



## NATO DEFENSE COLLEGE FOUNDATION

### STRATEGIC TRENDS

November 2014

#### **MAGHREB**

##### **Libya**

The political climate in Libya worsened immediately after the pronouncement of the Supreme Court on 6<sup>th</sup> November. The judicial body declared the internationally recognised Parliament in Tobruk as unconstitutional and invalidated the June election of the House of Representatives on account of the violation of Libya's provisional constitution by the committee in charge of drafting the election law.

The Tobruk Parliament, which is characterised by a strong representation of liberals and federalists, rejected the decision and accused the Supreme Court based in Tripoli to rule under the threat of arms. In August the capital was seized by Operation Dawn (Fajr) coalition, which had reinstated the General National Congress (GNC), the previous Parliament where Islamists are more represented.

Despite the fact that the decision of the Supreme Court will not produce any tangible result due to the current territorial fragmentation of Libya, it will strengthen the position of the GNC. It could be expected that the GNC will be more legitimated, at least in the negotiation attempts *via-à-vis* the Tobruk Parliament, providing a chance for national dialogue.

At the international level, the different responsibilities of the principal regional powers in Libya crisis became more evident. The bombings of the Egyptian and United Arab Emirates (UAE) embassies in Tripoli on 13<sup>th</sup> November provided a clear example: Egypt and UAE are often accused of meddling in

Libyan affairs, mainly through their support to the Libyan government in Tobruk and to General Khalifa Haftar's Operation Dignity (Karama). On the other hand, it is noteworthy the role of Algeria in looking for a diplomatic solution for Libya, by offering to host a dialogue among its different factions. Support to Algeria's diplomatic efforts is predictable in the next months, mainly by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and some European countries.

## **Tunisia**

After the parliamentary elections of 26<sup>th</sup> October, Tunisia focused on the presidential campaign. The two main candidates were Beji Caid Essebsi, leader of the Nidaa Tunis party, which won the majority of seats in the Assembly, and the current President Moncef Marzouki, leader of the Congress for the Republic party.

On 7<sup>th</sup> November the Islamist Ennahda party, which came second in the parliamentary elections, decided to present no official candidate for the presidential elections, considering the current regional trend against Islamism. Ennahda let its electoral base free to vote for any presidential candidate, so as not to be considered a movement that wants to control all the institutions. The elections, which were held on 22<sup>nd</sup> of November, were won by Essebsi with the 39.46% of votes, against the 33.4% of Marzouki, short of the needed overall majority. Despite Ennahda's leadership announcement, it was clear that the majority of Ennahda voters supported Marzouki.

The second round of the presidential elections will be held on 21<sup>st</sup> of December. With regard to the outcome, Ennahda's next moves will be crucial to set the Tunisian political framework in the coming months. The movement can decide either to maintain its opposition stance, in order to reorganize itself and wait for the special congress of next year, or to throw its support behind one of the two candidates, thus resulting decisive for the final result.

Government formation will likely wait until the presidential run-off. Even if a grand coalition between Nidaa Tunis and Ennahda cannot be ruled out, the most predictable hypothesis is that Nidaa Tunis will form a coalition with smaller parties to garner the necessary 109-seats majority.

## **Algeria**

On 24<sup>th</sup> November President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced that his country would move ahead to reform its constitution. The reform aims at opening up Algerian society and preserving its stability, thus saving it from the upheaval that has been seen in other countries of the region. This is not the first time that such announcements were made, and it remains to be seen what will happen in the next months. It is worth mentioning that the previous reform of 2008 amended the constitution only to lift the limit of two presidential terms. In the wake of the Arab Spring of 2011, further efforts were made, involving political parties and associations, but they were not followed up, and actually it is not clear what the opposition plans to do.

After the October strikes, police demands have been addressed by the government, which responded to their economic and professional requests. Nevertheless, the government ignored their political demands, such as the establishment of a police union and the removal of the Director-General of the National Security, General Abdelghani Hamel, on allegations of corruption and abuse of power, in order not to upset the powerful Department of Intelligence and Security.

## **Morocco**

In Morocco the rising threat of jihadism became more evident. On 27<sup>th</sup> November 13 terrorists were sentenced to 4 years jail term by a criminal court for setting up terrorist groups and plotting attacks. They were also accused of affiliation with the Islamic State (IS) terrorist organization.

Observers expect a qualitative shift in terrorist activity in Morocco because of the recent pledges of allegiance to the IS by different organizations; among them, Harakat Sham al-Islam, which is composed by a core of Moroccan salafists involved in the Syrian civil war. The struggle inside the jihadist front between those who support IS and those who are still loyal to al-Qaeda is expected to be imported in Morocco in the next months, leading to further divisions and the isolation of local salafist leaders who oppose IS activities.