration for Ennahda with regards to the separation of the party from the religious movement. Ennahda seems to have studied what the PJD did before it announced a similar separation between political and religious activities in 2016.[106]

As mentioned, Ennahda has also been close to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Though there is no evidence of formal ties between them, Ennahda did view the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as an ally until it became a liability for Ennahda following the 2013 ouster of the Egyptian president, Mohamed Morsi, which coincided with the political crisis in Tunisia.

Links between Ennahda and the AKP in Turkey have also been strong, although not all of Ennahda's leadership have viewed AKP as a model for the party, due to

100 Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone, "Moderation through Exclusion? The Journey of the Tunisian Ennahda from Fundamentalist to Conservative Party," *Democratization,* Vol. 20, No. 5 (2013), pp. 861−2.

101 Wolf, *Political Islam in Tunisia,* pp. 160−2; Larbi Sadiki, "Tunisian Ennahda's 'Second Founding'," Afro-Middle East Centre, 3 July 2016; Sayida Ounissi, "Ennahda from Within: Islamists or 'Muslim Democrats'," *Brookings Rethinking Political Islam Series,* February 2016, p. 8.

102 Wolf, *Political Islam in Tunisia,* p. 135.

103 Anne Wolf, "An Islamist 'Renaissance'? Religion and Politics in Post-revolutionary Tunisia," The Journal of North African Studies, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2013), p. 567; "Rached Ghannouchi," Counter Extremism Project, https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/rached-ghannouchi; Bill Roggio, "'Moderate' Islamist Leader in Tunisia Strategizes with Al Qaeda-linked Salafists," *FDD's Long War Journal,* 16 October 2012.

104 Camille Tawil, "Ennahda Reconsiders Ties with Tunisian Salafist Groups," *Al-Monitor,* 30 May 2013; "'Political Islam' and the Muslim Brotherhood Review," Foreign Affairs Committee, House of Commons, November 2016; Anne Wolf, "New Tunisian Salafist Party: A Threat to Democratic Transition?" *Open Democracy,* 14 August 2012.

105 Wolf, "An Islamist Renaissance"; Zeinab Marzouk, "Thirty-one Deputies Resign as Nidaa Tounes Loses Majority," *Tunisialive,* 9 November 2015.

106 Mohammed Masbah, "North Africa's Islamist Parties Provide Important Lessons in Secularization," Chatham House, 28 February 2017.

the AKP's organizational structure and the dominance of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan within it. Repression in Turkey following the 2016 attempted coup may also be prompting Ennahda to re-evaluate the extent to which it wishes to be publicly associated with the AKP.[107]

Ennahda's leadership is also close to Qatar, which like Turkey under the AKP, has sought to foster strong relations with Islamist parties in the region. While leading the troika government, many significant projects in strategic sectors of the economy were awarded to Qatar, often in the absence of sufficient transparency. Accusations that Ennahda has received funding from Qatar have also been recurrent since Ennahda entered politics in 2011. In the run up to the 2012 parliamentary elections, for example, Ghannouchi was rumoured to have received substantial funding from the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hama ben Khalifa al-Thani, in order to finance Ennahda's electoral campaign. More recently, in 2017, the Parti Destourien Libre (PDL) filed a complaint with the prosecutor of the primary court calling for investigations into the financing of Ennahda, particularly in relation to allegations it has received financial support from Qatar.[108]

Although Ennahda's leadership enjoys close relations with Qatar, it also maintains links with Saudi Arabia. Ennahda began to soften its stance towards Saudi Arabia following the ouster of Morsi in Egypt and the political crisis in Tunisia, enabling a slight realignment of Tunisia's foreign policy under the Nidaa Tounes-led coalition. Ennahda's leaders appear to be attempting to cultivate good relations with the Saudi royal court by reassuring Saudi Arabia that it is not intent on exporting political Islam to the wider region. Ennahda's modified position vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia was also facilitated by the latter's greater forbearance towards mainstream Islamists following the conclusion of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The 2017 crisis between Qatar and the GCC could yet see Ennahda lean more towards Saudi Arabia, though support for Qatar within the context of the crisis is still strong among its constituencies.[109]

Vectors of Influence

National

Ennahda's participation in government has translated into a considerable capacity to influence the domestic political scene, although Ennahda has sought compromise with non-Islamist parties when doing so. At the helm of the troika government, Ennahda was also able to use its position to facilitate the inclusion of its allies, such as Salafi political parties, within the political system, and was thus able to facilitate the growth of an AST support base that to some extent overlapped with its own.[110] However, its capacity to promote actors whose agendas at least partially overlap with its own has since diminished as the Ennahda has strategically distanced itself from Salafi actors.[111]

Close relations between Qatar during the troika government may have had the advantage of demonstrating to the electorate that it, as leader of the governing coalition, had good relations with a wealthy country that was willing to invest in Tunisia. Ennahda's lawyers also allegedly received Qatari funds with which to help fund media outlets sympathetic to Ennahda.[112] The extent to which relations with Qatar are favourable to domestic influence is changing, though, as remaining neutral in the Qatar-GCC crisis has become paramount.

International

Ennahda has several channels through which it can exert influence internationally. Ghannouchi is reported to be the deputy head of the international Muslim Brotherhood organization. He is also a high-ranking member of a number of Islamist organisations in Europe, including the Dublin-based European Council on Fatwas and Research (ECFR), which is presided over by Al-Qawadari and aims to provide interpretations of Islamic law to European Muslim minorities, and the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), an association of theologians, which is also presided over by Al-Qawadari.[113]

Ennahda has also benefited from positive coverage on Al-Jazeera and the London-based newspaper that was launched by a Qatari company, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed. Al-Jazeera in particular has been an important channel for constructing a positive public image for the party, which was perceived as especially important given the negative publicity the party received in Saudi and

107 "Ennahda Party of Tunisia," *The Global Muslim Brotherhood Daily Watch,* https://www.globalmbwatch.com/ennahda-party-of-tunisia/; Wolf, *Political Islam in Tunisia,* p. 154; Monica Marks, "Tunisia's Islamists and the 'Turkish Model'," *Journal of Democracy,* Vol. 28, No. 1 (2017), pp. 107, 111 − 14.

108 "Tunisia to Investigate Qatari Funding of Ennahdha Party," *Qatarileaks,* 30 August 2017; "Comment Ennahdha a vendu la Tunisie au Qatar," *Webdo,* 19 November 2012; Sarah Louden, "Political Islamism in Tunisia: A History of Repression and a Complex Forum for Potential Change," *Mathal,* Vol. 4, Issue 1 (2015), p. 13; Kristina Kausch, "'Foreign Funding' in Post-revolution Tunisia," AFA/FRIDE/HIVOS, 2013, p. 10; Hanin Ghaddar, "Qatar Bets on Islamists," The Wilson Center, 7 February 2013.

109 Ruth Hanau Santini, "Bankrolling Containment: Saudi Linkages with Egypt and Tunisia," Memo Prepared for the Workshop, "Transnational Diffusion, Cooperation and Learning in the Middle East and North Africa," 8 − 9 June 2016; Hussein Ibish, "Saudi Arabia's New Sunni Alliance," *New York Times,* 31 July 2015; Youssef Cherif, "The Gulf Crisis Threatens Tunisia's Stability," Atlantic Council, 8 November 2017.

110 "'Political Islam' and the Muslim Brotherhood Review."

111 Tawil, "Ennahda Reconsiders Ties with Tunisian Salafist Groups"; Christine Petré, "How Ansar al-Sharia Grew in Post-revolutionary Tunisia," *Middle East Monitor,* 11 March 2015.

112 Youssef Cherif, "Tunisia's Elections amid a Middle East Cold War," Atlantic Council, 22 October 2014; Kausch, "'Foreign Funding' in Post-revolution Tunisia," p. 7.

113 "Rached Ghannouchi," Counter Extremism Project, https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/rached-ghannouchi; Kyle Shideler, "U.S. Institute for Peace Hosts High Level Global Muslim Brother... Again," *The Counter Jihad Report,* 27 October 2015.

Emirati media outlets when it was at the helm of the troika government. However, support from Qatar's media outlets is likely to be less of an asset within the context of the Qatar-GCC crisis. Relations that Ennahda is fostering with Saudi Arabia could prove an important means of damage limitation for the party.

2.2 Salafi Parties (Hisb Ut-tahrir and Jabhat Al-Islah)

Background and Objectives

Several Salafi parties were established following the 2011 uprising. While all have a relatively limited following within the Salafi current, the most influential among them are Jabhat Al-Islah and Hisb Ut-tahrir. Jabhat Al-Islah was legalized under the troika government led by Ennahda. It was created by an older generation of Islamists. Its initial leader, Mohamed Khouja, was a member of the Tunisian Islamic Front, which was formed by a group of hardline members of the MTI in the mid-1980s and advocated domestic jihad. Khouja was succeeded in 2015 by Rachid Tarjani.[114]

The party advocates the establishment of an Islamic caliphate and believes that sharia law should form the basis of the constitution and legislation. It has, nevertheless, renounced violence and seeks to work within the democratic system to achieve these ends. It does not accept a separation between religion and politics or the idea of the nation state. However, like Ennahda, it is attempting to secure its position with the Tunisian democratic system. This has led it to try to reconcile Salafi values with the Tunisian political context. To this end, it recognizes that some elements of civil law may be compatible with sharia law. It also advocates some democratic values, such as freedom of expression, as long as they are circumscribed by Islamic guidelines.[115]

Hisb Ut-tahrir's agenda is more conservative than that of Jabhat Al-Islah. It is part of a broader pan-Islamic movement that first emerged in Tunisia in the 1980s, operating clandestinely until it was legalized as a political party in 2012. Led by Ridha Belhaj, Hisb Ut-tahrir is also committed to the establishment of sharia law and an Islamic caliphate. However, unlike Jabhat Al-Islah, it be-

lieves that an Islamic revolution is required to achieve these ends. As a result, it does not support democracy or participate in elections, mostly focusing instead on preaching.[116]

Alliances

National

As noted, both Jabhat Al-Islah and Hisb Ut-tahrir have to varying degrees been allied with Ennahda. Relations between Ennahda and Jabhat Al-Islah, nevertheless, have been closer than those between Ennahda and Hisb Ut-tahrir. This is likely to be due to the more reformist agenda of Jabhat Al-Islah, as well as the ties forged between the leaders of both parties in the 1980s. From early on, Ghannouchi demonstrated support for Jabhat Al-Islah by attending its inaugural conference. In turn, Jabhat Al-Islah has lent tactical support to Ennahda. When Jabhat Al-Islah members ran as independents in some regions during the 2012 parliamentary elections, it encouraged its supporters to vote for Ennahda in the regions in which it did not run. Despite their cooperative relations, Jabhat Al-Islah has been critical of the concessions that Ennahda has made to non-Islamist parties.[117]

Jabhat Al-Islah and Hisb Ut-tahrir also had good relations with AST before it was designated a terrorist organization by the Tunisian authorities in 2013. Hisb Ut-tahrir co-organized at least one demonstration with AST, which called for the establishment of sharia law and an Islamic caliphate. While Jabhat Al-Islah has not co-organized events with AST, it has participated in AST-organized demonstrations and promoted the latter's events on its social media outlets. Neither party joined the authorities in condemning AST as a terrorist organization.[118]

International

Jabhat Al-Islah's international linkages are fairly limited, partly due to its narrow social base and lack of financial resources. It has attempted to connect with Salafi parties in Egypt. However, this has become infeasible after the ouster of President Morsi in 2013.[119] Hisb Ut-tahrir has more substantial international ties. It is alleged to receive

114 Heidi Reichinnek, "Jabhat Al-Islah (JI)/ Tunisien," Philipps Universität Marburg, March 2015, p. 1; Wolf, "An Islamist 'Renaissance'?" p. 570.

115 Wolf, "An Islamist Renaissance," p. 570; Aaron Zelin, "Who Is Jabhat Al-Islah?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 18 July 2012.

116 "Tunisia Calls for Ban on Islamist Party Hizb ut-Tahrir," *The New Arab,* 8 September 2016; Wolf, "An Islamist 'Renaissance'?" p. 570; "The Involvement of Salafism/Wahhabism in the Support and Supply of Arms to Rebel Groups Around the World," Directorate-General for External Policies, Policy Department, European Parliament, 2013; "Tunisia Legalizes Second Hardline Islamist Group," *Al Arabiya,* 18 July 2012.

117 Ghassan Ben Khalifah, "Tunisia's Salafist Emergence Puts New Players on Political Stage," *Al-Monitor,* 23 September 2012; Monica Marks, "Who Are Tunisia's Salafis?" *Foreign Policy,* 28 September 2012; Zelin, "Who Is Jabhat Al-Islah?"

118 Alaya Allani, "Mouvements religieux radicaux pendant la transition: L'exemple d'Ansar Al-Charia en Tunisie : naissance et expansion. Perspectives 2011–2014," UNDP Tunisie, 12 July 2014, p. 226; Zelin, "Who Is Jabhat Al-Islah?"

119 Correspondence with Anne Wolf, Research Fellow at Girton College, University of Cambridge, UK, 12 December 2017.

support from Jordan and Turkey. It is also part of a global organisation that is present in over 40 countries worldwide. It, thus, has close relations with other national chapters of Hisb Ut-tahrir, some of which are openly hostile to the West.[120]

Vectors of Influence

National

Jabhat Al-Islah has sought to appeal to voters situated to the right of Ennahda. However, it has failed to generate a significant support base amongst this section of society. Its members ran as independents in both the 2012 and 2014 elections, though failed to win any seats on both occasions, even though it attempted to tap into AST's support base. Many Salafis are scornful of Jabhat Al-Islah, given that they view the electoral process as a futile means of achieving an Islamic caliphate and the implementation of sharia law. While the party has managed to attract a small following amongst older Salafis, its association with this older generation of Islamists has tended to reduce its appeal among younger Salafis.[121]

  While Hisb Ut-tahrir's refusal to promote change through participation in the electoral process might have made it more appealing to ultra-conservatives, it has still failed to generate a significant support base with which to expand its influence nationally. Through its activities, including preaching, it does, nevertheless, have constituencies in several areas of Tunisia. It is notably popular in some hotbeds of radicalization, such as Ettadhamen in the greater Tunis area. Its failure to build up a broader base of support may be due to the party's failure to develop an agenda sufficiently adapted to the Tunisian context, as well as a comparative lack of funding.[122] Its ability to exert influence nationally is also likely to be hindered by the authorities' efforts to crackdown on it. The party was prevented from holding its annual conference in 2016 and its activities have been temporarily suspended on two occasions, most recently in 2017, in response to inciting hatred and undermining public order.[123]

International

Jabhat Al-Islah's limited international linkages mean that it also has few international vectors of influence. By contrast, Hisb Ut-tahrir's membership in a broader international movement means that it benefits from promotion through the Hisb Ut-tahrir's central media office. While the Tunisian chapter of Hisb Ut-tahrir does not have a great deal of influence within the broader movement, it does receive support from Hisb Ut-tahrir in Jordan in particular.[124]

2.3 Quietist Salafis (Salafi Ilmiyya)

Background and Objectives

Many quietist Salafis in Tunisia are uninstitutionalized, though attempts have been made to organize them. The most prominent group to do so was AST. The latter does not fit neatly into the quietist category, though. At its inception, it was ostensibly quietist. However, it evolved into a jihadi movement. Nevertheless, it does deserve attention, due to the role that it played in expanding Salafism in Tunisia through preaching and charity work before it became jihadi.

  AST was established in 2011 by Abu Iyad Al-Tunisi, a former member of MTI, who managed to flee the country during the crackdown against Islamists under Ben Ali. From exile in Afghanistan, he co-founded the jihadi Tunisian Combat Group. His arrest in Turkey in 2003, resulted in his extradition to Tunisia, where he was imprisoned until the general amnesty in 2011 led to his release.[125]

  AST seeks to establish an Islamic state in Tunisia governed by sharia law. However, unlike Salafi parties, such as Jabhat Al-Islah, it sought to do so from the bottom up by promoting Salafi ideology through a variety of activities, including preaching, charity work and enforcement of moral behavior. While the latter often involved vigilante-type behavior by AST followers, the organization did not initially call for jihad in Tunisia. It did encourage its members to wage jihad abroad, particularly in Syria, however. Its position regarding domestic jihad changed during 2013, following the organization's designation by

120 Alaya Allani, "Spécialiste des mouvances Islamistes: 'Le danger Salafiste menace nos institutions'," *Réalités,* 24 July 2014; Roggio, "'Moderate' Islamist Leader in Tunisia."

121 Ewan Stein, Frédéric Volpi, Fabio Merone, Kawther Alfasi and Larissa Alles, "Islamism and the Arab Uprisings," A CASAW-AHRC People Power and State Power Report, June 2014, p. 14; Wolf, "New Tunisian Salafist Party"; Reichinnek, "Jabhat Al-Islah (JI)/ Tunisien"; Alaya Allani, "Mouvements religieux radicaux pendant la transition," p. 226.

122 Stein, Volpi, Merone, Alfasi and Alles, "Islamism and the Arab Uprisings," pp. 14 – 5; Allani, "Spécialiste des mouvances Islamistes"; "Hizb ut-tahrir : Le retour du Califat comme solution?" *Leaders,* 14 October 2012.

123 "Tunisia Radical Islamist Party Banned for One Month," *News 24,* 7 June 2017; "Tunisie: un parti islamiste radical souhaite 'enterrer' la démocratie," *Le Point International,* 16 April 2017; "Tunisian President Moves Against Party Threatening To 'Cut Off Heads'," *Middle East Eye,* 2 September 2016.

124 See Hisb Ut-tahrir's central media office Website: http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/en/index.php/leaflet/tunisia.html; Allani, "Spécialiste des mouvances Islamistes."

125 Stefano Maria Torelli, "A Portrait of Tunisia's Ansar Al-Shari'a Leader Abu Iyad al-Tunisi: His Strategy of Jihad," *Militant Leadership Monitor: Personalities behind the Insurgency,* Vol. VI, Issue 8, 2013, p. 9.

the Tunisian authorities as a terrorist organization, although this shift was never officially announced.[126] AST has now fragmented, with some of its members having fled abroad, especially to Syria and Libya.

Alliances

National

AST initially received strong public support from a highly influential jihadi cleric, Sheikh Khattab Idrisi, who spent several years in Saudi Arabia studying under Wahhabi clerics and gained popularity following the fall of Ben Ali. There has been some speculation that Idrisi could have been one of AST's leaders. However, his early ties to the organization remain unclear. At the very least, Idrisi seems to have served as a spiritual guide to the organization's members, who viewed him as one of the only credible clerics in Tunisia. In addition to support from Idrisi, AST benefited from the support of Salafi charities that are believed to have helped to raise funds for the organization.[127]

As mentioned, AST counted among its allies the Salafi political parties, including Jabhat Al-Islah and Hisb Ut-tahrir and initially Ennahda, as noted earlier. Al-Tunisi had close ties with key figures within Ennahda's leadership, including Ghannouchi and Sadok Chouroue, former president of Ennahda. Al-Tunisi is known to have met with Ghannouchi in the early phase of the transition. However, as indicated, cooperation between AST and Ennahda dissipated from 2012 onwards.[128]

International

AST is believed to have received support by patrons in several Gulf States. Much of the organization's literature is thought to have been donated from Saudi Arabia, where it was printed. A Salafi charity in Kuwait was also reported to have supplied food and medical supplies to AST. Concrete evidence to support such claims is difficult to come by, though.[129]

Ties to the now disbanded Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL), the Libyan jihadi group with links to Al-Qaeda, which sought to establish sharia law in Libya through preaching, charity, vigilante-style violence and armed struggle, have also been reported. While AST and ASL are not affiliates, linkages between the two appear to have

existed. The extent of these ties is, nevertheless, disputed. While some observers claim that the two organizations maintained operational, financial and logistical connections, others believe that they operate independently from one another.[130]

Although AST denied having formal ties with Al-Qaeda, it was loyal to the latter. Al-Tunisi is also reported to have links with Al-Qaeda leaders, including Osama bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri. Additionally, two other AST leaders, Sami Ben Khemais Essid and Mehdi Kammoun, are known to have been involved in Al-Qaeda operations in Italy before returning to Tunisia and joining AST. The organization is also believed to have received guidance from Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). According to Tunisian and US governments, funding has also been provided to AST by AQIM.[131]

While the AST leadership is closer to Al-Qaeda than IS, AST has expressed support for IS and has encouraged its members to travel to Syria to join the group. In 2014, an important AST leader, Kamel Zarrouk, joined IS in Syria. The same year, AST spokesman, Seifeddine Rais, pledged allegiance to IS, although it is thought that he did so on an individual basis, rather than on behalf of the AST. Nevertheless, his pledge of allegiance appeared to prompt a number of AST militants to depart for Syria, where they subsequently joined IS.[132]

Vectors of Influence

National

AST was able to gain ground after the uprising partly due to its charity work, particularly in neglected areas of the country, such as the governorates in the South, the Interior and the Northwest. Its support base was also built through the distribution of printed material, its media outlet, the Qayrawan Media Foundation (QMF), and its Facebook page.[133] The crackdown against the organization has considerably limited these activities, although it is possible that some of its members continue the organization's charitable work in rural areas of the country, away from the watchful eye of the authorities. Moreover, the organization may still be able to rely on support from Salafi sheikhs to remain relevant.

126 "Ansar Al-Sharia Tunisia," The Mackenzie Institute, 12 April 2015; Allani, "Mouvements religieux radicaux pendant la transition," p. 219; "Ansar Al-Sharia in Tunisia," Counter Extremism Project, https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/ansar-al-sharia-tunisia-ast.

127 Aaron Y. Zelin, "Tunisia Arrests Leading Salafi Cleric," *The Washington Institute Policy Analysis,* 25 October 2013; "Ansar Al-Sharia in Tunisia."

128 Anne Wolf, "Religious Violence in Tunisia Three Years after the Revolution," Combating Terrorism Center, West Point, 24 February 2014; Synda Tajine, "A Jihadist Comes Home And Tunisia Cracks Down," *Al-Monitor,* 20 September 2012; Roggio, "'Moderate' Islamist Leader in Tunisia."

129 Louden, "Political Islamism in Tunisia," p. 13.

130 "Ansar Al-Sharia (Tunisia)," Mapping Militant Organizations, Stanford University, http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/547; "Ansar Al-Sharia in Tunisia."

131 Thomas Jocelyn, "Ansar Al-Sharia Responds to Tunisian Government," Foundation for Defense of Democracies, 3 September 2013; "Ansar Al-Sharia (Tunisia)"; "Ansar Al-Sharia in Tunisia."

132 "Ansar Al-Sharia (Tunisia)."

133 Petré, "How Ansar Al-Sharia Grew in Post-revolutionary Tunisia"; Allani, "Mouvements religieux radicaux pendant la transition," pp. 212, 228; "Ansar Al-Sharia (Tunisia)"; Aaron Y. Zelin, "Shabab Al-Tawhid: The Rebranding of Ansar Al-Sharia in Tunisia?" *The Washington Institute Policy Watch* 2250, 9 May 2014.

International

AST's loyalty to Al-Qaeda meant that it could rely on publicity via the Al-Qaeda Forum Ansar Al-Mujahidin Arabic Forum (AMAF).[134] Following the outlawing of AST in 2013, many AST members are believed to have redeployed to Libya, where they were reported in 2014 to be regrouping under the name of Shabab Al-Tawhid as a way of maintaining the AST network without attracting the attention of the Tunisian authorities.[135]

2.4 The Importance of Tunisia's Islamists

Tunisian Islamists that have entered the political arena after Ben Ali have been successful only to the extent that they have adapted their aims to the Tunisian context. Ennahda's effort to do just that is the product of a long evolution that reached new heights following the uprising, when the party no longer insisted on the implementation of sharia law, and more recently, when it sought to further emphasize the separation of religion and politics. While this transition towards a civic party has undoubtedly helped to secure Ennahda's place within the democratic system in Tunisia, it has been accompanied with the reduced capacity to promote more conservative Islamists within the politics and society, who could have constituted potential allies. Among the latter, Salafi parties have in any case failed to gain much traction within the political system. They have failed to appeal to ultra-conservative youth, who have tended to either gravitate towards the quietist Salafi current or to join the Salafi jihadi stream.

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134 "Ansar Al-Sharia (Tunisia)."

135 Zelin, "Shabab Al-Tawhid"; Stefano Maria Torelli, "Tunisian Jihadists Establishing New Networks with Libyan Islamists," *Terrorism Monitor,* Vol. 12, Issue 11, 30 May 2014.

Concluding Remarks

While the political influence of Libya's mainstream Islamists, notably the Muslim Brotherhood and its JCP, was considerable in the immediate post-Qaddafi years, largely due to strong alliances with members of Salafi parties and Salafi-leaning independents in the GNC, their political influence has declined since the civil war began in mid-2014. That said, most have maintained vectors of influence within the context of the UN-led political process, although their political clout could be further reduced within the context of an effort to revive the UN-led reconciliation process. The Muslim Brotherhood's associations with brigades that back the GNA means that it could have some sympathizers within future unified and reformed security structures, should these brigades be integrated into them. In the event of such a development, the Muslim Brotherhood could have overlapping agendas with parts of Libya's future "deep state".

Non-mainstream Islamist actors have generally failed to gain much political traction in Libya. LIFG/LIMC veterans have garnered limited political support, as representatives of Salafi parties. However, brigades with ties to them have become important actors on the ground in some areas of the country. The power of these brigades has been reduced recently, though. Nevertheless, it could be possible that LIFG/LIMC veterans might be represented in future security structures, though their links to jihadi Salafi actors could well preclude this from transpiring. Madkhali brigades that have gained in prominence as a result of the civil war, may also form part of police and army structures in the future, which could add an element of instability due to their opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood. Their increased following in the East, which is likely to continue to be supported by external actors, including Saudi Arabia, could also lead to the further growth of ultra-conservativism and possibly radicalization in the East, which has historically been a hotbed of violent extremism and foreign fighter recruitment.

Tunisia's Islamists have been struggling to find their place within a very different context characterized by the existence of established governance structures and a secular state. Ensuring continued political influence within this context has led to the further moderation of Ennahda, which has become ever more mainstream in terms of its acceptance of civic law and democratic norms and principles. By contrast, a mismatch between the agendas of the more conservative Salafi parties and the Tunisian context has limited their significance, especially with young Salafis, who may be more inclined to shun politics or even embrace violence.

Although the environments in which Islamists operate within Libya and Tunisia are different, in both countries mainstream Islamists are likely to maintain some, albeit reduced, influence. By contrast, more conservative political Islamists, notably Salafi parties, are likely to remain fairly insignificant in their own right. This leaves room for the nominally quietist Salafi current. The latter may, at least in the Libyan case, continue to grow, with the potential for some of its adherents to become radicalized.

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