

N° 06/2015

*recherches &
documents*

décembre 2015

Jihadism in the Maghreb A Threat Assessment

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Édité et diffusé par la Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique
4 bis rue des Pâtures – 75016 PARIS

ISSN : 1966-5156
ISBN : 978-2-911101-87-8
EAN : 9782911101878

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Introduction*

The escalation of radical Islam and jihadism have recently crystallized into new violent groups that challenge the dominance of local political authorities and political systems in transition in the Maghreb (defined here as a region made up of four states: Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia). Their activities do not only threaten internal stability and security, but have hampered the achievement of political freedoms in the midst of transition processes and development gains made over the past decade. This violence tends to have different root causes and spans different eras, as evidenced by the disturbing amalgam of an imagined past and present, Western and Arab-Muslim cultures, imported religious practices, and local traditions. In other words, Maghrebian jihadism is hybrid, glocal, and both ancient and contemporary, while being characterized and influenced by many socioeconomic factors.

This note aims to provide a generic risk analysis and take stock of radical extremist activities in North African countries, which present a highly volatile phenomenon and are a threat to national and regional stability.

The note presents the following:

1. The theoretical and theological underpinnings of radical Islam and jihadism, in particular in the Maghreb;
2. Endemic drivers of violent extremism in the Maghreb;
3. A generic regional threat assessment;
4. A threat assessment by country; and
5. Conclusions.

This overview is limited given the scope of work and time constraints. A thorough analysis of country studies will need to be conducted through deeper evaluation and a more systematic approach. A security-related review can, however, provide additional information to understand the challenges and opportunities for preventive actions and countermeasures.

Radical Islam, Jihadism, and Radicalization: A Theology of Discontent

For the sake of clarification, radical Islam (or radical Islamic fundamentalism) is defined here as an Islamic revivalist movement, often characterized by moral conservatism, literalism, and the attempt to implement Islamic values in all spheres of life, including politics. While there is no universal definition and the actors themselves do not necessarily define it this way, many scholars and experts insist on the conservative and literalist aspects. Concretely, radical Islamism often seems to oppose Western ideas, viewed as *westoxication*, *West-struck-ness*, *Westitis*, *Euromania*, or *Occidentosis*.¹ Its rather heterogeneous corpus considers the Koran a holistic reference, free of ambiguity, gaps, and contextual interpretation. Islam is thus viewed as an unambiguous, complete system. The question is to understand who defines what “good”

* This text was completed on July 20, 2015 (Marseille).

¹ “Westoxication” is a well-known concept that gained common usage following the clandestine publication in 1962 of the book *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West* by Jalal Al-e Ahmad, a shi’a Iranian scholar.

Islam is. A theological competition between radical currents has existed on this matter for decades, mostly coming from the Middle East where historically, the most prestigious Islamic cities, and consequently the main theological centers, are located.

Radicalizers

Among the most influential radical currents, the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928, exerted a global influence in the Arab world for decades, including in the Maghreb. The main thinker of this deeply rooted current is Sayyid Qutb who fused together the core elements of modern Islamism.² Like Mawdudi, another influential religious scholar, he famously used an old Islamic concept, *Jahiliyya*, to describe not only the society that existed before Islam, but also the contemporary non-Islamic or allegedly Islamic societies spread over radical fringes. For him, the reappearance of *Jahiliyya* is a result of the lack of Sharia law, without which Islam could not exist.³ In his view, the true Islam is a complete system with no room for any element of *Jahiliyya* and all aspects of *Jahiliyya* (“manners, ideas and concepts, rules and regulations, values and criteria”), such as democracy and human rights, are “evil and corrupt.”⁴

Another global influential, literalist, and puritanical doctrine is Salafism⁵ (from *As-salaf*, the ancestors). Salafism, within Sunni Islam, considers imitating the way of life of Muhammad and the earliest Muslims the only acceptable way to be a good Muslim. Such imitation aims to attain a temporal proximity to the Prophet’s time, which represents for Salafists the epitome of Islamic practice. A hadith that quotes Muhammad saying “The people of my own generation are the best, then those who come after them, and then those of the next generation,” is seen as a call to Muslims to follow the example of those first three generations, known collectively as the *salaf* or “pious predecessors” (*as-Salaf as-Salih*).⁶ The Salafi movement is often described as being synonymous with Wahhabism because of its rejection of speculative religious innovation or disambiguation, but Salafists consider the term *Wahhabi* derogatory since it is far too limitative and only associated with one thinker (Ibn Abdelwahhab) and one country (Saudi Arabia).⁷ Salafism has also been described as a hybrid of Wahhabism and other post-1960s movements.

While (radical) Islamism is not necessarily violent, jihadism certainly is as it is action determined by its “cause,” its organizational capacity interests, and surrounding societal characteristics. The term “jihadism” refers to contemporary armed jihad in Islamic fundamentalism. Coined in the 2000s, it has been used mainly to refer to Islamic insurgency and terrorism since that time. It has also been extended to cover both Mujahedeen guerilla warfare and Islamic terrorism with an international scope, which rose in the 1980s (during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan). Since the 1990s, jihadism has been mainly represented by the al-Qaeda network and, today, the Islamic State (IS).

2 Olivier Carré et Michel Seurat (1983), *Les Frères musulmans (1928-1982)*, L’Harmattan; Carrie Rosefsky Wickham (2015), *Muslim Brotherhoods: Evolution of an Islamist movement*, Princeton UP.

3 Qutb, Sayyid (1981), *Milestones*. Mother Mosque Foundation.

4 Sivan, Emmanuel (1985), *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*. Yale University Press.

5 Meijer, Roel (2009), *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, Oxford: Oxford UP.

6 Winter, Tim J. (2008), “Introduction.” *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

7 Rentz, George (2007), *The birth of the Islamic Reform Movement*, London, Arabian Publishing.

As a theological concept, jihad has been regularly used throughout history to mobilize Muslims and legitimize an almost infinite number of political interests.⁸ Contemporary jihadism has its roots in Islamic revivalist development in the late 19th and early 20th century, especially as illustrated by Qutbism. In connection, The Egyptian Farag should also be mentioned, who considered Jihad as a “neglected obligation”, in a highly influential pamphlet (*Al-Farida al-gha'iba*), and namely a collective and individual duty at the same level as Islamic faith pillars (pilgrimage, zakat). A specific type of Salafist jihadism has been identified by some scholars within the Salafi movement of the 1990s. To sum up, jihadism believes that jihad (literally “effort”—for instance to become a better human being—and not “war”) is both a collective and individual duty against aggression, a defensive act. For that reason, it also has a pan-Islamist or internationalist dimension: Mujahedeen may come from all over the Islamic world to assist in a conflict that they deem to be religiously important.⁹ Moreover, following a specific theological logics, for some jihadist authorities, influenced by Farag, jihad should be considered another of Islam’s pillars, like pilgrimage in Mecca or Friday prayer (*khutbah*). This opinion is marginal, highly controversial, and outside the folds of mainstream Islam; it is not included in the Sunni way of life.¹⁰

Jihadism

Jihadism has recently evolved with IS into a more eschatological or apocalyptic¹¹ mode, strongly connected to the Middle Eastern background of its leaders and militants, as evidenced by the use of specific Islamic symbols—the black banner (*rayat al-sawda*), one of the flags carried by Muhammad in Islamic tradition, with *shahada* (the Islamic creed declaring belief in the oneness of God and the acceptance of Muhammad as God’s prophet), the caliphate, and the Mahdi. The use of the Caliph title is an obvious attempt to legitimize the IS movement and its leader, al-Baghdadi, since in Islamic history, religious and political authorities are mixed. The caliphate is the institution that merges these spiritual and legal orders (*Khalifat rasul Allah* – Prophet Successor), and the Caliph is the one who exerts sovereign authority, as originally instituted by the Prophet Muhammad.¹² The Mahdi, for its part, is the prophesied redeemer of Islam who will rule for seven, nine, or nineteen years (according to differing interpretations before the Day of Judgment (*yawm al-qiyamah*) and will rid the world of evil.¹³ Many of the jihadists fighting in Syria and Iraq believe that their jihad is actually the last battle before Islam rules the world. An immediate consequence for the Maghreb, as for the whole world, is that IS tends to internationalize its project. Its current success in the field helps enhance its legitimacy, including against old jihadist networks, such as al-Qaeda. In fact, when Islamic State leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, rejected al-Qaeda’s authority and later declared a caliphate, he split the fractious jihadist movement and weakened al-Qaeda. Such competition to represent the “true jihad” has had various consequences in the Maghreb, and, for instance, produces new organizations, new brandings, new jihadist

⁸ Guérin, Michel, Marret, Jean-Luc (2015), *Histoires de djihad*, Paris, Equateurs.

⁹ Landau, Jacob M. (1990), *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

¹⁰ El Fadl (2005), *The Great Theft*, San Francisco: Harper-Collins, p. 122.

¹¹ Cook, David (2002), *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*. Darwin Press. p. 197.

¹² Crone, Patricia; Hinds, Martin (1986), *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹³ Shauhat Ali (1993), *Millenarian and Messianic Tendencies in Islamic Thought*, Lahore: Publishers United.

solidarity, and in the end, shapes the likely targets and the modus operandi of the jihadist movement.

Maghreb Malikism vs. Literalism

Paradoxically, Maghrebian Islam is—or could have been—a potentially good antidote to Salafi-jihadism. Deeply rooted in daily life, the full component of Maghrebian history, Malikism, is the local cultural form of Islam, with specific practices that contradict Salafi-jihadism. It is essentially an imported ideology. Malikism is one of the four *madhab*,¹⁴ the orthodox schools of Sunni jurisprudence and was founded by Imam Malik bin Anas (711–795). This school is the most important in North and West Africa and essentially differs from the others school of thought by its jurisprudential sources (*fiqh*). While every school uses the Koran, *Sunna* (the sayings, actions, and approvals of Muhammad), *ijma* (theological consensus among Muhammad’s companions), and analogies (*qiyas*), Malikism also has a bias toward Medina inhabitants’ daily practices (*Amal ahl al-medina*). Moreover, this school takes into consideration the general collective interest (*al-masalih al-mursala*), which provides for adaptability to events and changing times. In that sense, Malikism is generally viewed as one of the most dynamic ideologies, open to societal evolution and flexible enough to adopt local specificities.¹⁵ By contrast, Hanbalism, founded by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and followed by Muslims in Qatar, most of Saudi Arabia, and minority communities in Syria and Iraq, is claimed by Salafist-jihadist movements to be their forerunner as the most legitimate, literalist, and rigorist school of thought.¹⁶ In cases where there is no clear answer in sacred texts of Islam, the Hanbali School does not accept jurist discretion or customs of a community as a sound basis to derive Islamic law, a method that Maliki *fiqh* accepts.¹⁷

Many local Islamic practices contradict Salafi-jihadist standards and, for that reason, are considered an illegal innovation or paganism by jihadists. On the other hand, they can be perceived as locally based cultural codes that remain incompatible with imported rigorist religious norms. Mention can be made of the following examples of such Islamic practices:

- The use of magical-religious practices by male (*meddedb* or *faqih*) or female (*sowafa* or ‘*arifa*) professionals,
- The saints’ cult and popular maraboutism, which are both essential parts of local Islam. It is not surprising that when al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) conquered Timbuktu (or, incidentally, IS conquered Palmyra), its militants started to destroy local Islamic saints’ mausoleums and other symbols perceived as idols.¹⁸

¹⁴ Christopher Melchert (1997), *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law: 9th-10th Centuries C.E.*, Leiden: Brill Publishers.

¹⁵ Maribel Fierro (2005), “Proto-Maliki, Maliki and Reformed Maliki in al-Andalus,” *taken from* The Islamic School of Law: Evolution, Devolution and Progress. Eds. Peri Bearman, Rudolph Peters and Frank E. Vogel (2005), Cambridge, Massachusetts; Ilardo, Agostino (2014), *Maliki Fiqh*, in *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God* (2 vols.), Edited by C. Fitzpatrick and A. Walker, Santa Barbara, ABC-CLIO.

¹⁶ Zaman, Muhammad (2012), *Modern Islamic thought in a radical age*. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁷ https://www.academia.edu/6790702/Introduction_to_Hanbali_School_of_Jurisprudence

¹⁸ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1112/>

As it confronts a declining, but resistant, traditional local Islam, literalist Islam – including jihadism for the most radical – provides an easy alternative for poor urban classes who now use it to denounce institutions’ failure to end poverty, unemployment, and corruption.¹⁹ This is also in reaction to existing societal hierarchies that are still present and limit the social recognition of a younger generation. Moreover, a growing conservatism has been observable in Maghreb for years, which very often implies an increase in literalism.²⁰ The relative autonomy that traditional religious authorities originally benefited from has been gradually reduced by post-colonial states. With the so-called Arab Spring, some regime changes – noticeably in Tunisia – dismantled security services, at least temporarily, and diminished their capacity. These societies therefore lost in security what they earned in liberty. In combination with the rise of Islamist-oriented governments that were by definition less inclined to mobilize persistent efforts to counter Islamist movements and prevent radicalization, this conjunction of circumstances has fed extremism.

At the same time, socioeconomic factors, and demographic dynamism in particular, are push factors of change, with high youth unemployment across the subregion playing a significant role. As observed very often in history, social changes caused by wage earning and commercial exchange lead to urban individualism and help weaken traditional and communal religiosity. Seen through this lens, Maghreb countries are hybrid in many ways. For instance, the public debate in Morocco and Tunisia, although peaceful, reveals a variety of contrasting opinions and societal polarization – from feminism to Salafism. Scriptural Islam, or Salafi Islam, took advantage of these developments, not with a view to secularization, as Protestantism did in Europe, but as an ideology to protect Muslims from imported modernity. Ultimately, attacks targeting Western tourism in Tunisia stand as evidence of such defiance in the face of modernity,²¹ and jihadism is the most extreme manifestation of this trend.

Radicalization in the Maghreb: Endemic Drivers

According to robust scientific evidence provided by international research programs, violent radicalization is a complicated, multivariable, and non-linear process involving psychological, social, individual, and group dynamics, both at micro and macro levels.²² While some of its variables are universal, others, in the Maghreb case, are quite specific:

- **Political oppression and exclusion** under authoritarian regimes has been identified across North Africa as a triggering factor. Salafism evolved into a framework of resistance through which some youth expressed their opposition to the regime. The influence of traditional moderate Islamic organizations, often more tolerant and accommodating of other religions and communities, declined during authoritarian regimes. This situation was largely exploited by radical

¹⁹ Geertz Clifford (1968), *Islam Observed, Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (1968), University Of Chicago Press.

²⁰ See for instance the current “Respect Ramadan - No bikinis” conservative campaign in Moroccan touristic areas, the recent arrests of two women wearing skirts, or the regular anti-gay “spontaneous” campaigns in the same country (http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2015/06/24/maroc-femmes-agressees-robres-prison-sexisme-justice_n_7655230.html).

²¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33313749>

²² See: <http://www.safire-project-results.eu/> ; <http://impacteurope.eu/>

Islamist preachers, first underground, then openly to encourage more citizens, especially youth, to join them. In other words, domestic tensions and societal challenges, such as breaches of the social contract, provided space for the proliferation of jihadism.

- The **Arab Spring** initiated a transition process, but also offered new areas of action and opportunities for violent extremist groups. Tradeoffs accompanying the promotion of democracy included increased instability in the processing of political openings as the new, open election process allowed for political participation by all, including extremist actors. These actors were able to broaden their participation and actions through new constitutional processes, while also continuing to act outside of the political system (and with less of a threat of state counteraction).
- The **release of radical prisoners** and the **return of combatants** from conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan jointly contributed to radicalization and instability. The release of Salafist prisoners in Libya, jailed in the infamous Abu Salim prison, during the last days of the Qadhafi regime, increased political instability and undermined the security situation.²³ Similarly, the release of 1,200 Salafis in 2011, including 300 former Mujahideen who fought in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and Somalia, gradually had severe consequences in Tunisia,²⁴ where some became prominent radicals and leaders of violent groups. In the past, the issue of combatants' return from the "land of jihad" also contributed decisively to polarization and radicalization of the Maghrebian fringes – in the early 1990s, Algerian and Libyan jihadists that returned from combat in Afghanistan radicalized more moderate Islamists and quickly tried to duplicate what they learned overseas. The current Syrian "land of jihad" is expected to have the same proliferating consequences, with potentially major impacts in countries like Tunisia, but also through diaspora networks in Europe.
- **International military interventions** in Libya, then in northern Mali, had paradoxical consequences – Algerian jihadist groups (AQIM, Murabitoun) and affiliated networks moved away from locations in northern Mali to southwest Libya, benefiting from local traditional solidarity among the transnational Touareg tribes²⁵ and the nomadic Toubous.²⁶ Libyan jihadists were then prompted to use the security vacuum to increase their influence and power.
- **Social exclusion and youth marginalization:** North African youth are largely excluded from political decision-making processes, which are generally dominated by well-known figures from earlier generations. Despite their central role in the revolution (for example, Tunisia), political parties failed to attract and include youth in their structures. As result, the mobilization of these marginalized young people contributed significantly to an increase in the popularity of the Salafist fringes. For at least a portion of these youth, Salafi-jihadism offers an identity, a subculture, and an inspirational opportunity to fight for something larger than themselves. For instance, Salafiya Jihadiya, a group that appeared in

²³ <http://genevalunch.com/2010/03/24/libyas-notorious-abu-salim-prison-to-be-emptied/>

²⁴ <http://www.courrierinternational.com/article/2012/07/12/a-tunis-la-revolution-a-l-heure-de-la-parole-liberee>

²⁵ <http://rue89.nouvelobs.com/2013/01/29/guerre-au-nord-du-mali-le-role-des-touaregs-de-libye-239103>

²⁶ <http://www.ennaharonline.com/en/international/7088.html>

the mid-1990s, wanted to fight against the Moroccan regime, which it perceived as “infidel.” The group recruited in local urban slums and committed burnings, kidnappings, and drug trafficking and coordinated terrorist acts in Casablanca on May 16, 2003 (resulting in 45 deaths).²⁷ The 14 perpetrators all came from Sidi Moumen, near Casablanca. This district has been considered one of the poorest in Morocco, its population rising from 134,697 to 298,431 inhabitants between 1994 and 2008.^{28,29}

- Radical Islamists exploit **weak economic conditions**. The high unemployment rates and very limited opportunities for income generation among graduates and skilled youth, who often have extensive university training, is a systemic problem and a trigger for both radicalization and legal or illegal immigration.
- **Social jihad**: Radical groups, such as more mainstream Islamist organizations, gradually became key economic actors and service providers (such as schooling, mediating local conflicts, administrative issues, etc.) in the absence of government capacity. Dedicated charities providing municipal services largely compete with inadequate local governments and are particularly active where strong geographic and economic disparities fuel unrest.
- **Locations of radicalization**: Some mosques, among other places (Madrassa, private houses, jails, coffee shops), play a role in radicalization. Following the transition in Tunisia, more than 1,000 of Tunisia’s approximately 5,300 mosques slipped temporarily from government control and came under the influence of radicals espousing extremist interpretations of Islam. About 200 new mosques were even built without a license and became centers of radicalization. Addressing this sensitive problem will require dedicated and consistent efforts from Tunisian authorities.³⁰
- Some aspects of the **region’s geography**, with long, porous, and traversable borders, ancient unmapped paths, inaccessible mountains, and deserted areas, create serious challenges for effective state control. Consequently, terrain plays a role in radicalization as it offers protection to illegal, clandestine, violent organizations, allowing them to prepare attacks and try to control broader territory. Tunisia’s recent decision to install fences on large but limited segments of its border with Libya will certainly increase security, but will have a negative impact on economic exchanges and flows, although these are largely informal.³¹

²⁷ http://www.asraralislam.com/Groupes%20terroristes/salafiya_jihadiya.html

²⁸ Haut-commissariat au Plan, “Recensement général de la population et de l’habitat de 2004”, www.lavieeco.com.

²⁹ The authorities reacted by investing there (as a national pilot program), and in other poor districts, to develop community-driven urbanism through specific programs, such as *les villes sans bidonvilles* (Cities without slums), and prevent social exclusion (*Initiative nationale de développement humain* (INDH) (National Human Development Initiative). <http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P100026/national-initiative-human-development-support-project-indh?lang=en>. The National Human Development Initiative (INDH) Project for Morocco assisted the Government with improving inclusiveness, accountability, and transparency of decision-making and implementation processes at the local level in order to enhance the use of social and economic infrastructure and services by poor and vulnerable groups.

³⁰ <http://www.lapresse.tn/14042015/98588/sur-fond-de-campagne-de-recuperation-des-mosquees.html>

³¹ http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/07/08/la-tunisie-veut-construire-un-mur-le-long-de-sa-frontiere-avec-la-libye_4675851_3212.html

- Violent groups have better **integrated globalized practices** than states: for decades, they have jointly developed a form of transnational collaboration that remains inaccessible for regional governments. Through this collaboration, their recruitment, support, practices, and weltanschauung (world vision) are globalized.

Current Threat Assessment

An analysis of jihadism and political violence in the Maghreb currently offers contrasting realities. Although it is in no way comparable to the wave of political violence that struck Algeria in the 1990s, some countries could face systemic stress from insecurity. Some trends are already indicative of increasing overall geopolitical instability, given the spillover effects and transnational actions, which will pose longer-term challenges at the macro level as has happened in economies and societies across the region.

Global and Local Impacts

Some terrorist acts can have a worldwide impact: extremist violence in North Africa spreads with the use of multimedia and increasingly targets Western victims. It is well known, including by radical fringes, that striking against tourists, expatriates, and national institutions (including museums) will mobilize the international media and thus capture international attention. This has a domino effect on the whole region, as demonstrated recently in Tunisia (at the Bardo Museum³² and Riu Imperial Marhaba Hotel beach, at Port El Kantaoui, about 10 kilometers north of the city of Sousse)³³ where attacks on tourism in Tunisia not only damaged the vulnerable Tunisian tourism industry,³⁴ but more broadly affected the entire services sector with a contagion effect on other North African tourist destinations (Morocco and Egypt).

Algerian terrorist attacks against state-owned energy facilities also showed that some terrorist groups or networks are strategic and rational in their targeting, in particular by duplicating international operational practices. Imitating previous terrorist acts by al-Qaeda against the energy sector in the Middle East, AQIM pushed Statoil's operations onto the front page with a major attack against its In Amenas gas production facility at the border with Libya. The attack, which evolved into a hostage crisis from January 16-19, 2013, led to the deaths of 39 expatriate workers.³⁵ It was undertaken from the organization's branch in northern Mali.

While the current jihad in Syria-Iraq seems to mesmerize future recruits, it must be recalled that violent North African organizations, networks, and individuals pursue their own local agenda without taking direct orders from leading networks such as al-Qaeda or IS. Despite the fact that there are affiliations to al-Qaeda and partners in the Maghreb and the Sahel, in particular with AQIM, some recent alignments with IS remain rather

³² On March 19, 2015 IS claimed to be responsible, but on March 28, the Tunisian government announced the death of a leader of the "Katiba (military unit) Okba Ibn Nafaa", an offshoot of AQIM.

³³ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/26/us-tunisia-security-idUSKBNOP61F020150626>

³⁴ Tunisia is predominately viewed as a low-cost destination. The government is seeking to diversify and strengthen niche tourism. However, recent terrorist attacks obviously have a strong negative impact on the sector and the overall economy.

³⁵ Statoil investigation report:

http://www.statoil.com/en/NewsAndMedia/News/2013/Pages/12Sep_InAmenas_report.aspx

limited. Individuals acting alone can also have a significant impact, as recently shown by the Sousse attack. They can either act on behalf of an organization that will eventually endorse the terrorist act (the bottom-up lone wolf) or they can follow an order to act from the organization itself (the top-down lone wolf).³⁶ Such cases obviously complicate perceptions of jihadism. Indeed, in the Maghreb, a great variety of jihadist skills, expertise, and operational capacity have been observed. On one hand, some individuals act alone, sometimes with low rationality, a dissociated personality, or under the influence of drugs³⁷ and without particular skills or means. In recent years, Tunisian police publicly complained about Salafist aggressions (fights, stabbings with local machetes (*satour*),³⁸ and assassinations) against police officers and officials.³⁹

On the other side of the spectrum, jihadist groups can also try to display quasi-state capacity to control terrain, generally in deserted or mountainous areas where, at least for a while, they exert a sort of tenuous micro-sovereignty. In the mid-1990s, Algerian jihadists (*Groupes Islamiques Armés GIA*), succeeded in achieving episodic control of some Algerian mountainous areas around Algiers, in Kabylie, and near Tunisia. They eventually installed checkpoints on a regional East-West road (also known as the “Sharia express”).⁴⁰ More recently, AQIM and its allies, while controlling northern Mali (Azawad) and Timbuktu, exerted political control based on the concepts of social jihad, clientelism, and Sharia principles in order to install an Islamic state.⁴¹

Radical Opportunities and Porous Borders: Regional Libyan Contagion

Imitating terrorist practices at a large scale as they occur in conflict situations, for instance in Syria, is rarely possible. However, some practices were successfully replicated: suicide-bombing practice was exported from the jihadist fringes in Iraq, around 2002-2004, to Western Europe and the Maghreb where Algerian jihadists launched martyrdom operations against institutions, security services, and the military – although without much political success. However, easy access to arms and military means in failing states is a concern (particularly military ammunitions, heavy weaponry, and military quality explosives), whereas they are difficult to acquire in Europe. The Maghreb clearly suffers on account of domestic security chaos in Libya.

Whereas Syria is the main magnet for North African jihadists, Libya, at the crossing between the Maghreb and the Middle East, is a safe haven and land of opportunity where jihadists can receive training, indoctrination, support, and resources. There are different reasons for this. First, the international coalition against Colonel Muammar al-

³⁶<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2759922/Top-US-security-threats-lone-wolves-Syria-fighters-officials.html#ixzz3f7H5fTWa>. These concepts have been shaped by Danish intelligence.

³⁷ The use of prescriptions or drugs by Maghrebian jihadists is widely documented. In Northern Mali, evidence shows the use of a veterinary painkiller among AQIM combatants, while militants belonging to MUJAO (*Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest - Jama'at at-tawhid wal-jihad fi gharb 'afriqqiya*) have used cocaine. Some British sources mention that the perpetrator of the Sousse attack was under the influence of medical drugs or cocaine.

³⁸ <http://www.tuess.com/fr/tunivisions/42803>

³⁹<http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20121101-tunisie-excedes-agressions-salafistes-policiers-exigent-pouvoir-riposter-ennahda-salafistes/>

⁴⁰ Martinez, Luis (1999), *La guerre civile en Algérie*, Paris, FNSP.

⁴¹<http://www.leparisien.fr/international/mali-la-terrifiante-feuille-de-route-d-aqmi-retrouvee-a-tombouctou-25-02-2013-2597681.php#xtref=http%3A%2F%2F>

Qadhafi completely destabilized Libya and failed to promote a stable regime. Second, the porosity of the Tunisia-Libya border, which has been tolerated – although with substantial limitations – by Tunisian authorities for decades, the border being controlled by Touazine clans,⁴² is overwhelmed by new, erratic players that appeared in the aftermath of the Libyan conflict. While it is probably no longer relevant to speak of Berber support chains in southern Tunisia, some traditional and tribe-related solidarity remains beyond contemporary and internationally recognized borders. Since Roman times at least, local tribes have always been reluctant to abide by an external political order.⁴³ The current situation is a serious change from what appeared, until recently, to be an informal, but well-established, social order.

Arms trafficking in Libya began in March 2011⁴⁴ when pro-Qadhafi mercenaries – often Malian Touaregs stationed in Benghazi – deserted their weaponry and crossed over the desert to return to their country, thereby aggravating local tensions and the separatist movement, including by associating – perhaps opportunistically – with AQIM. Observable levels of arms trafficking, which are often overestimated in the western media, also appeared in the Maghreb and Sahel with the multiple seizures of Colonel Qadhafi’s conventional arsenals.⁴⁵ Qadhafists installed hidden arsenals in the Nefoussa Mountains in western Libya, close to the Tunisian border, in the suburbs of Tripoli, and in the desert around Sebha. While chemical arsenals were closely monitored by western countries, during their military intervention, these conventional arsenals were emptied by anti-Qadhafi rebels and criminals and disseminated without strong controls.⁴⁶ In addition, weaponry delivered to local Berber tribes in the Nefoussa Mountains by France and funded by Qatar to barely controlled anti-Qadhafi groups did not help to prevent arms dissemination.⁴⁷

Porous borders extending over a portion of the 459-kilometer Tunisia–Libya border, which is largely deserted, are lightly monitored by security forces.⁴⁸ Bordered by legal entry points, this territory offers a perfect opportunity for contraband and jihadist transborder mobility. The role of trafficking for revenue generation among impoverished local populations should not be ignored: facing poverty and unemployment, trafficking and an informal economy present, as elsewhere, an economic opportunity to raise income and gain social recognition. It is significant that in 2010, the local population in Sidi Bouzid rioted and spurred regime change when the Ben Ali regime tried to impose rules and taxes on transboundary exchanges and informal business.

⁴² International Crisis Group, “La Tunisie des frontières : Jihad et contrebande,” Report 148, November 28, 2013.

⁴³ Louis, André, “Le monde ‘berbère’, de l’extrême-sud tunisien,” *Revue de l’Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 11, 1972, 107-125.

⁴⁴ Kartas, Moncef, (2013), “On the Edge? Trafficking and Insecurity at the Tunisian–Libyan Border,” *Small Arms Survey Working Paper* 17.

⁴⁵ <http://www.algerie360.com/algerie/un-contrebandier-libyen-temoigne-%C2%ABvoila-comment-jai-transfere-des-armes-vers-lalgerie-et-legypte%C2%BB/>

⁴⁶ http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2013/01/16/la-libye-depot-d-armes-jihadiste_874596

⁴⁷ <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/06/28/01003-20110628ARTFIG00704-la-france-a-parachute-des-armes-aux-rebelles-libyens.php>

⁴⁸ <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/08/article55335638/tunisia-border-dilemma;>
<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/13/africa/tunisia-scrambles-to-seal-border-against-isis/>

The current fragmentation of Libya also provides obvious possibilities and a safe haven for Maghrebian jihadists. The perpetrator of the Sousse attacks is reputed to have been trained in Libya. This attack was actually the culmination of long-term cooperation between violent Tunisian and Libyan radicals that was initiated in the 1980s and intensified since 2011. Initially, some connections appeared in Afghanistan between these militants: members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) (*Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah al-Muqatilah fi-Libya*)⁴⁹ helped the Tunisians create their own training camp and organization in Afghanistan. Cooperation was scaled up after 2000, when future leaders of Ansar al-sharia in Tunisia (AST) co-created the Tunisian Combatant Group, a loose, anti-western network of violent activists.⁵⁰

Some of its members (again mostly Tunisian and Libyan) supported jihadists and foreign fighters that had spread across Europe. Milan, Italy, a central hub for radical recruitment, provided logistics and support to foreign fighters involved in the Bosnian war. After the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat* GSPC) tried to regionalize its cause by recruiting in Tunisia and Libya and creating a military unit known as a *katiba* (Katiba El-Fatah El-Moubine).⁵¹ It should be noted that in the late 2000s, groups of Algerians, Tunisians, and Libyans were sometimes arrested together in Algeria and Tunisia.

The current local situation is a direct consequence of these initial efforts. El-Fatah El-Moubine can be viewed as a precursor of the current pro-al-Qaeda/AQIM-affiliated Katiba Oqba ibn Nafi located in the Chaambi Mountains on the Tunisia-Algeria border.⁵² Other networks were developed in parallel by Algerian and Libyan jihadists to send volunteers to Iraq in the mid-2000s to fight against the U.S.-led coalition. These networks formed the base for the networks developed after 2011 between Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia (AST), Ansar al-Sharia Libya (ASL), and the Islamic State in Libya.⁵³ It is particularly noteworthy that in recent years, Maghrebian cells or Tunisian and Libyan militants together – often connected to AQIM and, more recently, to IS – were frequently arrested in Tunisia and Libya. The connections between Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia and its counterpart in Libya are also well documented, the latter inspired by the former. Tunisian militants also contributed to developing the Libyan structures, and joint training has been observed in southwest Libya, where AQIM is also active.

In summary, conditions in Libya appear to facilitate the proliferation of decisively jihadist violence: areas in the southwest and northwest of Libya appear to be hubs for training, background logistical support and camps, operational best practices, and planning. It is possible, and in some cases almost certain, that many of the most serious terrorist attacks in the Maghreb and in Libya were decided there, for example the failed attack in Sousse in 2013 and attacks in Libya against the Tunisian diplomatic facility and the U.S. consulate in 2012.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Gambill, Gary, “[The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group \(LIFG\)](#),” *The Jamestown Foundation*, March 24, 2005.

⁵⁰ “[The Tunisian Combatant Group](#),” Overseas Security Advisory Council (USA), December 28, 2005.

⁵¹ <http://www.echoroukonline.com/ara/mobile/articles/183349.html>

⁵² <https://7our.wordpress.com/2015/01/16/tunisie-confirmation-du-lien-entre-la-katiba-okba-ibn-nafi-et-aqmi/>

⁵³ Zelin, A. *The Tunisian-Libyan Jihadi Connection*, ICSR Insight, July 6, 2015.

⁵⁴ “[Libyan storm Ansar Al-Sharia compound in backlash after attack on U.S. Consulate](#)”. FoxNews.com. Associated Press. September 21, 2012.

Regional spillover effects: This situation has a destabilizing effect on the whole region. It not only affects the security situation, but also stretches local State capacity to manage humanitarian disasters and war refugees as the increase in the Libyan refugee population in Tunisia increases poverty, raises prices and unemployment, and requires higher government spending on social support programs.⁵⁵ Renewed violence in Libya has spilled over into Tunisia, to which thousands of Libyans fled to escape ongoing armed clashes. By May 2014, there were between 600,000 and 1,000,000 Libyan refugees in Tunisia⁵⁶ (the Tunisian Ministry of Commerce claimed over 1 million with other sources going as high as 1.8 million⁵⁷), representing between 10 percent and 15 percent of the Libyan population. Libya is one of Tunisia's largest commercial partners, and the Libyan crisis is likely to affect the Tunisian economy, in particular its labor market, owing to limited absorption capacity and a general slowdown of economic growth (3.6 in 2012, 2.6 percent in 2013, and 2.3 percent in 2014).

This situation also has severe consequences for European states. Southern European countries regularly note indications of radical elements willing or attempting to use illegal immigration flows to infiltrate their territory, in some cases to commit terrorist attacks.⁵⁸ Although this situation risks increasing populist sentiment owing to exaggeration of this threat by the media, it would be wise to guard against naïveté regarding this possibility.

Threat Assessment by Country

Libya: The collapse of Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi's regime and the failure of successive governments led to a severe deterioration of the country's internal stability. This process was polarized by what might be called local primary identities, mainly with a tribal or enlarged family base, which pushed the failing state toward rising violence and radicalization. While such identities are traditional in Libya, the conflict transformed them into armed militias that are confronting each other largely in a fragmented and vulnerable national, regional, and local ecosystem.⁵⁹ (map A.1)

The emergence of civil war⁶⁰ aggravated the security situation and deepened the humanitarian and economic crisis: an estimated 2 million Libyans, of a population of 6.2 million, have been affected.⁶¹ The number of internally displaced persons has almost doubled from an estimated 230,000 in September 2014 to more than 434,000 in June

⁵⁵ Libya remains Tunisia's second largest economic partner (after the European Union) and the current conflict in Libya could cause an increased outflow of foreign direct investment from oil-rich Libya to Tunisia. See the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) development blog "*Libya or Tunisia: Who Needs the Other More?*" April 17, 2015.

⁵⁶ *Le Monde* "Kadhafi est toujours là' pour les Libyens de Tunis," Isabelle Mandraud, May 13, 2014.

⁵⁷ *The New-York Times*, "Libyan Refugees Stream to Tunisia for Care, and Tell of a Home That Is Torn Apart" September 9, 2014.

⁵⁸ *The Independent*, "Isis fighters posing as refugees are being smuggled to Europe on migrant boats, report says," Jessica Ware, May 17, 2015.

⁵⁹ <http://blog.inkerman.com/index.php/2013/11/27/libyas-militias-a-guide/>

⁶⁰ Council on Foreign Relations, "Political instability in Libya," last updated June 15, 2015. The presence of rebel militias is said to have increased to approximately 1,700 armed groups.

⁶¹ Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "Libya's civil war; Rebuilding the country from the ground up," April 2015.

2015 amid escalating fighting this year in different areas⁶² (map A.2). This dramatic escalation has deeply affected the Libyan economy, which contracted by 24 percent in 2014.⁶³

The conflict has had a particularly significant impact on legal oil exports by interrupting this major source of government and external revenue. Libyan jihadists had already begun activities in the late 1980s and faced repression from Qadhafi's regime.⁶⁴ The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), created by veterans of the jihad in Afghanistan, launched various attacks against the Libyan regime (mainly between 1995 and 1998), which caused oppression, harsh counterstrikes, and mass imprisonment.⁶⁵ Massacres in the Abu Salim prison and severe conditions in prison fostered radicalization and created a new wave of jihadists, some of whom went into exile in other countries such as Afghanistan and Algeria.

The breakdown of Qadhafi's regime was exploited by various factions to increase the jihadist societal base and influence. Although radical groups are present in various regions, two main hubs in the northeast can be identified, namely Derna and Benghazi.⁶⁶ Interestingly, aside from its military operations, Ansar al Sharia Libya (ASL) developed a strong charity function that effectively replaced service provision in the failed state.⁶⁷ Moreover, the emergence of Ansar al Sharia and other jihadist networks took place in a specific local context in which rivalries could be manipulated to control cities.

In October 2014, the Derna Mujahideen Shura Council proclaimed loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's Islamic State and declared Derna the Seat of IS-Province Barqa (the Arabic name of Cyrenaika).⁶⁸ By November 2014, this city became an IS stronghold from which it expanded to other coastal cities in Libya. However, this alignment was strongly opposed by the Abu Salim Brigades who sought – with some success – to pursue their own idea of an Islamic state. Yet, at this stage, in July 2015, it is difficult to view the Islamic State in Libya – or, more accurately, the militants that adopted IS's brand for their networks although they tend to duplicate the most sadistic IS methods – as more than another group of jihadists exploiting IS's reputation and name recognition. In mid-July 2015, militants from the Islamic State acknowledged losing control of the city of Derna. The loss of this city, however, does not change IS's perspective in Libya and its capabilities are not altered although it remains a very constrained organization that faces substantial opposition from local competitors.⁶⁹

⁶² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Numbers of internally displaced in Libya double since September," June 30, 2015.

⁶³ World Bank, MENA Economic Monitor, "Towards a New Social Contract," April 2015.

⁶⁴ Ashour, Omar (2011), *Post-Jihadism: Libya and the Global Transformation of Armed Islamist Movements*, in: *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23, p. 377-397.

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Libya: June 1996 Killings at Abu Salim Prison," New York, June 27, 2006. The June 1996 massacre at the Abu Salim Prison in Tripoli had about 1200 casualties.

⁶⁶ Urban elites exerted a strong influence under the former Libyan monarchy (1951-69). However, they lost power under Qadhafi and became the opposition. The northeast of the country was generally neglected.

⁶⁸ *International Business Times*, "ISIS establishes stronghold in Derna, Libya," November 10, 2014; "Shura council of Islamic Youth prepared the path of establishing Kalifat in Derna," *Al-Wasat*, October 6, 2014, www.alwasat.ly/ar/news/libya/40449/

⁶⁹ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/07/12/ISIS-loses-control-of-Libyan-stronghold.html>

In the final analysis, the Libyan problem is multifold: the country's current challenges contribute to the exportation of refugees to neighboring countries, with the attendant macroeconomic effects on countries already under stress; it also facilitates, on its soil, the training of North African radicals who eventually commit terrorist attacks elsewhere; and the country serves as a stepping stone for jihad in Syria. It is also a quasi-safe haven for jihadist groups like AQIM and affiliated networks, along a 400-kilometer axis extending from the Ghat District at the Algeria-Libya border to Ubari, 150 kilometers southwest of Sebha.⁷⁰ Libya, therefore, no longer plays the role of a buffer separating radical elements in Europe and North Africa, but is a center of radical action in North Africa today and an accelerator of organized crime, violent radicalism, and illegal immigration. The pending peace process negotiations, supervised by the UN, cannot be mobilized at this stage in the absence of sufficient international efforts to reunify the country.⁷¹

Algeria was the first country in the Maghreb to suffer from violent extremism, with an unprecedented wave of terror resulting in particularly severe forms of violence in the 1990s and the early 2000s. In the late 1980s, Algerian jihadists created a significant number of groups, cells, and networks that acted within the Algerian territory to commit terrorist acts against Algerian security forces and institutions and the local population. For instance, the *Mouvement Islamique Armé* (MIA), directed by Mustapha Bouyali, with around 200 members from 1985 to 1987, was active at the east of Blida and in the suburbs of Algiers. Another small group, the *Mouvement pour L'Etat Islamique* (MEI), directed by Abdelkader Chebouti, was active in 1990 in the Mitdjida valley before relocating to the Sidi Naamane Mountains under pressure from Algerian security forces.⁷²

On December 26, 1991, the Islamist group *Front islamique du salut* (FIS) won 82 percent of the votes in the legislative elections. In reaction, the Algerian army stopped the electoral process through a military coup and forced President Chadli Benjedid to resign. Cancellation of the democratic process combined with oppression of the FIS as a legitimate political party and the autocratic nature of the regime were decisive factors in the emergence of violence.

The domestic socioeconomic and political crisis coincided with the emergence of jihadist groups and crystallized into a massive civil war between 1992-1998.

External factors also contributed to the deterioration of societal conditions in Algeria. The jihad in Afghanistan in the 1980s had attracted thousands of young Algerian volunteers who learned to fight and were indoctrinated in jihadist ideology. With the Afghan victory against the Soviets in 1989, a significant number of these new converts returned to Algeria, some with the desire to share this ideology in their own country.⁷³

In the 1990s, the Algerian authorities severely repressed violent groups through anti-guerilla warfare and counterterrorism measures. Algerian diasporas in Europe and the

⁷⁰ <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20140205sud-libye-nouveau-sanctuaire-jihadistes-terrorisme-hassoumi/>

⁷¹ http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2015/07/12/libye-l-accord-de-paix-paraphe-au-maroc-malgre-l-absence-du-parlement-de-tripoli_1346710

⁷² Interview with Dr. Jean-Luc Marret, specialist on French-speaking jihadism, Paris, June 29, 2015.

⁷³ See for instance Mokeddem Mohamed (2002), *Les Afghans Algériens: De la Djamaâ À la Qa'ida*, Algiers, Editions ANEP.

broader European community also suffered from this civil war, with terrorist attacks occurring in France in 1995 and 1996, while pro-jihadist logistical networks were actively fueling guerilla fighting in the Algerian mountains.⁷⁴ Today, authorities talk about having contained “residual terrorism” on Algerian soil,⁷⁵ and in fact, the Kabylie Mountains (Djurdjura in particular) likely harbor the remaining jihadist groups in Algeria.⁷⁶ However, other networks and groups have expanded outside of Algeria into neighboring countries. Therefore, it appears that Algerian success in combatting terrorism domestically may have contributed to exporting it elsewhere.

The National Reconciliation Program (*Elouinam elmadani*), adopted by the government on July 8, 1999, organized the reintegration of former jihadist combatants under specific conditions and with political amnesty – sometimes perceived as too broad by its opponents – and was reinforced by a referendum in late September 2005. It is estimated that 6,000 jihadist combatants were reintegrated and stopped fighting,⁷⁷ while 2,200 individuals jailed for terrorist activities were freed.⁷⁸

Attrition caused by repression from the security forces, along with internal dissension among jihadists, weakened groups and some were destroyed or disappeared while others merged and new groups appeared, their novelty attracting the remaining militants. In 1998, the most famous and powerful group, the *Groupe salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat* (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat), was mainly active between Algiers and the Tunisian border. Armed Islamic groups, which were in decline in 1999, had just about 150 combatants, essentially deployed in western Algeria and south of Algiers. The remaining groups (with about 300 members) were very weak and remained locally based, mainly committing brigandage.

It is likely that pressure from the Algerian security forces contributed to the rise of existing but underdeveloped jihadist capacity in the Sahel. This coincided with the transformation of the GSPC into AQIM, which advanced the internationalization strategy amid increased non-Algerian recruitment, the importation of global jihadist practices such as suicide bombing, and attacks on Western targets such as expatriates and tourists.⁷⁹

At its zenith, in 2011–12, AQIM was largely funded by kidnappings of Westerners, but was mainly decentralized owing to the size of the territory on which this group was active (the Maghreb, the Sahel, and eventually, Sub-Saharan territories). This trend of expansion across the Sahel region was encountered by the French-African coalition in January 2013.

In Algeria, and perhaps more than anywhere else in the Maghreb, groups are now competing to become the “most legitimate” regional organization – Jund al-Khilafa fi Ard al-Jazair (The Army of Caliphate), an AQIM splinter group, pledged allegiance to IS and considers itself the local branch of the caliphate. As its inaugural act, in October

⁷⁴ http://www.lexpress.fr/informations/l-europe-contre-le-gia_629173.html

⁷⁵ <http://www.algerie-focus.com/blog/2015/05/securete-la-diplomatie-algerienne-parle-de-terrorisme-residuel/>

⁷⁶ <http://www.europe1.fr/international/la-kabylie-refuge-des-terroristes-algeriens-2242427>

⁷⁷ *Le Nouvel Observateur*, September 4, 2006.

⁷⁸ *L'Indépendant*, September 15, 2006.

⁷⁹ Isaacs, Russell J. (2009). “The North African Franchise: AQIM’s Threat to U.S. Security”. *Center for temporary conflict. Strategic Insights*, Volume VIII, Issue 5.

2014, this group kidnapped and beheaded a French citizen as a reprisal against French military intervention in Syria as part of the U.S.-led coalition.⁸⁰

However, while AQIM is facing the constraints of military defeat and withdrawal from north Mali, IS appears to be leading the competition to be “the defender of the true Islam.” Jund al-Khilafa fi Ard al-Jazair, for now, no longer has its 2011–13 capacity. In 2014, 100 Algerian jihadists were allegedly killed by local security police, while Algerian security forces succeeded in killing the leader of Jund Al-Khilafa and 59 militants in 2015.⁸¹

One of the most interesting questions regarding Algeria is how to explain the relatively low number of Algerians allegedly going to carry out the jihad in Syria (estimated at 200 in January 2015).⁸² Local authorities attribute it to the success of their counterterrorism efforts. It is also probable that the bloody civil war that occurred in the 1990s prevents many individuals from joining violent fringes.⁸³ Moreover, the heavily subsidized economy might have eased some of the economic tensions other North African countries face. However, Algeria’s heavy dependence on the hydrocarbon sector is of serious concern on account of its implications for economic and social stability. The sector generates about two thirds of total government revenue and accounts for 97 percent of total exports. Declining international oil prices and exports have seriously undermined the trade balance and current account balance,⁸⁴ and under current projections, Algeria will deplete its financial savings in the long term, leaving future generations worse off.⁸⁵ Considering the domestic unemployment rate and demography, these trends could have serious polarizing consequences, one of which may be an increase in the number of potential jihadists.

In **Tunisia**, prior to the revolution, the Islamist movement Jama`a Islamiyya, renamed Ennahda in 1989, presented the biggest opposition to the secular elite. The revolution in 2011 had paradoxical effects, among them the resurgence of religious ultraconservatism and the rise of Salafist groups. While the pro-Ben Ali intelligence and security apparatus had been largely dismantled, radical fringes found the space to organize, with the economic and institutional crisis amplifying this phenomenon. In some regions, unemployment now stands at around 30 percent and is sometimes even higher for youth, which fosters resentment and allows for political exploitation by Salafists. The current resurgence of Salafism was also influenced by the release in 2011 of many high-profile Salafi militants who had been imprisoned and the return from exile of others. The new democracy also allowed foreign Salafist scholars to come to Tunisia to spread their doctrine.

One of the main consequences of the Ennahda political victory has been a policy of tolerance toward Salafist groups, causing an overall phenomenon of radicalization in the

⁸⁰ <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/43194/politique/alg-rie-jund-al-khilafa-des-soldats-pas-si-inconnus/>

⁸¹ <http://www.lorientlejour.com/article/926121/il-ne-reste-que-des-residus-de-terrorisme-en-algerie.html>

⁸² <http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/>

⁸³ Addi, Lahouari (1997), “Political Islam and Democracy: The Case of Algeria” in Axel Hadenius, ed. *Democracy’s Victory and Crisis*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 105–20.

⁸⁴ WBG, Algeria Economic Monitoring Note, March 2015.

⁸⁵ IMF Country Report, 14/342, December 2014.

country as most of these groups, which were severely repressed under Ben Ali, are now free to express their ideas and their political agenda.⁸⁶

Several Tunisia-based extremist groups have hence emerged since 2011. Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia (AST) is the largest Salafi-jihadist organization that was set up under the leadership of Abu Ayyad al-Tunisi, a jihadist combatant who fought in Afghanistan and was deported to Tunisia on charges of international terrorism. The organization has attracted a significant number of members because members can commit themselves to AST's mission in a variety of ways, from joining military operations to teaching religion classes in their communities.⁸⁷

Now, a few years after the revolution began, while some positive results are observable – and democratic institutions seem to be solid enough to tolerate the majority of the changes – security is a serious concern. The recent declaration of a state of emergency, granting special powers to the police and army, after the Sousse attack can be viewed as symptomatic of the inadequacy of the security apparatus.⁸⁸ In late August 2012, the government of Tunisia designated AST a terrorist organization connected to al-Qaeda⁸⁹ after this organization staged a mass rally in Kairouan attended by up to 5,000 Salafists and organized numerous blasphemous campaigns while encouraging gender segregation. Since this decision by the government, those who do not abandon the group are arrested, or, as is common in such circumstances, disappear – some join the jihad in Syria, others align themselves with the pro-al Qaeda Katiba Oqba ibn Nafi in the Chaambi Mountains.

Beyond the abovementioned cooperation with ASL, there is increasing Tunisian activity in Libya with the Islamic State. It is estimated that up to 1,000 Tunisians are currently fighting or in training in Libya – a Tunisian, for example, was one of the IS-affiliated attackers of the Corinthia Hotel in late January 2015.⁹⁰ Apart from the two major attacks against tourist targets previously mentioned, Tunisian militants operating within IS have also infiltrated Tunisia to perpetrate low-level harassment attacks since April 2015.

Tunisian authorities are also trying to gain control of radical mosques, with some success. It is estimated that 180 mosques (out of 5,000) have been built since the revolution. Most recently, Tunisian security services found weapons in 40 of these radical mosques.⁹¹ Ninety of the newly built mosques have contacted the authorities to seek legal status; the remainder still refuse to regularize their situation. Therefore, around 80 mosques, most of which are clearly Salafist and reject Malikism, could be closed owing to violence or jihadism⁹²

⁸⁶ “The Involvement of Salafism/Wahhabism in the Support and Supply of Arms to Rebel Groups Around the World” (2013). Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union. Policy Department, European Parliament.

⁸⁷ “Ansar al-Shariah Tunisia” (2014), Mapping Militant Organizations, Stanford University. <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/547>

⁸⁸ <http://news.yahoo.com/tunisia-declares-state-emergency-beach-attack-133959643.html>

⁸⁹ <https://7our.wordpress.com/2013/09/05/tunisie-ansar-al-charia-affiche-sa-filiation-avec-al-qaida/>

⁹⁰ “Libya hotel attack: Five foreigners among nine killed.” BBC News. January 28, 2015.

⁹¹ <http://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-40-mosquees-transformees-en-cache-darmes/259841>

⁹² <http://mejliss.com/tunisie-40-mosquees-transformees-cache-darmes>

Every week, the local media mentions that young Tunisians have left the country to go to Libya or Syria, including, although rarely, military or security members.⁹³ One reason for this, at least since 2013, is rooted in the local terrain. In the mountains at the Algeria-Tunisia border, including Chaambi (in theory, a national park), and the Selloum and Semmama Mountains in the Kasserine *wilaya* (district), the terrain is both isolated and inhospitable and is a long-time jihadist refuge, perhaps since 2002. This jihadist hub regularly launches attacks against local security forces, which retaliate with ground and air force during counterterrorist operations.⁹⁴ In July 2014, Oqba Ibn Nafaa killed 15 soldiers in the Chaambi area, and⁹⁵ earlier, in May 2014, the same group attacked the house of the Minister of Interior in Kasserine.⁹⁶

Under Ben Ali, Tunisia only witnessed sporadic jihadist violence, but in very similar, although less intense, ways. On August 2, 1987, four improvised explosive devices exploded in four hotels in Sousse and Monastir, injuring 13 people. In February 1991, three jihadists attacked the office of the Ben Ali-led Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) party in Bab Souika.⁹⁷ The most prominent attack, however, was on April 11, 2002, when a young Tunisian linked to al-Qaeda bombed the synagogue in Djerba in Tunisia's south.⁹⁸ The attack resulted in the deaths of 21 people, including 14 German tourists, five Tunisians, and two French citizens. In response to the Djerba attack, the Ben Ali regime implemented harsh counterterrorism laws that were sufficient to restrain religiously motivated violence, until Tunisia's revolution in 2011, but which also resulted into arbitrary imprisonments and the almost complete collapse of the local Islamist movement.

In **Morocco**, according to the local judiciary (*Bureau Central des Investigations Judiciaires*, BCIJ), at least 27 jihadist cells have been dismantled since 2013 – eight between January and May 2015 and 14 in 2014 (132 total between 2012 and 2015). Local police are now concerned that between 1,000 and 2,000 Moroccans and European-Moroccans may have been recruited by IS. In March 2015, at least 156 citizens were under scrutiny after their return from Syria.⁹⁹ In January 2015, a YouTube video – widely viewed in Morocco – showed seven young people from Berkane city pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, IS's general emir.¹⁰⁰ According to the local security services, before having been arrested, they intended to go first to Libya through Algeria, as many others have, to coordinate with Ansar Al-Sharia leaders and join IS training structures in its controlled territory in Syria and Iraq. The domestic authorities extrapolate from their own security assessment and from the number of

⁹³<http://www.businessnews.com.tn/pres-de-20-individus-quittent-clandestinement-remada-parmi-eux-3-militaires-dont-un-pilote,534,57284,3>

⁹⁴<http://www.businessnews.com.tn/des-terroristes-presumes-a-chaambi-semmama-et-jebel-selloum-poursuivis-par-des-drones,520,56946,3>

⁹⁵ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/07/17/uk-tunisia-violence-idUKKBN0FL2V420140717>

⁹⁶ <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/52825/politique/tunisie-le-domicile-du-ministre-de-l-interieur-attaque-4-policiers-tu-s/>

⁹⁷ <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/tunisia-signs-of-domestic-radicalization-post-revolution>

⁹⁸ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7873543.stm>

⁹⁹ <http://fr.starafrika.com/actualites/maroc-pres-de-132-cellules-terroristes-demantelees-entre-2002-et-2015-bcij.html>

¹⁰⁰<http://www.medias24.com/NATION/DEFENSE/150709-Maroc.-La-cellule-Daesh-de-Berkane-demantelee-en-un-temps-record.html>

actual or potential Moroccan jihadists that serious terrorist acts could occur in the largest touristic cities (Marrakech, Agadir, Fès, Casablanca)¹⁰¹ during or after Ramadan, particularly car bombings and suicide bombings (like those in Casablanca in 2003).

The dismantling of a jihadist Moroccan-Saudi cell in May 2002, the Casablanca attack in 2003 and the 2007 bloody wave, ended the myth of a Morocco free of terrorism. Local authorities reacted decisively by arresting 2,112 radical Islamist militants, jailing 903 of them and sentencing 17 to death.¹⁰² Even prior to these acts, in order to contain the rise of politically driven Islam, the regime took various initiatives in an attempt to legitimize the monarchy through “Makhzenization”:¹⁰³ monitoring mosques; imposing an official preach for Friday prayer; constraining rules regarding the management of mosques; controlling the training of local imams, muezzins, and preachers; and, in 1981, reorganizing the *oulémas* national council, the only official organization, composed of local theologians, authorized to express legal *fatwas* (Islamic orders).

The local production of jihadists has been persistent and, as seen above, has recently risen. Some small groups were active in the past, mainly in the 1990s: Al-Hijrah wa Takfir (Hegira and Anathema) was active in urban centers; Jama’at Assirat al-Moustakim (meaning “the organization of the right path”), a splinter group with possible links to Afghan jihadist networks, became famous in 2002 with the stoning of a man in the Casablanca slums; and Salafiya Jihadiya was active in the early 1990s after Afghan jihadist veterans returned to Morocco, where they recruited among young urban sub-proletarians and, especially, street vendors. The *Groupe Islamique Combatant Marocain* (GICM), for its part, was created in 1998 possibly to provide logistical support to core elements in al-Qaeda and facilitate its infiltration of Europe. GICM had networks in Western Europe, among the Maghrebian diaspora.¹⁰⁴

Syria: The Main “Land of Jihad” for the Maghreb

The modern time has seen extensive mobilization of individuals to carry out jihad and transnational insurgencies.¹⁰⁵ The first of note took place in the late 1980s against the Soviet army in Afghanistan resulting in the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan. Mention should also be made of the conflicts in Bosnia, Chechnya, Iraq, and in Afghanistan today, which all had immediate and long-term consequences for many countries. It seems that any foreign military intervention in a country, and, alternatively, some civil wars involving a secularist State (such as the Assad regime), crystallize into a global call to fight on a religious basis. Such a theological basis, however, is in no way unanimously endorsed by Muslims. Yet, if the current conflict in Syria is indicative of anything, it demonstrates the polarizing effect of radical social media as well as the extreme dynamism of the radical fringes among the diaspora and, more broadly, illustrates the negative consequences of military intervention. Such interventions can make a decisive contribution to regime change, but are far less able to manage the

¹⁰¹ <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/north-africa-beyond-jihadist-radicalization>

¹⁰² Mohamed Bouzoubaa, Moroccan Minister of Justice, quoted by *Le Monde*, July 16, 2014.

¹⁰³ “Makhzen” refers, in the local dialectal Arabic, to State and institutions.

¹⁰⁴ Saïd Haddad (2005), “Le jihadisme au Maghreb: vers la fin des exceptions algérienne et marocaine?” in Jean-Luc Marret (dir.), *Les fabriques du jihad*, Paris, PUF.

¹⁰⁵ I. Salehyan (2009), *Rebels without borders: Transnational insurgencies in World politics*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell UP; J. Mackinlay (2002), *Globalization and insurgency*, Adelphi Papers, no. 352 (London: IISS).

secondary effects, such as the sharpening of jihadist sentiment, with Iraq in 2004 serving as a cautionary tale), the impact of refugees, and the challenges of reintegrating ex-combatants.

An illuminating example of this last challenge is Algeria: when the Soviet forces left Afghanistan, many jihadist veterans returned to their countries of origin or joined a new “land of jihad” in light of their goal to internationalize their fight. The Afghan jihad had actually produced a community of mobilized, trained, battle-hardened, radicalized, determined, and committed volunteers for years. It is the same for other lands of jihad. It will be the same for Syria today.

This is not to say that all combatants intend to keep fighting forever: some returnees do reintegrate into peaceful family environments. However, the Algerian example shows how perilous returnees can be for a state’s stability. The year 1992 marked the end of the Afghan war and coincided with the cancellation of the electoral process in Algeria. Many Algerian jihadists returned home to duplicate what they learned against the Red Army, through various international channels. The GIA was created by Algerians in Afghanistan as a copycat of the Hizb Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar,¹⁰⁶ a local prominent and Islamist warlord (the Libyan GICL was also created in Afghanistan). The political and socioeconomic situations in Algeria were added to this security concern and culminated in a very bloody civil war.¹⁰⁷

It is difficult to evaluate the scale and distribution of foreign fighters in Syria.¹⁰⁸ Data are collected through various protocols: some data are missing, and many biases are probable. Nevertheless, according to figures provided by the Moroccan Centre for Strategic Studies (*Centre marocain d’études stratégiques*), approximately 8,000 Maghrebians (3,000 Tunisians, 2,500 Libyans, 1,200 Moroccans, less than 1,000 Algerians, and a handful of Mauritians, with an insignificant number of Sahelians) have joined the jihad in Syria. Never has another conflict – from Afghanistan in 2001 to Iraq in 2003 – attracted as many North African jihadists.¹⁰⁹ The British, International Center for the Study of Radicalization (ICSR) provides other numbers: 200 Algerians, 600 Libyans, 1,500 Moroccans, and between 1,500 and 3,000 Tunisians.¹¹⁰ It must be noted that these estimates are “conflict totals” and do not evaluate the number of effective real combatants and non-combatants; the dead or injured; and those that left the conflict zone (estimated at around 10 percent to 30 percent). Among these foreign jihadists, some will also never return to their countries of origin, which are still perceived as “non-Islamic,” but as long as IS gains territory, or at least is not perceived as losing, it will continue to attract volunteers.

¹⁰⁶ Muhammad Tahir, “Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Return to the Afghan Insurgency,” *Jamestown Foundation*, June 29, 2008.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Willis (1996), *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History*, NYU Press, New York; William B. Quandt (1998), *Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria’s Transition from Authoritarianism*, Brookings Institution Press., Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁸ T. Hegghammer (2010), “The rise of Muslim foreign fighters – Islam and the globalization of jihad,” *International security*, Vol. 35, No. 3, Winter 2010/2011, pp. 53-94.

¹⁰⁹http://www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxiu-adjunts/anuari/med.2015/IEMed_MedYearbook%202015_Jihadism_in_Northern_Africa_and_the_Sahel_Samir_Amghar_2.pdf

¹¹⁰ <http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/>

Only an active disengagement program, for instance of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), can possibly facilitate the reintegration of these combatants in the future. However, there remains the challenge of judicial review of their actions on the battlefield (killings, human right violations, rapes, for example). Some countries also face severe security challenges. Apart from Libya, which is, at present, a collapsed state, considering the number of its citizens fighting in Syria and Libya and its current domestic problems, Tunisia could be confronted with perhaps a more grave security situation than any other society in the Maghreb.

Conclusion

Having taken stock of extremist activities in North African countries where radical forces are particularly active, it is evident that jihadism in the Maghreb should not be considered a predominantly global movement despite select affiliations with umbrella organizations such as al-Qaeda and, today, Islamic State. Local conditions clearly contributed to the rise and proliferation of jihadism as political oppression and exclusion and open transition processes were exploited by violent extremist groups. In addition, the release of radicalized prisoners and the return of ex-combatants following such transitions, combined with international military interventions and fragility, social exclusion, and youth marginalization, further exacerbated the weak economic conditions. Finally, specific geographic and societal conditions, including the relationships among violent groups, such as the competition for legitimacy and the division of labor, among other variables, contribute to the hybrid nature of Maghrebian jihadism.

The internal complexity of the region will require deeper analysis in order to determine the need for future research, security, and development assistance on sensitive issues. One such issue is the outlook for Tunisia's future in light of (1) the number of Tunisian jihadists in Syria and Libya; (2) the conditions of their eventual return, for instance in a coordinated manner determined by IS or because of a sudden collapse of IS in the Middle East; and (3) domestic uncertainties in Tunisia.

However, the worst-case scenario might be an Algerian-type crisis. Algeria can be viewed as a sleeping giant as it is the region's strongest economy as well as the country in the region most affected by terrorism over the longest period – dating back to the 1990s. There is still uncertainty regarding Algeria's prospects given its vulnerability and strong dependence on the hydrocarbon sector, which finances substantial subsidies. If the economy contracts further, social unrest similar to the bread riots in 1989 could rise and provide opportunities for radical elements to polarize the country. While the risk of widespread proliferation is limited given the common memory about the bloody decade, the potential for a renewed rise of violent groups against a secular elitist system should not be underestimated.

Considering the current impact of social media, compared to the 1990s, and the size of the Tunisian and Algerian diasporas living in Europe, there could be a conjunction of worsening conditions. One method of dampening the possible threat of increased terrorist activity has taken the form of efforts by the European Union and France in particular to assist Tunisia and Algeria with enhancement of their security capacity. Similarly, in June 2015, the U.S. elevated Tunisia to the status of major non-NATO ally, a gesture that recognizes the country's democratic progress and its security concerns. This

upgrade in status will help Tunisia secure economic and defense assistance.¹¹¹ More broadly, it will be important to adopt a proactive approach to the reintegration of combatants to determine how this should be done and under which conditions.

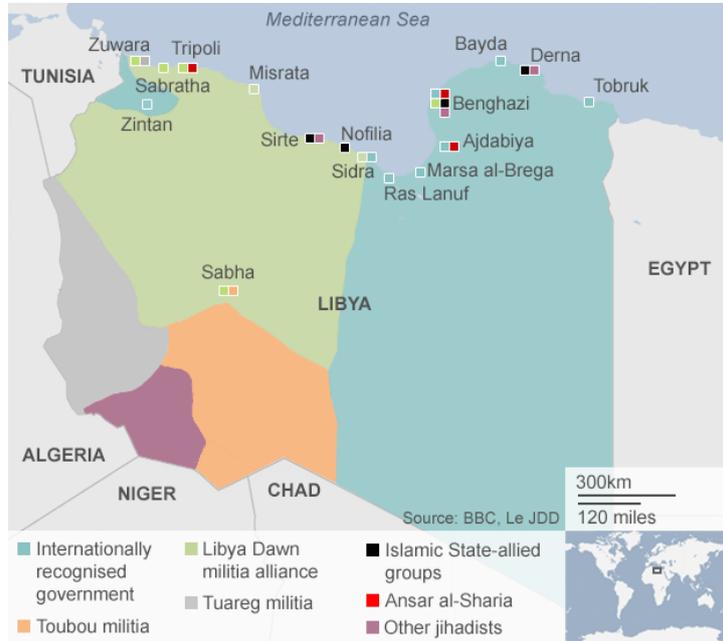
Finally, this paper sought to illustrate the extent of the Libyan contagion effect, which risks destabilizing the entire region. This not only affects national security, but also stretches local capacity to manage humanitarian disasters and refugees of war. Libya has become a jihadist haven with worsened security conditions, including negative spillover effects for Tunisia.

The Libyan collapse also has consequences for Europe and the region as a whole as it increases the stress on these communities through illegal immigration and challenges associated with the integration of migrant populations. Moreover, there are rising concerns that radical elements are willing or attempting to use illegal immigration flows to infiltrate the territory, in some cases to commit terrorist attacks. It is clear that the future of the North African region is very closely tied to the fate of these neighboring communities, not just through the narrow lens of security, but also from the standpoint of regional stability and prosperity.

¹¹¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/21/us-usa-tunisia-obama-idUSKBN00626M20150521>

Appendix A

Map A.1. Libya's Rival Power Bases



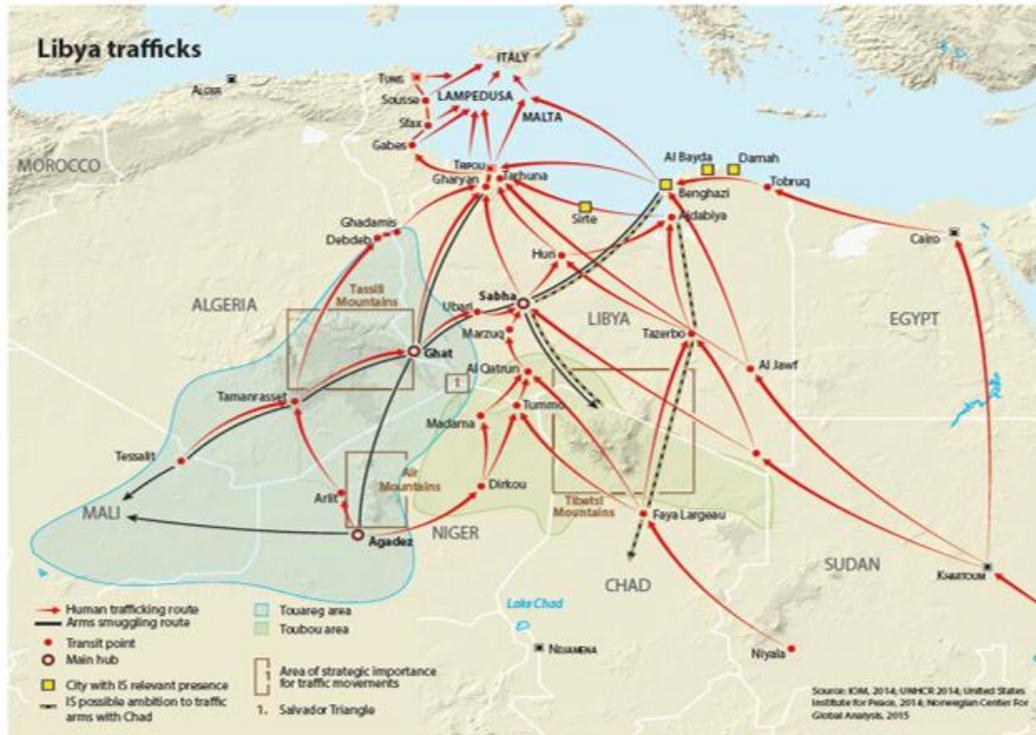
Source: BBC News "Libya crisis: UN presents 'unity' plan to factions", 9 June 2015

Map A.2. Internal Displacement in Libya as of March 2015



Source: IDMC, 30 March 2015

Map A.3. Migrant Smuggling through Libya



Greater resolution on some of the migrant smuggling routes in Libya. The East-West flows along the coast are of greater significance from the rise in trafficking compared to traditional Trans-Saharan routes, including of Syrians and Eritreans, suggesting coordinated action through Egypt to Sinai and Jordan and Lebanon. The trafficking on the coast is now worth at least US\$ 255 -323 million.

Source: The Global Initiative, “Libya: a growing hub for Criminal Economies and Terrorist Financing in the Trans-Sahara” May 11, 2015