



A Quiet Revolution: The Tunisian Military After Ben Ali

Sharan Grewal
February 24, 2016
Regional Insight

This regional insight was prepared as part of the 2014–2015 Renegotiating Arab Civil-Military Relations: Political and Economic Governance in Transition Project run by the Carnegie Middle East Center. The project sought to promote research on armed forces in Arab states and on the challenges of democratic transition.

Summary

Alongside Tunisia's political revolution has been the beginning of a transition in its civil-military relations. Marginalized for decades under former president Habib Bourguiba and especially under the police state of former president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, the military after the 2011 revolution has begun to see its fortunes reverse. The political transition has produced changes in five aspects of civil-military relations:

- Management of the military has transitioned from the personalized rule of previous autocrats to more decentralized channels.
- The changing face of Tunisia's political leadership has spelled the end of privileging officers from the wealthy coastal regions from which Bourguiba and Ben Ali hailed.
- Tunisia's grave security threats have forced postrevolution governments to enhance the military's budget, weapons, international linkages, institutional capacity, and political influence.
- Ex-military officers have enjoyed more transitional justice than other Tunisians.
- Retired officers have become active members of Tunisia's robust civil society, providing the military with a new lobby to advance its interests.

As of 2016, the increase in the military's strength appears to be a healthy phenomenon for Tunisia's young democracy, considering the security challenges and the lack of military expertise among the country's civilian leaders. After the military was sidelined in Ben Ali's police state, these developments seem aimed at correcting the historical imbalance. However, Western governments and other domestic and international actors should be attentive to encouraging the military's growth in line with democratic principles.

Introduction

Considered the one success story of the Arab Spring, Tunisia has managed to steer its rocky political transition toward democracy. When the transition appeared to be on the verge of collapse in the summer of 2013, political forces pulled together, producing a constitution by near consensus and a second peaceful election and transition of power.

Among the most commonly cited reasons for the relative success of Tunisia's transition is the nature of its military. The Tunisian armed forces are the smallest in the Arab world, numbering only 40,500 active duty personnel in a population of nearly 11 million. They have fought in no major wars, largely remaining (in the words of one retired officer, "imprisoned"¹) in the barracks. Underfunded, underequipped, and sidelined from political and economic power under former presidents Habib Bourguiba and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, the military as an institution never developed deep corporate interests that would tie it to the fate of Tunisia's autocratic rulers. This lack of vested interests allowed it to quickly move beyond Ben Ali following his ouster in January 2011 and then stand much more removed from domestic political developments than other militaries in the region.

While much ink has been spilled about how the nature of the Tunisian military has affected the revolution and subsequent transition,² little has been written about how the transition has affected the military. Behind the scenes, there have been significant changes in civil-military relations, potentially spelling a gradual restructuring of the polity away from Ben Ali's police state and toward one in which the various security apparatuses are more evenly balanced.

A History of Marginalization

Unlike in neighboring countries, the army in Tunisia has historically been weak militarily and politically. Tunisia's first president, Habib Bourguiba, having witnessed the wave of postindependence coups peppering the region in the 1950s, sought to deprive the Tunisian military of the capacity to carry out a coup. Bourguiba's task was made easier by the fact that the Tunisian armed forces were established after independence: there was no national army to inherit from the colonial era, as there had been in Egypt.³ Relatedly, Tunisian troops had played only a minor role in the nationalist movement and were thus deprived of the legitimacy to govern that the military in Algeria, for instance, had gained through its role in the war for independence from France. When Bourguiba created the Tunisian armed forces on June 30, 1956, combining 850 men from the Beylical Guard, 1,500 from the French army, and 3,000 conscripts, he was able to keep the military small and removed from political power.

After a brief skirmish with France in the Battle of Bizerte in 1961, and a failed coup attempt the following year by officers loyal to Bourguiba's political rival Salah Ben Youssef, the military remained confined to the barracks and relatively aloof from politics. Over the next two decades, Bourguiba also had other priorities, spending 40 to 50 percent of the budget on education and social services, leaving few resources for the military. Bourguiba preferred to ensure Tunisia's security through alliances and diplomacy rather than war.

Beyond underfunding, Bourguiba also pursued a series of other measures designed to prevent a coup. He placed the Tunisian National Guard, a paramilitary force typically housed in the Ministry of Defense, in the Ministry of the Interior to undermine collusion between the national guard and the military. He also prohibited military officers and soldiers from voting or joining political parties in order to lessen their interest in politics. Finally, he promoted loyal officers to command the armed forces. In 1956, Bourguiba instructed his Neo-Destour Party to conduct background checks on the first cohort of Tunisian officers sent to the French military academy Saint-Cyr.⁴ Officers from this one vetted cohort—self-styled the Bourguiba promotion—would go on to occupy the top military posts for the next three decades, ensuring the military's loyalty to the regime.⁵

However, growing internal and external threats forced Bourguiba to change course and strengthen the armed forces in the late 1970s and 1980s. A nationwide general strike by the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) in 1978, a Libyan-backed insurgency in the interior town of Gafsa in 1980, and large-scale bread riots in 1983–1984 overwhelmed the police and national guard, which "shocked Bourguiba out of his complacency and obliged him to reconsider the . . . modernization of the armed forces," wrote L. B. Ware, the foremost scholar on the Tunisian military.⁶ Military spending quadrupled and arms imports—especially from the United States—skyrocketed during this period (see figures 1 and 2).

As Bourguiba became increasingly reliant on the military for security, military officers began to assume a larger political role. Brigadier General Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, a member of the aforementioned Bourguiba promotion who had created the Directorate of Military Security in 1964,⁷ was transferred to the Ministry of the Interior in 1977 as director general of national security. He then began to climb the civilian ranks, beginning as the ambassador to Poland in 1980, secretary of state for national security in 1984, interior minister in 1986, and finally prime minister a year later. In 1984, Ben Ali's classmate, military Colonel Habib Ammar, also assumed control of the 6,000-strong national guard in the Ministry of the Interior.

In the end, it seems the ailing Bourguiba had been right to be wary of appointing military officers to such high nonmilitary positions:⁸ on November 7, 1987, Ben Ali deposed Bourguiba in a soft coup.⁹ With Habib Ammar's national guard surrounding the presidential palace, doctors assembled by Ben Ali declared Bourguiba medically unfit to govern.¹⁰ Bourguiba remained under house arrest until his death in April 2000.

The Military Under Ben Ali

The ascendance of a military officer to the presidency raised expectations among members of the officer corps that their time had finally come. Within weeks of taking office, Ben Ali elevated four officers to the rank of general and then rebranded Bourguiba's National Defense Council into a National Security Council (NSC) that now included two military officers: the chief of staff of the armed forces and the director general of military security.¹¹ Moreover, while Bourguiba's council had been explicitly consultative, Ben Ali's NSC was legally mandated to meet weekly and tasked with "collecting, studying, analyzing, and evaluating information related to domestic, foreign, and defense policies with the aim of safeguarding internal and external state security."¹²

Senior officers then began to fill the ranks of traditionally civilian posts. Ben Ali appointed Habib Ammar as minister of the interior in 1987, Abdelhamid Escheikh as minister of foreign affairs in 1988 and then of the interior in 1990, Mustapha Bouaziz as minister of justice in 1989 and then of state domains in 1990, Ali Seriati as director general of national security in 1991, and a number of other military officers to top security posts. These appointments meant that military officers in the late 1980s held a majority in the NSC, and a dominant voice in policymaking. As L. B. Ware wrote at the time, "the military now enjoys a higher degree of visibility and influence than ever before."¹³

Yet these moves did not go unnoticed by the military's institutional rivals: the ruling party (renamed the Constitutional Democratic Rally) and the police.¹⁴ Threatened by the military's rise, they concocted a plan to play on Ben Ali's paranoia and undercut both the military and the most threatening opposition actor, the Islamist group Ennahdha, in one fell swoop. In May 1991, the Ministry of the Interior announced the discovery of a coup plot between the military and Ennahdha. Airing the testimony—extracted under torture—of Captain Ahmed Amara on live television, then interior minister Abdullah al-Qallal accused elements of the military of meeting with Ennahdha leaders in the coastal town of Barraket Essahel. In what became known as the Barraket Essahel affair, the Interior Ministry proceeded to round up, torture, and remove from the military some 244 officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers, including three of the six assistants to the army chief of staff.

While officials involved in the investigation now admit that there was neither a meeting at Barraket Essahel nor any coup plot,¹⁵ Ben Ali's trust in the military had been shaken. He immediately forced those officers he had previously named ministers into retirement or out of the country as ambassadors. For the rest of Ben Ali's rule, members of the military would not receive a single civilian or security post. At the same time, Ben Ali neglected the armed forces materially, lavishing new weapons and higher salaries instead on the Ministry of the Interior. The budget of the Interior Ministry, which was smaller than that of the Defense Ministry for most of Bourguiba's reign, jumped to 165 percent of the defense budget in 1992 and remained near that level for the next two decades. Tunisia had become a police state.¹⁶

"Bourguiba did not like the army, but he respected it," claimed former chief of staff of the armed forces General Said el-Kateb. "The military under Bourguiba were treated better than the police, as far as budget, equipment, and training. Under Ben Ali, the budget allocated to the police was higher than the military's; the number of police officers increased dramatically. We could feel our marginalization."¹⁷

Ben Ali simultaneously tightened his control over the military, moving toward a system of personalized rule over the armed forces. After General el-Kateb retired in 1991, Ben Ali refused to appoint a new chief of staff of the armed forces, depriving the military of its most senior position and leaving it without a general to coordinate the army, navy, and air force. Ben Ali instead took on this role himself, making most decisions about the military on his own and calling upon the NSC only after rare natural disasters. As a retired major colonel observed:¹⁸ "Ben Ali worked directly with the military as if he was the minister of defense! We [senior officers] often sent reports directly to [the presidential palace in] Carthage. This was the old system. It was a personal rule, not a rule by the state."¹⁹

Another aspect of this personalized system was appointing to the top of the armed forces officers that Ben Ali either knew from his time in the military or through personal connections. At first this meant his classmates from the Bourguiba promotion. Afterwards, given the nature of personal networks, Ben Ali appeared to privilege officers from Tunis and from the Sahel—the region on the eastern coast including Sousse, Monastir, and Mahdia from which Bourguiba and Ben Ali both hailed. These areas amounted to

just 24 percent of Tunisia's population yet claimed nearly 40 percent of the officers promoted to the Supreme Council of the Armies under Ben Ali.²⁰

Citing Rachid Ammar (army chief of staff from 2002 to 2013, hailing from the Sahel) as a paradigmatic example of connections trumping merit, retired Major Colonel Mohamed Ahmed observed: "If you are from Kairouan, Gafsa, or Kef, you are just an average officer. But if you are from the Sahel, you have a big chance of being promoted more quickly."²¹ Another retired army major colonel suggested that when two officers of equal merit were under consideration for promotion, the post would be given to the one from the Sahel.²² A former director general of military security, who wielded veto power over promotions, also confirmed that while the majority of soldiers and junior officers were from the interior regions, the majority of senior officers hailed from the coast.²³

Beyond promotions, officers in the leadership's favor also received more desirable posts as military attachés abroad. While those with connections were sent to Paris or Washington, those disliked by Ben Ali or the top generals were punished with assignments in Libya or Egypt, with whom Tunisia had little military cooperation.

Underpaid, underequipped, and deprived of political influence, the bulk of the officer corps resented Ben Ali and felt betrayed by those generals who benefited from the system. When a popular uprising began in December 2010 and eventually ousted Ben Ali, the majority of the officer corps felt no remorse.

Those at the very top who owed their positions to Ben Ali's favoritism, however, like army chief of staff Rachid Ammar, remained loyal until the end. While General Ammar was widely rumored to have refused Ben Ali's order to fire upon civilians during the uprising, military officers categorically denied this rumor, explaining that Ben Ali never issued an order to fire upon civilians.²⁴ By contrast, a former minister of defense revealed that at 3 p.m. on January 14, 2011, just hours before Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia, the president asked Rachid Ammar to take over the operations room of the Interior Ministry, an order with which Ammar complied.²⁵

The Rise of Rachid Ammar

The rumor that General Rachid Ammar refused the order to fire on protesters made him hugely popular among the Tunisian people. That reputation, coupled with the visible role the military played to ensure security immediately after the revolution, made him, according to the *New York Times*, "the most powerful and the most popular figure in Tunisia" in the wake of Ben Ali's ouster.²⁶ Seeking to use his popularity, the interim government asked him on January 24 to disperse the remaining protesters. At the Kasbah, in what seemed more like a campaign rally than a call to disperse, he declared that "the army will protect the revolution," fueling speculation that he sought a political role.

However, there was no need to assume an official political position: for all intents and purposes, Rachid Ammar had become the center of power. "All governmental institutions were protected by the military," explained Fathi Jerbi, vice president of the Wafa Movement. "For any problem, everyone would refer to Rachid Ammar. He was governing the country."²⁷

"The army was very well-positioned," added a retired brigadier general. "Most of the politicians from the period of Ben Ali had gone; Rachid Ammar was the only figure that knew how to run the government. And at the time, the problems were security matters: how to confront the deteriorating situation in the south, what to do with Libyan refugees, how to respond to a large strike or protest. In practice, though not legally, Rachid Ammar was the man calling the shots."²⁸

With the police and the former ruling party reeling after the revolution, Ammar sought to elevate the relative political position of the military. In February 2011, Army Brigadier General Ahmed Chabir was appointed the director general of national security in the Ministry of the Interior, while Colonel Moncef Helali assumed command of the National Guard. Major Colonel Mohamed Abdennaceur Belhaj was later appointed the director general of customs, which had been civilian-led throughout the 2000s. The military thus assumed command of the nation's top security posts. Likewise, having held no provincial governorships under Ben Ali between 1991 and 2010, seven military officers were appointed as governors in 2011; two other governors were civilians who had studied alongside officers at the Tunisian National Defense Institute.

The transitional period brought changes in the military as well. Most significant was the revival of the position of chief of staff of the armed forces in April 2011, with Ammar assuming this role in addition to heading the land army. With this move, Ammar acquired near hegemony over military decisions, and reportedly consulted with no one. Ammar "had infinite self-confidence," claimed retired Major Colonel Mahmoud Mezoughi, president of the Association of Former Officers of the National Army. "To him, no

one in his staff understood the situation better than him. So he did everything by himself.”²⁹ General Mohamed Ali el-Bekri, who served as inspector general of the armed forces during this time, noted that Rachid Ammar largely took over the role of minister of defense as well: “Everybody knew that the real minister of defense was Rachid Ammar, and not Mr. Abdelkarim Zbidi.”³⁰

Rachid Ammar now enjoyed much the same personal control over the military that Ben Ali had before him. However, this tradition of personal control over military affairs would soon be challenged by Tunisia’s first democratically elected government.

From Personal to Institutional Control

Following the 2011 National Constituent Assembly elections, the Islamist movement Ennahdha formed a governing coalition with two secular parties, the Congress for the Republic (CPR) and Ettakatol. In this troika government, Ennahdha’s Hamadi Jebali became the prime minister, CPR’s Moncef Marzouki assumed the role of the presidency, and Ettakatol’s Mustapha Ben Jaafar headed the assembly. This division of responsibilities reflected Tunisia’s transition to a parliamentary system, in which the most powerful position was the prime minister.

The previous presidential system had facilitated Ben Ali’s personal control over the military, as the constitution had granted the president exclusive responsibility for military matters. However, in the temporary constitution promulgated by the troika government at the start of its term in December 2011, management of the military became a shared responsibility between the president and the prime minister. The president was tasked with appointing the top military positions “in consultation with the prime minister.”³¹ The 2014 constitution kept this phrasing with regards to military appointments and defined the sharing of powers more clearly, naming the president the commander in chief of the armed forces responsible for declaring war and “setting the general state policies in the domains of defense, foreign relations, and national security.”³² This implied that the prime minister and his minister of defense would be responsible for managing more routine military and defense affairs.

The line between general policies and more routine decisions is open to interpretation. This loose division of responsibility, coupled with a delicate institutional arrangement in which the minister of defense is loyal to the prime minister and not necessarily to the commander in chief, the president, was a source of tension between Marzouki and Jebali. These institutional factors were then compounded by differing personal strategies toward the military. While Marzouki wanted to remove Ben Ali–era figures like General Ammar and then defense minister Zbidi, Jebali refused, arguing that maintaining the military as it was “was pivotal to the stability of the country.”³³ The rivalry between Jebali and Marzouki inadvertently pushed each executive to appoint military advisers and advisory councils to help them manage the military, institutionalizing decentralized channels for governing the armed forces.

Instead of reactivating the NSC (which by law would have been chaired by Marzouki), Jebali created and presided over a Security Council. This council was composed of the ministers of defense, the interior, and foreign affairs; the top Interior Ministry officers; and the top two military officers—the chief of staff of the armed forces (at the time Rachid Ammar) and the director general of military security (then Kamel Akrouf). The president was notably absent from the Security Council, nor was he represented. Jebali did not promulgate a law governing the council, but it continued in 2013 under the subsequent prime minister Ali Larayedh. The council was renamed the Crisis Cell in 2014 under then prime minister Mehdi Jomaa and has persisted under current Prime Minister Habib Essid.

When the troika government first took office, the center of power in the military was still Rachid Ammar. Ammar appeared to ally with Jebali³⁴ leaving Marzouki feeling relatively isolated from decisionmaking. This sentiment came to the fore in the summer of 2012 in the case of Baghdadi Mahmudi, a former Libyan official who had served under Colonel Muammar Qaddafi and fled to Tunisia during his country’s revolution. In November 2011, a Tunisian court ruled that Mahmudi should be extradited per the request of Libya’s National Transitional Council. Marzouki, a former human rights activist, opposed this decision on the grounds that Mahmudi would be subject to torture if returned to Libya. In June 2012, however, Jebali extradited Mahmudi to Tripoli, over the opposition of Marzouki.³⁵

Furious at being sidelined in this fashion, Marzouki threatened to resign but was convinced to remain in office after receiving an apology from Ennahdha head Rached al-Ghannouchi.³⁶ Marzouki also blamed General Rachid Ammar, whom he claimed was aware of the extradition but did not inform him.³⁷ The episode heightened Marzouki’s distrust of Jebali and Ammar and convinced him to push back simultaneously against Jebali’s domination of decisionmaking and Ammar’s control over the military.

Marzouki began by creating a position for a military adviser in September 2012, for the first time institutionalizing a role for the military in the president’s office.³⁸ While Marzouki was already head of the

Supreme Council of the Armies (a body dominated by Ammar), he—now distrustful of Ammar—felt the need to interact with other officers. Marzouki's intent was simply to remain informed of military matters, but this caused friction with General Ammar, who according to the presidential spokesman "wanted sovereignty over the information about the military" given to the president.³⁹

Worse yet for Ammar was the particular selection of Major Colonel Brahim Ouechtati as the military adviser. Hailing from Jendouba in the northwest, and rising through the ranks of the air force, Ouechtati was outside the personal network of Rachid Ammar, who was from the Sahel and a member of the land army. Ammar had also been refusing to promote Ouechtati to general despite him satisfying the relevant requirements.⁴⁰ Both civilian and military contacts suggested that Ouechtati was chosen as the military adviser precisely because he did not have a good personal relationship with Ammar: it was an explicit attempt to undermine Ammar's hegemony over the military.

At Ouechtati's advice, Marzouki revived the National Security Council, which after 1991 had met only once or twice a year. The NSC included all members of Jebali's Security Council plus the president, allowing Marzouki to regain a voice in defense policy. According to administration officials, the NSC convened almost monthly under Marzouki. The president, perhaps to further dilute Ammar's influence, also increased the number of military officers present in the council. Beyond Ammar and Akrouf, Marzouki routinely invited the next top three generals as well: the chiefs of staff of the navy and air force and the inspector general of the armed forces.⁴¹

With Jebali's creation of a Security Council, and Marzouki's appointment of a military adviser to the president and reactivation of the NSC, decisionmaking over military matters had become increasingly dispersed. "Before, only one person was managing all the army," observed Imed Daimi, Marzouki's chief of staff. "First it was Ben Ali, then General Ammar."⁴² Since 2012, management of the military has become more decentralized, with the president, prime minister, minister of defense, parliament, military adviser, NSC, and Security Council all offering their input. The influence of each institution has varied tremendously in successive administrations, with then president Moncef Marzouki for instance playing a much larger role during Ali Larayedh's government in 2013 than during Hamadi Jebali's in 2012 or Mehdi Jomaa's in 2014. But the crucial point is that management of the military has become a shared responsibility between multiple actors, transforming it, as a retired Major Colonel put it, "from personal rule to institutional rule."⁴³

Coup-Proofing Through Positive Discrimination

The new system of managing the military gave senior officers direct and regular input into national security policy. But the top generals and the troika government did not always agree, prompting Marzouki to fear the potential for a coup. A major sticking point was how to deal with the Tunisian branch of the jihadi movement Ansar al-Sharia, especially in the wake of its September 2012 attack on the U.S. embassy in Tunis. The troika favored dialogue, and Marzouki invited the leaders of Ansar al-Sharia to the presidential palace in October 2012. Ammar and other senior officers disagreed. "Marzouki accepted in Carthage people who are terrorists!" exclaimed a former director general of military security. "During that period Ammar saw some contradictions [between Marzouki's words and deeds]. Some generals believed that Marzouki, his party, and Ennahdha, by their conduct, helped terrorism grow."⁴⁴

These disagreements intensified after the assassination of the leftist politician Chokri Belaid in February 2013. During Belaid's funeral, then defense minister Zbidi lent military helicopters for the first time to a private television station, Nessma TV, to help film the service. As Nessma TV had been vehemently anti-troika, Marzouki interpreted this move as the beginning of a Zbidi-Ammar coup and lobbied Ennahdha to replace Zbidi in a cabinet reshuffle. His replacement, Rachid Sabbagh, a specialist in Islamic jurisprudence who was previously head of the Higher Islamic Council, proved to be a much more loyal defense minister to the troika government.

Marzouki also worked to maneuver Ammar out of his post. Over the next several months, the military became increasingly involved in operations in the Chaambi Mountains, where the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade, a cell of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, had set up camp. These operations gave Marzouki the opportunity he needed. On June 6, 2013, two soldiers were killed and two others wounded by a roadside bomb. Parliamentarian Mohamed Abbou, president of the Democratic Current (a splinter party from Marzouki's CPR), publicly called for Ammar's resignation, arguing "it is not logical for a manager to keep his job when he failed in his mission."⁴⁵ As Marzouki began to consider retiring the general, Ammar himself chose to resign on June 27 to avoid the image of being fired.⁴⁶

However, the fear of a coup did not dissipate with Ammar's resignation—indeed, it was just beginning. One week later, the Egyptian military ousted the Muslim Brotherhood-backed president Mohamed Morsi, emboldening opposition members in Tunisia to believe that their military could do the same. After a

second political assassination on July 25, the opposition abandoned the ongoing process of drafting a new constitution. It took instead to the street, explicitly calling for a repeat of the Egyptian scenario and demanding the troika government's departure and the dissolution of the country's only elected body, the National Constituent Assembly. Tunisia's transition appeared set to follow Egypt's path.

Retired Major Colonel Mokhtar Ben Nasr, president of the Tunisian Center for Global Security Studies, noted that the Tunisian military in the summer of 2013 felt pressure to intervene: "The street and conditions were calling for a coup. The people feared Ennahdha would install a new type of dictatorship. They wanted a coup, and events in Egypt sent a message that maybe it is possible that our army would do the same."⁴⁷ A former director general of military security agreed, noting that the warnings from opposition politicians to Ennahdha leaders to "look at Egypt" were an implicit "call for the military to intervene."⁴⁸

Fearing an Egyptian scenario, the troika government, and Marzouki in particular, pursued a series of measures designed to prevent a coup. The first order of business was choosing a replacement for Rachid Ammar as the chief of staff of the land army. In selecting a replacement, Marzouki sought to appoint a general from outside of Ammar's personal network and thus from outside the historically privileged regions. Mindful of the symbolism, Marzouki appointed Mohamed Salah Hamdi of Sidi Bouzid, where the revolution began in December 2010. Hamdi had also previously been punished by Ammar with an assignment as a military attaché in Libya in 2011, signaling to Marzouki that he would be unlikely to work with Ammar.

When opposition protests peaked in mid-August, Marzouki made further changes to the leadership of the military to ensure its loyalty. Each of these appointments followed the positive discrimination pattern of Hamdi, bringing in officers who originated from outside of Tunis and the Sahel, and outside of Ben Ali's and Ammar's personal networks. Bechir Bedoui of Bizerte became chief of staff of the air force; Nouri Ben Taous of Sfax—another former military attaché in Libya—became director general of military security; and Mohamed Nafti of Gafsa—formerly a military attaché in Egypt—became inspector general of the armed forces.

"The promotion of the generals from the regions was like transitional justice in the army," argued former presidential chief of staff Daimi. "The goal was not to make a gap between the regions, but rather because the officers from the interior regions were deprived of or banned from the high ranks. Marzouki gave them their deserved ranks, and when Hamdi was appointed, all of the mid-level officers from the interior regions said finally, the end of the privileging of the Sahel!"⁴⁹

In the words of retired Major Colonel Mohamed Ahmed, these appointments "marked an important turning point. Now it doesn't matter if you're from the Sahel or from the center, south, or north. It was a very personal position of Marzouki to mark a difference with the past."⁵⁰

However, while Marzouki's appointments signaled the end of favoritism toward the Sahel, they did not necessarily indicate that appointments were becoming more professional or meritocratic. The new leaders were still chosen, in some sense, for their political loyalties. Officers from the interior regions, just like electorates in these disadvantaged regions,⁵¹ were more likely to support the revolution and the troika. As a retired major colonel from the army pointed out, the top officers after the revolution appeared to be beholden to party instead of region.⁵²

Marzouki and the troika government pursued two other strategies to avoid an Egyptian scenario. First, the position of chief of staff of the armed forces was left vacant following Rachid Ammar's resignation, and remains so as of early 2016. Without a general to coordinate the army, navy, and air force, the military may be less effective, but it may also be less able to coordinate a coup, a trade-off that Tunisia's postrevolution leaders have thus far been willing to make.

Second, the troika government sought to alleviate friction with the military through substantive policy changes. It took a stronger stance on terrorism, labeling Ansar al-Sharia a terrorist organization on August 27, following its earlier ban on the organization's activities in May. Then, on August 29, the troika government at the NSC's suggestion established military zones along Tunisia's southern borders with Libya and Algeria, placing local police and customs officers under the military's command.⁵³

These changes, Daimi claimed, "guaranteed the professionalism" of Tunisia's armed forces, ensuring they continued to defend state institutions in the face of the implicit calls for a coup. When protesters attempted to storm the National Constituent Assembly in August and September, the military defended the building, even while some police officers openly defected to the side of the protesters.⁵⁴ As the opposition came to realize that the military would not intervene and thus an Egyptian scenario was not in the cards, it shifted gears, turning instead to negotiations mediated by civil society.

Arming the Army

As the political crisis subsided, Marzouki and the troika turned their attention again to national security. The growing terrorist threat forced the government to enhance the military's capabilities, increasing its budget, upgrading its weapons and equipment, and developing its international linkages, institutional capacity, and political influence. The growing material and political strength of the military suggests that the previous institutional arrangement—skewed heavily toward the police—is beginning to be recalibrated.

Consider first the military's budget. From 2011 to 2016, the budget of the Ministry of Defense has grown more quickly than any other ministry, increasing by an average of 21 percent each year (see table 1). What military officers were particularly bitter about under Ben Ali was how quickly the Ministry of the Interior's budget had grown during the 1990s and 2000s relative to the military's. This trend has reversed after the revolution: while the military still receives a smaller percentage of the general budget, its share has grown more quickly than that of the Interior Ministry. In 2011, the defense budget stood at just 56 percent of the Ministry of the Interior's, but just five years later the ratio has increased to 72 percent.

"Now when I meet a soldier or officer, the first thing he says is that 'we are very thankful for Mr. Marzouki for improving our situation,'" claimed Daimi. "We hear the opposite among the police—they say Marzouki cared for the military and not for us!"⁵⁵ According to retired General Said el-Kateb: "Without a doubt, things have improved. Ben Ali relied on the police. Now, each institution has seen its capabilities enhanced. The military has importance, the police has importance, the national guard has importance. Each has a unique mission to fulfill."⁵⁶

With trusted generals now at the helm, the troika felt comfortable supplying the armed forces with new weapons and equipment. A presidential spokesman recalled that Marzouki summoned the NSC in the fall of 2013 to discuss the military's needs in the Chaambi Mountains. At the top of the list were mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles. "Marzouki immediately called [then Turkish president Abdullah] Gul, who sent eight vehicles and began production for more right away."⁵⁷

After the NSC meeting, the number of defense contracts climbed steadily. In 2014, Tunisia signed two military contracts with U.S. companies for land cruisers and heavy-duty trucks. Since President Beji Caid Essebsi assumed office in 2015, Tunisia has signed an additional ten contracts with the United States, including for Black Hawk helicopters, armored personnel carriers, and Hellfire missiles.⁵⁸ Deliveries in 2015 from previous contracts included 52 Humvees, three patrol boats, and two C-130J transport planes.

The post-2011 transition has brought increased military-to-military cooperation with foreign countries. Tunisia ratified security cooperation agreements with the United Arab Emirates in October 2011, Turkey in October 2013, and Qatar in June 2014. Relations with the United States have also increased dramatically since the revolution. In April 2014, the United States hosted the first annual U.S.-Tunisia Strategic Dialogue and then tripled its military aid to Tunisia the following year. In July 2015, the United States designated Tunisia its sixteenth major non-NATO ally, a label that comes with "tangible privileges including eligibility for training, loans of equipment for cooperative research and development, and Foreign Military Financing for commercial leasing of certain defense articles," according to the U.S. State Department.⁵⁹

In addition, the Tunisian armed forces have enhanced their own production capabilities. The navy, for example, produced its first patrol boat in August 2015, symbolically named *Istiqlal*, meaning independence. "We aim to develop the military industry in Tunisia," noted Captain Zouhayr al-Joundil. "Today we produce a patroller ship, tomorrow, why not equipment for the army, the air force, or the joint services. This [will] give us the ability . . . to be self-sufficient for our military industry."⁶⁰

Governments after the revolution have also sought to enhance the military's institutional capacity. In November 2014, then president Marzouki rebranded the Directorate of Military Security as the Agency for Intelligence and Security for Defense, charging it with collecting intelligence on "potential threats to the armed forces and the security of the country in general."⁶¹ While the directorate had been collecting intelligence since its creation in 1964, this change gave it the legal jurisdiction to do so. The 2014 decree granted the agency financial independence from the armed forces, with President Essebsi providing it a starting budget of 1 million Tunisian dinars in the draft 2016 budget. While enhancing the military's intelligence capacity, postrevolution governments have also been keen to do this in line with democratic principles, consulting the Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces throughout the process.⁶²

Finally, the growing security threat has pushed Tunisian civilian leaders to appoint military officers to several civilian and security posts. Brigadier General Mohamed Meddeb, for instance, was appointed director general of customs by the troika government in 2012. Moreover, while only one military officer was appointed as a governor during Ben Ali's twenty-three-year reign, eleven officers have already assumed governorships after the revolution, and some for multiple terms in different governorates, especially in the interior and border regions where security threats are greatest. Other than in 2013 (when the troika feared the potential for a coup), military officers have comprised about 11 percent of new governors each year (see figure 3), a relatively high percentage considering that the Ministry of the Interior nominates candidates for governor.

These material and political developments suggest that the historically marginalized Tunisian military has begun to see its situation improve. Undoubtedly, the armed forces remain overextended and underequipped—their slow progress in the Chaambi Mountains is testament to that. But what has changed since the revolution is that the military is becoming a priority for politicians. Tunisia's major security threats have forced successive governments to devote increasing time and money to fund and equip the armed forces. As retired Major Colonel Hedi Kolsi observed: "The army was neglected in the time of Ben Ali, completely. After the revolution, everything has changed. The military has become valued by the authorities. From Marzouki until now, all military interests—equipment, weapons, logistical support, salaries—everything has improved."⁶³

Reparations for the Barraket Essahel Affair

The 2011 revolution has also brought major changes for those 244 individuals unjustly removed from the military in the 1991 Barraket Essahel affair, a symbolic recognition of the military's shifting fortunes. Following their expulsion from the armed forces, they were deprived of their salaries, access to military hospitals, and basic human rights. "The right to expression, to work, to a passport, to public life, even to freely see our friends and family," listed retired Colonel Amor Ben Romdhane. "All of our rights were stripped from us."⁶⁴

After the revolution, seventeen of these officers formed the Association of Justice for Military Veterans to lobby for their rights. They began by filing a case against Ben Ali, former interior minister Abdullah al-Qallal, and twelve others on charges of misusing power, using violence to extract false confessions, and imprisoning officers without a court judgment. In November 2011, a military court sentenced Ben Ali, al-Qallal, and four other defendants to four to five years in prison, which in April 2012 was reduced on appeal to two years. On June 23, 2012, on the armed forces' fifty-sixth anniversary, Marzouki delivered an official state apology for the Barraket Essahel affair, clearing the 244 individuals of any wrongdoing, and later hosted them at the presidential palace in December.

In June 2014, the National Constituent Assembly passed law 2014-28 returning to the officers their uniforms and elevating their ranks by two or three promotions, up to where they would have been had they not been expelled. Their pensions were also made commensurate with their new ranks. "With the rehabilitation of the group of military officers of Barraket Essahel," announced Marzouki after this law, "Tunisia today turns a dark chapter in its history and in the history of the relationship between the state, the army, and human rights."⁶⁵

"After the revolution, a new era began, everything has changed," exclaimed retired Major Colonel Ali Hajji, who was among those expelled in 1991. "We have gotten back many of our rights during these four years."⁶⁶ In a further symbolic act, Major Colonel Hedi Kolsi, who had been similarly expelled in 1991, was appointed the head of a regional branch of the Truth and Dignity Commission in 2015.

For the officers of the Barraket Essahel affair, perhaps more so than for other Tunisians, the revolution has truly brought transitional justice. Moreover, as the 1991 incident signaled the beginning of the police's dominance over the military,⁶⁷ the official state apology for this event also represents, in some sense, an apology for the marginalization of the military under Ben Ali.

The Officers in Civil Society

Perhaps the sharpest break with the Ben Ali era has been the entrance of retired officers into Tunisia's robust civil society. Retired officers have taken an active role in educating the public and politicians about the military and its needs, providing the armed forces with a new lobby to advance their interests in a democratic age.

In part, this has taken place through retired officers who have capitalized on the newfound freedom of association to form civil society organizations. Besides the Association of Justice for Military Veterans, these include the Association of Former Officers of the National Army (formed in March 2011), the Tunisian Center for Global Security Studies (November 2013), and the Association of Veterans of the National Defense Institute (July 2015).

Whether through these organizations or as individuals, retired officers have played an important role in advancing and shaping the public debate over the armed forces. “The best thing we got after the revolution is the liberty of expression,” praised retired General Said el-Kateb. “Sometimes I write articles for [the magazine] *Leaders*, sometimes I am invited to conferences at the Temimi Foundation [for Scientific Research and Information]. We were not permitted to do this under the regime of Ben Ali.”⁶⁸

During the drafting of Tunisia’s postrevolution constitution, for instance, a former director general of military security advised members of the National Constituent Assembly on article 9, about military conscription, and article 36, about the right to trade unions and the right to strike, particularly the exceptions carved out for the army and security forces. He was also sought out by two presidential candidates in 2014 for advice on defense policy. Likewise, former inspector general of the armed forces Mohamed Ali el-Bekri advised Beji Caid Essebsi during his presidential campaign. In February 2015, retired brigadier general Mohamed Meddeb published a book with *Leaders* containing several specific proposals for reforming the armed forces, including cutting down on draft dodging, appointing a chief of staff of the armed forces, and extricating the military from basic police functions.⁶⁹

Among these retired officers’ top proposals is the development of a comprehensive defense policy to be produced by the Ministry of Defense and then approved by the parliament. In February 2015, the Association of Former Officers of the National Army held a conference putting forth this proposal, pressuring the Ministry of Defense to then reach out to its international partners for advice on how to draft a white paper on defense policy. Although terrorist attacks in March, June, and November 2015 have pushed the government back into a reactionary mode, retired officers remained optimistic that the Ministry of Defense would soon present a white paper to parliament for review.

While these retired officers will have to be cautious not to drown out civilian voices on military matters, most observers contend that their entrance into civil society represents a healthy phenomenon for Tunisia’s young democracy. Given the country’s history, and in particular the military’s minor role and Ben Ali’s personalized rule over its affairs, there are few experts let alone politicians who are knowledgeable about the military or military matters. Retired officers can play a critical role in expanding public knowledge about “the institution of the military, the needs of this period, and how to transform an institution that traditionally occupied a very marginalized role in the country to the risks and challenges for the military today,” as one retired major colonel put it.⁷⁰

Maxime Poulin, deputy head of the Tunis office of the Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, suggests that the entrance of retired officers into civil society “could have a positive impact. There are shortcomings in terms of policy planning within the government and also in civil society. These organizations of retired officers still have trust and connections with the Ministry of Defense, and they could eventually act as government think tanks on security issues while officials are caught up for the moment at managing urgent daily matters.”⁷¹

The involvement of retired officers in civil society also provides the institution with a new lobby to help prevent a future president from once again sidelining the military. Given President Beji Caid Essebsi’s links to the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes, some retired officers have expressed concerns that the progress the military has made following the revolution may be rolled back. Some fear a return to the old patterns of marginalizing the military and privileging the officers from the Sahel. Yet these officers remain optimistic that in this new era of freedom they will at least be able to fight back. Said retired Major Colonel Mohamed Ahmed: “If all appointments come from the Sahel, for instance, nobody will stay silent—we will say something about it! With the new constitution, new parliament, and new liberty of the press, things have changed, and we will at least denounce a reversion to the old ways.”⁷²

Conclusion

The ousting of Ben Ali in 2011 initiated a restructuring of the Tunisian polity away from a police state. The military, historically underfunded and underequipped, has begun to see its position improve. Tunisia’s growing security threats have forced successive governments to increase the military’s budget, equipment, international linkages, institutional capacity, and political influence. At the same time, retired officers in civil society have pushed Tunisia’s leaders to recognize past injustices toward the military as well as to consider further reforms to make the armed forces more effective. The enhancement of the

strength and influence of the military in the last five years suggests that the historical imbalance between the military and police is beginning to be corrected.

As of early 2016, President Beji Caïd Essebsi seems to support this trend, despite his past links to Bourguiba and Ben Ali. How far Essebsi continues on this path, however, depends on a number of factors, prominent among them the reactions of the yet-to-be-reformed⁷³ Ministry of the Interior and the powerful police unions, which appear envious of the military's growth⁷⁴ Essebsi may give in to these unions, but he could conceivably use the strengthened armed forces to counterbalance the Ministry of the Interior and even put pressure on the police to initiate internal reforms.

Essebsi could additionally prioritize reforms designed to maximize the efficacy of the armed forces. A comprehensive defense strategy, formulated in consultation with civil society, parliament, and international partners, would help guide budgetary and procurement decisions. Providing the NSC and the military adviser with a permanent staff would enhance their institutional capacity and enable a shift from reactive to more forward-looking policymaking.

Actors interested in democracy may naturally fear the growing influence of the military in the new Tunisia. Retired officers, at least in interviews, have expressed deep respect for the principle of civilian control over the military and the concept of democracy. In encouraging further restructuring among the Tunisian security apparatuses, however, Western governments and nongovernmental organizations should be conscious of managing the rise of the military in accordance with democratic principles. At least three reforms seem worthwhile in this regard. The first is to enhance the capacity of the parliament to oversee the armed forces. The second is to reform the system of military justice, which will soon receive a critical test when the officers of the Barraket Essahel affair file a case against those military officers they believe were complicit in the affair. The final reform is to develop civilian nongovernmental organizations working on defense policy to compete with the associations of retired officers, ensuring they do not achieve a monopoly over the public discourse on military matters.

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all quotes come from private interviews conducted by the author in Tunisia between August and December, 2015. This quote is from an interview with retired Major Colonel Hedi Kolsi, Sfax, September 21, 2015.

² See, for example, Risa Brooks, "Abandoned at the Palace: Why the Tunisian Military Defected from the Ben Ali Regime in January 2011," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 2 (2013): 205–20; Hicham Bou Nassif, "A Military Besieged: The Armed Forces, the Police, and the Party in Ben Ali's Tunisia, 1987–2011," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47 (2015): 65–87; and Sharan Grewal, "Why Tunisia Didn't Follow Egypt's Path," *Monkey Cage* (blog), *Washington Post*, February 4, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/02/04/why-egypt-didnt-follow-tunisias-path/>.

³ Although exclusively Tunisian, the Beylical Guard was still considered a foreign army of the Ottoman Empire.

⁴ Interview with a former minister of defense who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 13, 2015. This minister claimed to have found Ben Ali's recommendation from the Neo-Destour Party to study in Saint-Cyr while in office.

⁵ After two officers that were held over from the French army, officers from the Bourguiba promotion held the military's most powerful position, the chief of staff of the land army, until 1991. These officers included Abdelhamid Escheikh, Mohamed Gzara, Youssef Barakat, and Said el-Kateb. In addition, officers from the Bourguiba cohort populated the second-most powerful position, the director general of military security, from its creation in 1964 until 1988. These included Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, Boubaker Balma, Ammar Kherigi, and Youssef Ben Slimane.

⁶ L. B. Ware, "Ben Ali's Constitutional Coup in Tunisia," *Middle East Journal* 42, no. 4 (1988): 594.

⁷ Ben Ali's quick rise in the military—becoming the first director general of military security in 1964, less than eight years after entering the service—is often attributed to his 1963 marriage to the daughter of Mohamed el-Kefi, the military's commander in chief from 1956 to 1964. El-Kefi was a Tunisian officer in the French army who had provided Tunisian guerillas with ammunition during the independence movement. Interview with retired Colonel and former governor Boubaker Ben Kraiem, Tunis, December 8, 2015.

⁸ Bourguiba was in fact wary of Ben Ali, and on two occasions sent him abroad when he felt Ben Ali was becoming too strong: first as a military attaché in Morocco in 1974, and then as ambassador to Poland in 1980.

⁹ Ben Ali's coup on November 7, 1987, appears to have been motivated in part to preempt a separate coup attempt on November 8 by a group alternatively known as the "Group of 87," the "November 8 Group," the "Security Group," or the self-styled "National Salvation Group." This group of at least 120 individuals brought together civilians predominantly affiliated with the Islamic Tendency Movement and officers from the military, police, and customs. Interviews with three military officers from this group, Tunis, November 2, November 24, and November 25, 2015.

¹⁰ Interview with retired Major Colonel Ali Hajji, Tozeur, October 24, 2015.

¹¹ These were Youssef Barakat (who became chief of staff of the armed forces), Said el-Kateb (who became chief of staff of the land army), Ridha Attar (who became chief of staff of the air force), and Youssef Ben Slimane (who remained as director general of military security). See decrees 87-1289 through 87-1295 issued in November 1987.

¹² See decree 87-1297 issued on November 27, 1987 (amended by decrees 88-251 and 90-1195). The other members of the National Security Council stipulated by law were the president; the prime minister; the ministers of defense, the interior, and foreign affairs; and the director general of national security.

¹³ Ware, *Constitutional Coup*, 593.

¹⁴ Interview with a retired major colonel (air force) who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 20, 2015.

¹⁵ A former director of internal security in the armed forces noted that a meeting at Barraket Essahel as described in the confessions of Captain Ahmed Amara would have been impossible given the small size of the suspected house and the presence of a National Guard office next to it. While some of the 244 individuals who were removed may have been sympathetic to Ennahdha, there appears to be little evidence of a coup plot. Interview with a retired major colonel (army) who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 26, 2015.

¹⁶ See also Derek Lutterbeck, "Tool of Rule: The Tunisian Police Under Ben Ali," *Journal of North African Studies* 20, no. 5 (2015): 813–31.

¹⁷ Interview with retired General Said el-Kateb, Tunis, November 6, 2015.

¹⁸ The rank of major colonel (*ameed* in Arabic) was created by Ben Ali to ease the backlog of colonels waiting to become generals. In the Tunisian armed forces, the rank of general is generally granted only to those occupying one of the top five positions: the chiefs of staff of the army, air force, or navy; the director general of military security; or the inspector general of the armed forces.

¹⁹ Interview with a retired major colonel (army) who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 26, 2015.

²⁰ The Supreme Council of the Armies consists of the five senior positions of the Tunisian military: the chiefs of staff of the land army, air force, and navy; the director general of military security; and the inspector general of the armed forces. After appointing officers from the Bourguiba promotion to these positions, Ben Ali appointed sixteen other officers to these positions over the course of his presidency. Six of these sixteen (38 percent) hailed from either Tunis or the Sahel.

²¹ Interview with retired Major Colonel Mohamed Ahmed, Tunis, October 17, 2015.

²² Interview with a retired major colonel (army) who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 26, 2015.

²³ Interview with a former director general for military security who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 21, 2015. This pattern appears to have begun even under Bourguiba. See L. B. Ware, "The Role of the Tunisian Military in the Post-Bourguiba Era," *Middle East Journal* 39, no. 1 (1985): 38–39.

²⁴ The rumor that Rachid Ammar refused Ben Ali's order to fire on civilians was created by Tunisian blogger Yassine Ayari on January 7, 2011, and subsequently picked up by major news outlets. On July 17, Ayari admitted that he made up this rumor in order to try to force the army to defect from Ben Ali. See Mehdi Farhat, "Yassine Ayari: 'L'armée n'a jamais reçu l'ordre de tirer'" [Yassine Ayari: 'The army never

received the order to fire'], *Slate Afrique*, July 20, 2011, <http://www.slateafrique.com/15009/yassine-ayari-revolution-tunisie-blogueur-rachid-ammar-armee>.

²⁵ Interview with a former minister of defense who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 13, 2015.

²⁶ David D. Kirkpatrick, "Chief of Tunisian Army Pledges His Support for 'the Revolution,'" *New York Times*, January 24, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/25/world/africa/25tunis.html>.

²⁷ Interview with Fathi Jerbi, vice president of the Wafa movement, Tunis, September 17, 2015.

²⁸ Interview with a retired brigadier general (army) who did not wish to be named, Tunis, November 5, 2015.

²⁹ Interview with retired Major Colonel Mahmoud Mezoughi, Tunis, October 9, 2015.

³⁰ Interview with retired General Mohamed Ali el-Bekri, Tunis, November 28, 2015.

³¹ See law 6-2011 dated December 16, 2011, related to the temporary organization of public powers. Author's unofficial translation.

³² See article 77 of the 2014 constitution. Author's unofficial translation.

³³ Interview with former prime minister Hamadi Jebali, Sousse, December 17, 2015.

³⁴ There are several plausible reasons for why Ammar sided with Jebali: Ennahdha was the stronger party in the troika; Marzouki had wanted Ammar removed; and perhaps, as many interlocutors were quick to note, because Jebali and Ammar both hailed from the Sahel.

³⁵ President Marzouki also claimed to have not been informed of the extradition ahead of time. Prime Minister Jebali claimed that he sent a letter through official channels to the presidency, but that the president's office was unable to reach President Marzouki, who was on an official trip in the south of Tunisia. Interview with former prime minister Hamadi Jebali, Sousse, December 17, 2015.

³⁶ Interview with Ghassen Marzouki (CPR), Tunis, August 5, 2015.

³⁷ In September 2012, President Marzouki's adviser Ayoub Massoudi received a four-month suspended sentence for "denigrating the army," a charge filed by General Ammar in response to Massoudi's accusation that Ammar did not inform Marzouki of the Baghdadi Mahmudi extradition.

³⁸ "Marzouki nomme Brahim Ouechtati, conseiller chargé des affaires militaires" [Marzouki names Brahim Ouechtati advisor for military affairs], *Business News*, September 22, 2012, <http://www.businessnews.com.tn/Marzouki-nomme-Brahim-Ouechtati,-conseiller-charge-des-affaires-militaires,520,33574,3>.

³⁹ Interview with former presidential spokesman Adnen Mansar, Tunis, September 22, 2015.

⁴⁰ Interview with former presidential chief of staff Imed Daimi, Tunis, September 22, 2015.

⁴¹ Rachid Ammar was wearing two hats: the chief of staff of the armed forces and the chief of staff of the land army.

⁴² Interview with former presidential chief of staff Imed Daimi, Tunis, September 22, 2015.

⁴³ Interview with a retired major colonel (army) who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 26, 2015.

⁴⁴ Interview with former director general for military security who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 21, 2015.

⁴⁵ Mohamed Abbou denied being instructed by or even informing Marzouki that he was going to call for Ammar's resignation. Interview with Mohamed Abbou, Tunis, September 18, 2015.

⁴⁶ Interview with former presidential chief of staff Imed Daimi, Tunis, September 22, 2015.

⁴⁷ Interview with retired Major Colonel Mokhtar Ben Nasr, Tunis, August 27, 2015.

⁴⁸ Interview with a former director general for military security who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 21, 2015.

⁴⁹ Interview with former presidential chief of staff Imed Daimi, Tunis, September 22, 2015.

⁵⁰ Interview with retired Major Colonel Mohamed Ahmed, Tunis, October 17, 2015.

⁵¹ See Chantal Berman and Elizabeth Nugent, "Defining Political Choices: Tunisia's Second Democratic Elections from the Ground Up" (Center for Middle East Policy Analysis Papers #38, Brookings Institution, May 2015).

⁵² Interview with a retired Major Colonel (army) who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 26, 2015.

⁵³ See article 5 of decree 2013-230 issued on August 29, 2013.

⁵⁴ Mohamed Beldi, media officer of the largest police union, the National Syndicate for the Interior Security Forces, eagerly showed the author video and pictures of the police taking the side of the protesters in August 2013. Interview with Beldi, Tunis, September 22, 2015.

⁵⁵ Interview with former presidential chief of staff Imed Daimi, Tunis, September 22, 2015.

⁵⁶ Interview with retired General Said el-Kateb, Tunis, November 6, 2015.

⁵⁷ Interview with former presidential spokesman Adnen Mansar, Tunis, September 22, 2015.

⁵⁸ Military contracts with U.S. companies valued at \$7 million or more can be found at: <http://www.defense.gov/News/Contracts/Search/tunisia>.

⁵⁹ Office of the Spokesperson, "Designation of Tunisia as a Major Non-NATO Ally," press release, U.S. State Department, July 10, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/07/244811.htm>.

⁶⁰ "Tunisia unveils new Navy frigate 'Istiqlal,'" TVC News, <http://www.tvcnews.tv> (site discontinued).

⁶¹ See decree 2014-4208 issued November 20, 2014.

⁶² Interview with Maxime Poulin, deputy head of office, DCAF Tunis, in Tunis, November 11, 2015.

⁶³ Interview with retired Major Colonel Hedi Kolsi, Sfax, September 21, 2015.

⁶⁴ Interview with retired Colonel Amor Ben Romdhane, Tunis, November 4, 2015.

⁶⁵ "Marzouki: 'With the Rehabilitation of the Military of Barraket Essahel, Tunisia Turns Dark Chapter in Its History,'" Agence Tunis Afrique Presse, July 24, 2014, <http://www.tap.info.tn/en/index.php/politics2/19914-marzouki-with-the-rehabilitation-of-the-military-of-barraket-essahel-tunisia-turns-dark-chapter-in-its-history>.

⁶⁶ Interview with retired Major Colonel Ali Hajji, Tozeur, October 24, 2015.

⁶⁷ Regarding the Barraket Essahel affair, interviewees were most upset about the fact that the military officers were questioned, tortured, and humiliated by the Ministry of the Interior, despite the Ministry of Defense having military courts and a Directorate of Military Security to conduct the investigation itself.

⁶⁸ Interview with retired General Said el-Kateb, Tunis, November 6, 2015.

⁶⁹ See Mohamed Meddeb, *Réflexions Sur Défense & Sécurité Nationale: Quelles Réformes Pour l'ère Démocratique?* [Reflections on Defense and National Security: What Reforms for the Democratic Era?] (Tunis: Leaders, February 2015).

⁷⁰ Interview with a retired major colonel (army) who did not wish to be named, Tunis, October 26, 2015.

⁷¹ Interview with Maxime Poulin, deputy head of office, DCAF Tunis, in Tunis, November 11, 2015.

⁷² Interview with retired Major Colonel Mohamed Ahmed, Tunis, October 17, 2015.

⁷³ Yezid Sayigh, "Missed Opportunity: The Politics of Police Reform in Egypt and Tunisia," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 17, 2015; Fadil Aliriza, "Tunisia at Risk: Will Counter-terrorism

Undermine the Revolution?" Legatum Institute, November 2015.

⁷⁴ See, for instance, the statements by Issam Dardouri, president of the police union Tunisian Security and Citizenship accusing General Rachid Ammar of being a "cardboard hero" who "tried to demonize the security institution." Quoted from "Issam Dardouri: Rachid Ammar est un héros en carton" [Issam Dardouri: Rachid Ammar is a cardboard hero], *Tuniscopes*, November 9, 2015, <http://www.tuniscopes.com/article/81958/actualites/tunisie/ammar-dardouri-carton-280817>.

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Carnegie Middle East Center Emir Bechir Street, Lazarieh Tower
Bldg. No. 2026 1210, 5th flr.
Downtown Beirut, P.O.Box 11-1061
Riad El Solh, Lebanon

Phone
+961 1 99 15 91
Fax
+961 1 99 15 91

Contact By Email

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