



Stemming Tunisia's Authoritarian Drift

Middle East and North Africa Report N°180 | 11 January 2018

Translation from French

Headquarters

International Crisis Group

Avenue Louise 149 • 1050 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 2 502 90 38 • Fax: +32 2 502 50 38

brussels@crisisgroup.org

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
I. An-Nahda and Nida Tounes: Cooperation in Competition	1
II. Weakening Institutions	5
A. Reforms Adjourned Sine Die	5
B. Partisan Control of the Independent Administrative Bodies	7
C. An Increasingly Presidential Regime	8
III. To Establish the Constitution or Rewind?	12
A. The Dilemma of Political Decision-makers	12
B. Reviving an Authoritarian Regime: A Risky and Unrealistic Gamble	13
IV. Conclusion	16
APPENDICES	
A. Map of Tunisia.....	17
B. About the International Crisis Group	18
C. Crisis Group Reports and Briefings on the Middle East and North Africa since 2015....	19
D. Crisis Group Board of Trustees	21

Principal Findings

What's the issue? As the seventh anniversary of the 2011 Tunisian uprising approaches, the country is drifting back toward its old authoritarian reflexes. Much of this is due to the failure of nationalist and Islamist partners in Tunisia's coalition government to implement the January 2014 constitution.

Why does it matter? The authoritarian drift is accompanied by nostalgia for ex-President Ben Ali's misrule. Tunisia has a special responsibility to stand up to this tendency, to avoid new jihadist violence, to prevent a return to political polarisation and to sustain its role as the sole Arab state sticking to a peaceful, more democratic course since the 2011 Arab Uprisings.

What should be done? To prevent potential violence, Tunisia's leaders need to go forward, not backwards. They must refocus on strengthening institutions, the creation of a Constitutional court, the setting up of independent oversight bodies and the holding of much-delayed local elections in 2018.

Executive Summary

The ongoing efforts to maintain the parliamentary and government coalition between the nationalist Nida Tounes and the Islamist An-Nahda are delaying the implementation of Tunisia's constitution and weakening its institutions. As the economy falters, nostalgia is spreading for a strong state modelled on the former regime. But to strengthen the state and respond to unexpected turns of events, such as new large-scale jihadist attacks, out-of-control protests or the temporary or permanent absence of the president, the country must consolidate its institutions by respecting and implementing its constitution. The current drift toward authoritarianism has little chance of successfully establishing a Ben Ali-style regime, given the many socio-economic and political divisions and the newfound freedom enjoyed by the media over the past seven years. Any attempt to recreate an atmosphere of fear among the population would meet with fierce resistance. The government would not become any more effective and suppressed conflicts would end up resurfacing in more violent forms.

Since the legislative and presidential elections of late 2014, the parliamentary and government coalition led by Nida Tounes and An-Nahda has greatly alleviated political polarisation. But these two pivotal parties must surmount a number of challenges if they are to keep their coalition alive. As former enemies turned partners, they are struggling to conserve their political identity and internal cohesion; conflicts surface in line with the strengthening or weakening of their respective powers of negotiation within the partnership. The resulting tensions, against a backdrop of mutual mistrust, are contributing to an indefinite postponement of the reforms promised by the constitution: the establishment of a new Constitutional court, independent constitutional authorities, elected regional councils and increasing parliamentary autonomy.

Conversely, when the coalition is faring well, Nida Tounes and An-Nahda seek a political duopoly to the detriment of the parliament's autonomy and existing independent administrative institutions. Rached Ghannouchi, An-Nahda's president, and Béji Caïd Essebsi, the head of state and founder of Nida Tounes, who continues to stand in occasionally as party leader, are personalising the channels of political debate and crisis management. Essebsi in particular is presidentialising the regime and legitimising voices calling for amendments to the 2014 constitution to expand his prerogatives.

Meanwhile, the implementation of essential aspects of the 2014 constitution continues to face delays. The Constitutional court, designed to play a crucial role in case of a political and institutional crisis, has not yet been set up. The independent authorities embodying the principles of integrity, impartiality and neutrality, conceived in the afterglow of the 2010-2011 uprising to address the public administration's problems, are still non-existent, and the independent administrative bodies that have been established lack any real autonomy. Municipal elections likely to test the coalition (depending on the two dominant parties' performance at the ballot box, abstention levels, and the possible emergence of new political forces) and significantly increase the number of elected representatives have been postponed four times. The decentralisation process has become bogged down: it should have led to the election of regional

councils, but politicians and high-level public officials fear that it will weaken central government.

As the gap widens between constitutional principles and the current political reality, any discussion of constitutional amendments – as proposed by the head of state with the support of a number of political figures – would lead to a resumption of antagonisms at a time when support is growing for authoritarian regimes both in Tunisia and around the world. Opposition by the Islamist party (the main parliamentary grouping) to all constitutional amendments that question the regime's parliamentary nature would trigger a more violent polarisation than that seen in 2013. If it agrees to changes, the centralisation of power in the hands of the presidency could significantly harden the regime and create more problems than solutions. It is not worth opening this Pandora's box.

Tunisia is entering a period of electoral uncertainty, with municipal elections scheduled for 2018, and legislative and presidential elections for 2019. The current coalition, which theoretically could cede its place to a new majority, should accelerate the reforms planned as part of the constitution, while improving conditions for a peaceful handover of political power. It remains essential to:

- ❑ hold municipal elections in 2018 and, in the short term, to ensure the proper functioning of the Independent High Electoral Commission (ISIE), responsible for organising these elections, as well as the legislative and presidential elections in 2019;
- ❑ set up the Constitutional court as soon as possible;
- ❑ create fully empowered independent constitutional authorities;
- ❑ and increase parliament's financial and administrative autonomy.

Tunis/Brussels, 11 January 2018

Stemming Tunisia's Authoritarian Drift

I. **An-Nahda and Nida Tounes: Cooperation in Competition**

In February 2015, a number of Nida Tounes militants and voters viewed the establishment of a coalition with the Islamist party An-Nahda as a betrayal, which, in their eyes, was incompatible with the identity of their political group.¹ Initially, this weakened Nida Tounes, which split into two factions competing to control the party. On the one hand, there was the anti-Islamist-leaning faction led by Mohsen Marzouk, the electoral campaign manager of the president of the republic and leader of Nida Tounes, Béji Caïd Essebsi, who had been promoted to the post of minister-counsellor to the president at the beginning of January 2015. On the other, Hamed Béji Caïd Essebsi, the president's son, led the other faction, which supported both the alliance and consensus with the Islamist group.² The party's officials joined the latter group, believing that the president had broken his word by excluding them from the executive power.

In January 2016, the latter faction won the struggle, resulting in the division of Nida Tounes, the departure of Mohsen Marzouk – who then founded his own break-away political group (Machrou Tounes – Project for Tunisia) – and weaker political clout in Parliament for Nida Tounes, dropping from 89 MPs at the beginning of 2015 to 56 at the end of 2017.

Unlike Nida Tounes, An-Nahda was not divided by its entry into the coalition, even historic splits resurfaced. Internal dissent increased as a result of its efforts to make its image more compatible with the “secularist” identity of the alliance, particularly under the influence of regional and international trends that were unfavourable to political organisations borne of the Muslim Brotherhood movement.³ An-Nahda was compelled to make a greater number of concessions than Nida Tounes and to demonstrate its loyalty to its coalition partner more actively. This generated numerous conflicts in the party, taking up both the time and energy of most of its officials.⁴

¹ Nida Tounes (Call for Tunisia) is a political party originally constituted in April 2012 and led by Béji Caïd Essebsi. It groups supporters of the old regime, worker's party supporters and liberals, who feared the lack of a political structure able to challenge the disciplined Islamists of An-Nahda (Renaissance Party), then at the head of the governmental alliance known as the Troika (2011-2014). See also Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°44, *Elections in Tunisia: Old Wounds, New Fears*, 19 December 2014.

² In 2015, several members of this faction even mentioned the creation of a political front justified by the joint heritage of Abdelaziz Thaalbi, founder of the national movement in the 1920s. He was presented as a blend between the secularist and Western philosophy of Nida Tounes and the Arabo-Islamism of An-Nahda. See Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°168, *Tunisia: Transitional Justice and the Fight against Corruption*, 3 May 2016.

³ Mourad S., “Tunisie: Recomposition du paysage politique, naissance d'une coordination entre Nidaa Tounes, Ennahdha et UPL”, *Tunisie numérique* (www.tunisienumerique.com), 11 November 2017.

⁴ Generally speaking, the conflicts are related to the imposition of the new political approach that aims to centralise power around Rached Ghannouchi and his followers, excluding other historic militants. Crisis Group interviews, An-Nahda militants and sympathisers, Tunis, 2016-2017.

In May 2016, during its 10th congress, An-Nahda adopted a new strategy, bringing the party's focus onto strictly political activities (ie on gaining power and exercising it), and theoretically delegating its cultural, social and religious activities to a series of associations loosely connected to its political core. The party stepped up the number of declarations it made concerning its move away from political Islam, its "separation of politics and religion" and its shift away from the "Islamist" label, adopting instead that of "Muslim democrats".⁵

In order to make joint work at the Assembly and Council of Ministers easier, the Islamist party's leaders handed higher-ranking posts in the party and government to more discreet and consensual activists over historic militants.⁶ The grassroots felt marginalised and constantly denounced the leadership's frequently authoritarian attitude, its downplaying of the Islamist identity of the party, its subordinate stance to Nida Tounes and its eager engagement – and in some cases, collaboration – with representatives of the old regime who had been involved in the eradication of the party during the first half of the 1990s.⁷

The memory of ideological confrontations and repression between Islamists and anti-Islamists has fuelled the fears shared by both main parties of the coalition. In Nida Tounes, high-profile activists and intellectuals from the Arab nationalist far-left or from the Democratic Constitutional Rally ("RCD", former President Ben Ali's dissolved party), who had experienced the radical Islamist and "fundamentalist" period of An-Nahda during the 1980s, have fed these concerns.⁸ In An-Nahda, the trauma of mass arrests and torture – backed or endorsed at the time by individuals who are now members of Nida Tounes – is still very vivid, particularly among grassroots militants.⁹

These mutual preoccupations resurface dramatically whenever one or the other party increases its negotiating power in the coalition. Any imbalance of power between the two political organisations fuels the (often irrational) fear of a collapse of the alliance. Moreover, each party's negotiating power – based on their respective electoral weight – varies depending on sudden incidents that disrupt the coalition's normal operation.

Thus, whenever a jihadist attack hits the country (as occurred three times in 2015), Islamist and anti-Islamist polarisation plays out in the media landscape, although ordinary citizens pay much less attention to it than they did during the second half of 2013. An-Nahda has fewer relays in the press than the anti-Islamists (far-left, Arab nationalists, Nida Tounes dissidents or even members of said party) do. With the backing of supporters of the coalition who are influential in the media, it has nonetheless managed to dampen the aftershock of every attack, countering accusations of

⁵ Frédéric Bobin, "Rached Ghannouchi: Il n'y a plus de justification à l'islam politique en Tunisie", *Le Monde*, 19 May 2016.

⁶ Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°177, *Blocked Transition: Corruption and Regionalism in Tunisia*, 10 May 2017.

⁷ Crisis Group interviews, Former RCD leader, An-Nahda militants, Tunis, October-November 2017.

⁸ Sami A. Abou Sahlieh, "Le mouvement tunisien de la tendance islamique, la loi islamique et les droits de l'homme", *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, Vol. XXXV, 1996.

⁹ Crisis Group interviews, Psychologists specialised in torture-related treatment, An-Nahda militants, Tunis, October-November 2017.

laxity or even complicity with jihadist violence under the Troika (2011-2014), thus demonstrating the coalition's ability to reduce polarisation.

However, every campaign that accuses the Islamist party of bearing responsibility for jihadist violence puts it on the defensive.¹⁰ An-Nahda's leader, Rached Ghannouchi, then taps into the fears of its grassroots militants to justify the need for the alliance, which "protects the existence of the party", as well as the support for President Essebsi's initiatives, presented as the last remaining bulwark against those wishing to eradicate the party.¹¹

It is true that An-Nahda benefits from the lack of internal consistency and repeated crises in Nida Tounes, and sometimes even contributes covertly to them.¹² Thus, at the beginning of 2016, the resignation of 22 members of Nida Tounes (out of a total of 86) from the party and parliamentary bloc caused it to lose its majority to An-Nahda at the Assembly (69 members). In the wake of this event, Ghannouchi, invited to the Nida Tounes congress, took the floor and compared Tunisia to a bird, with An-Nahda and Nida Tounes acting as its wings.¹³

Yet, despite the fact that An-Nahda's leverage within the alliance nominally increased, it is limited by criteria defined by Essebsi in agreement with Ghannouchi, who "constantly fears that the head of state will turn against him", as an opposition party official from Ettayar ("Democratic Current") concluded.¹⁴ As its support from abroad seemed weak, An-Nahda has opted to protect its clientelist and regionalist balance with the non-Islamist political forces, which provided it with a minority position in trade bodies, trade unions, the security forces, banking institutions, public enterprises and private oligopolies.¹⁵

An-Nahda's leadership is indeed heavily affected by the degradation of the international and regional context for all political groups born of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. The election of Donald Trump in the U.S.; changes in the military balance in Libya, which had shifted to Field Marshall Haftar, supported by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt; the 'wait-and-see' stance of Turkey and Algeria, both focused on their domestic issues; and the diplomatic and economic offensive against Qatar, a close ally of the Islamist party, are just a few examples of these unfavourable geopolitical reconfigurations. Combined with national political constraints, these prevented

¹⁰ This was also the case at the end of December 2016, in the aftermath of an attack in Berlin perpetrated by a Tunisian national. As a result, the imminent return of jihadists from conflict zones back to Tunisia was vehemently denounced. In November 2017, a campaign accusing the Islamist party of having actively participated in sending Tunisian fighters to conflict zones was launched. "Tunisie: Après Issam Dardouri, Leila Chettaoui apporte des précisions sur l'implication d'Ennahdha", Direct Info (directinfo.webmanagercenter.com), 22 November 2017.

¹¹ Crisis Group interviews, An-Nahda members and sympathisers, politicians, community activists, Tunis, 2015-2017.

¹² Crisis Group interviews, An-Nahda leader, community activists, Tunis, Kasserine, Medenine, 2015-2017.

¹³ Aymen Gharbi, "Tunisie: Quand la métaphore de l'oiseau de Rached Ghannouchi est tournée en dérision", Huffington Post Maghreb (www.huffpostmaghreb.com), 12 January 2016.

¹⁴ Crisis Group interview, Democratic Current leader, Tunis, November 2017. The Democratic Current is a political party founded in May 2013 by Mohamed Abbou, a former leader of the Congress for the Republic (CPR), a party led by former President of the republic Moncef Marzouki. It is represented by three members in parliament.

¹⁵ Crisis Group Report, *Blocked Transition*, op. cit.

An-Nahda from fully benefiting from Nida Tounes' weaknesses, making that the party's bargaining power remain below its electoral and political weight in the alliance.¹⁶

Despite their rivalry, as pivotal parties in the coalition, Nida Tounes and An-Nahda have sometimes acted as a duopoly. On several occasions, Ghannouchi supported the draft law of the president of the republic on economic and financial reconciliation, despite vivid criticism against the bill.¹⁷ In some municipalities, the two parties defined their polling lists so as to ensure only one of the two parties would win. They agreed to support a single independent list and in 2016, they discussed the option of openly establishing joint electoral lists.

In addition, the two groups distribute posts in regional and local administrations (which are strategic in terms of patronage for the following electoral cycle) among themselves.¹⁸ Thus, at the end of 2017, three quarters of the country's governors and delegates were either members or supporters of Nida Tounes.¹⁹ The rest was shared by An-Nahda activists or supporters, and to a lesser degree, independents and members of the main trade union confederation, the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT).²⁰ The two parties also place loyal supporters at the head of public and semi-public companies and institutions, including at the public broadcasting service, where Nida Tounes and An-Nahda share the management of the various channels and are consequently able to influence their agenda.

¹⁶ Indeed, following the two last cabinet changes (Chahed I in September 2016 and Chahed II in September 2017), An-Nahda increased its portfolio (six ministries and state secretariats out of a total of 36), gaining more ground in the ministries dealing with economic matters. However, the most important directorates of ministries relating to national sovereignty (ie defence, interior and foreign affairs) seem to be reserved for non-Islamists, in accordance with the agreements struck by Essebsi et Ghannouchi. Crisis Group interviews, An-Nahda leaders, top civil servants, community activists, Tunis, 2015-2017.

¹⁷ Eric Gobe, "La Tunisie en 2015: La présidentialisation de l'impuissance politique?", *L'année du Maghreb*, N°15 (2016), pp. 281-307.

¹⁸ On the legal level, these nominations are put forward by the ministry concerned – in this case, the interior ministry because it is the higher authority for officials in the regional and local administrations – and following deliberations at the Council of Ministers. The president of the republic is informed thereof. In practice, the heads of government usually draw up a list of candidates in partnership with the main coalition forces, that they then communicate to the interior ministry and to the president of the republic for amendments. See Law 2015-33 of 17 August 2015, setting forth the high-ranking civil servant employment in accordance with Article 92 of the constitution.

¹⁹ Since 2016, due to the lack of elected municipalities, the governors are also responsible for special delegations (provisional municipal councils).

²⁰ Since August 2016 and the signature of the Carthage Agreement, the workers' trade union has had more influence on the choice of governors and delegates. The distribution of posts also takes regional balance into account. The regional origin of the families of the administrative officials is important, and does not necessarily correspond to the governorate to which they are assigned.

II. Weakening Institutions

A. *Reforms Adjourned Sine Die*

The tensions at the heart of the coalition and its component parties is significantly slowing down the implementation of reforms set forth in the constitution, thus weakening state institutions. Moreover, the bolstering of conditions for rotation of power is a laborious exercise for both parties in the coalition due to a lack of mutual trust.

The parties struggled to set up the legal and institutional framework for the organisation of the upcoming electoral cycle (Electoral Law and Independent High Authority for Elections – ISIE). Indeed, they were, and still are, worried that as a result, their current partner will become their enemy, forming a majority and excluding them. An-Nahda supporters often feel concerned that Nida Tounes, by gaining power alone, would corner them into an opposition role and gradually erode its influence in collaboration with the security forces (in large part anti-Islamist).²¹ On the other hand, many Nida Tounes militants are preoccupied that An-Nahda will impose its ideological hegemony on a readily conservative Tunisian society and that it will disturb the socio-economic balance between the various regions of the country to the benefit of the emerging elite, namely from the south of the country.²²

The disputes between An-Nahda and Nida Tounes have contributed to blocking the establishment of the Constitutional court, a pivotal institution in the event of a major crisis. The parliamentary majority has failed to strike a compromise on the nomination of four of its members to the Assembly and has been unable to elect the president of the High Judicial Council (CSM), entrusted with the selection of another four members.²³ The Provisional Authority for the Review of the Constitutionality of Draft Laws is currently fulfilling the main role of the future Constitutional court, but it does not hold the court's other prerogatives, which are fundamental in exceptional cases, ie, terminating the president's term of office as a result of a clear violation of the constitution, arbitration in cases of conflicts of competences between heads of state and government, and determining the provisional or definitive vacancy of the post of president of the republic.²⁴

Partisan friction has also contributed to delay the vote on the electoral law for municipal elections, initially scheduled for the end of 2016 but repeatedly postponed. Negotiations on the next regional council elections,²⁵ aimed at pushing forward the decentralisation process, have also been adjourned *sine die*. A number of non-

²¹ Crisis Group interviews, An-Nahda and Nida Tounes militants, trade unionists, high-ranking civil servants at the interior ministry, journalists, Tunis, 2017.

²² Crisis Group Report, *Blocked Transition*, op. cit.

²³ Crisis Group interviews, lawyers, Tunis, October 2017.

²⁴ Organic Law N°2014-14 of 18 April 2014 concerning the Provisional Authority for the Review of the Constitutionality of Draft Laws. See also Articles 80, 84 and 101 of the Tunisian constitution. Crisis Group interview, lawyer and community activist, Tunis, November 2017. And see the Tunisian constitution of 26 January 2014.

²⁵ Indeed, the constitution sets forth the establishment of elected regional councils. See the Tunisian constitution of 26 January 2014. Crisis Group interviews, journalists, An-Nahda sympathisers, Tunis, May 2017. See also "Samia Abbou: Nidaa Tounes et Ennahdha ont peur des élections municipales", Shems FM (www.shemsfm.net), 24 January 2017.

Islamist politicians and higher officials fear this process, believing that the central powers are too weak to support it.²⁶

The local elections are politically important, which explains the disputes that they generate. In addition to strengthening democratic processes locally by significantly increasing the number of elected officials (approximately 7,150 in the entire republic), they may have a significant impact on the coalition members' negotiating powers. If An-Nahda wins a high number of municipalities, it could request a ministerial reshuffle that would better correspond to its new electoral weight.

Moreover, these elections would enable the winning parties to consolidate their patronage networks, and consequently their voter base, in order to fare better in the national election cycle at the end of 2019 (parliamentary and presidential elections). To be sure, they will not be able to launch true local development policies, due to the lack of financial autonomy and chronic shortage of means in the municipalities.²⁷ But they could, for example, make use of the former RCD networks that are very powerful in rural areas, provide social housing and lease municipal farming land to their supporters or approve urban planning projects that raise the value of the surrounding land in their favour.²⁸

In February 2017, an increase in the belief that Nida Tounes and several peripheral parties could win the elections in a large number of municipalities, as well as the reiteration of Algeria's support of a "reconciliation" and "consensus" in Tunisia, permitted the adoption of the electoral law organising the municipal elections. The disputes then shifted to the control of the management of the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE).²⁹ In May 2017, this pushed the ISIE's president, Chafik Sarsar, to resign, which he attributed to excessive political pressure.³⁰ His post remained vacant until 14 November 2017, date on which the Assembly elected a new and more consensual president, Mohamed Tlili Mansri.

Consequently, in September 2017, the local elections were adjourned once more. An-Nahda accepted this,³¹ despite the discontent of its grassroots militants who had invested a great deal in the elections with the consent of their leaders, and the party even requested another adjournment to the ISIE with Nida Tounes in December 2017.³²

²⁶ Crisis Group interviews, politicians, high-ranking civil servants, Tunis, September-October 2017.

²⁷ H la Yousfi, "Redessiner les relations Etat/collectivit s locales en Tunisie: enjeux socio-culturels et institutionnels du projet de d centralisation", *Papiers de Recherche AFD*, N 2017-47, June 2017.

²⁸ Crisis Group interviews, politician, political analyst, inhabitants of the Kairouan governorate, Tunis, Kairouan governorate, September-October 2017.

²⁹ This support was reiterated during Essebsi's and Ghannouchi's respective visits to Algiers, on 15 December 2016 and 22 January 2017. Crisis Group interviews, politicians, Tunis, January 2017.

³⁰ "Sarsar fait part de pressions et pose des conditions pour le retrait de sa d mission", Tunis Afrique Presse (www.tap.info.tn), 11 May 2017.

³¹ According to the ISIE, the municipal elections should take place on 25 March 2018. "Tunisie-ISIE: Les  lections municipales auront bien lieu le 25 mars 2018", African Manager (www.africanmanager.com), 21 November 2017.

³² "La coalition gouvernementale demande le report des municipales", Kapitalis (www.kapitalis.com), 13 December 2017. On 16 December 2017, the ISIE set a new date for said elections: 6 May 2018. "Tunisie: les municipales report es au 6 mai 2018", Agence France Presse, 16 December 2017.

Even if, officially, these adjournments were encouraged by smaller political parties who argued that the “Code of Local Authorities defining the mission and prerogatives of the future municipalities” had not yet been adopted and that the ISIE had no president,³³ unofficially, the fact that An-Nahda was the favourite party was decisive.³⁴ The Islamist party was indeed the only one that had been able to complete its lists before the December 2017 deadline scheduled in April 2017. It presented candidates in the 350 municipalities of the country, managing to respect diversity criteria set forth in the electoral law.³⁵ “Even Nida Tounes wasn’t able to do so”, stated a party supporter.³⁶

B. *Partisan Control of the Independent Administrative Bodies*

An-Nahda and Nida Tounes are also distorting the roles of independent administrative bodies³⁷ by placing their candidates there, who then defend partisan interests, giving fodder to criticism from the opposition parties and civil society, which claim there is a “return to authoritarianism”.³⁸ Indeed, the constitution sets forth the creation of five independent constitutional bodies to uphold the principles of integrity, impartiality and neutrality that, in the aftermath of the 2010-2011 uprising, most political forces believed to be the antidotes against the ills of the public administration.³⁹

Three provisional bodies founded in 2011 are already operational: the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE), the Independent High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA) and the National Authority for the Fight against Corruption (INLUCC). In 2011, in a revolutionary move, the two first administrative bodies were able to attack the foundation of two of the authoritarian regime’s pillars: the organisation of elections by the interior ministry at the service of the ruling party and the strict control of the media by the regime. Over time, the parliamentary majorities of the National Constituent Assembly (ANC) and of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People (ARP) have chipped away at these authorities’ independence, increasing their power over the composition of the bodies, their organisation and their supervi-

³³ Mourad S., “Tunisie [Vidéo]: Huit partis politiques demandent le report des élections municipales”, Tunisie numérique (www.tunisienumerique.com), 5 September 2017.

³⁴ Crisis Group interviews, politicians, journalists, official at the interior ministry, inhabitant of the Kairouan governorate, Tunis, Kairouan governorate, September 2017.

³⁵ The organic law N°2017-7 of 14 February 2017, which amended and supplemented the organic law N°2014-16 of 26 May 2014 on elections and referendums, listed a set of criteria allowing a better representation of women, young people (under 35 years old) and candidates with physical disabilities and in possession of a disability card. With regard to women, nominations for membership of municipal and regional councils must be made based on the principle of parity between women and men as well as the rule of the alternation between them on the list.

³⁶ Crisis Group interview, An-Nahda sympathiser, Tunis, September 2017.

³⁷ These bodies are “entrusted with supervision or regulation tasks formerly under the responsibility of ‘ordinary’ administrations”. See Pierre Rosanvallon, *La légitimité démocratique*, (Paris, 2008), p. 121.

³⁸ Aziz Krichen, “Essebsi et Ghannouchi tombent le masque”, Huffington Post Maghreb (www.huffpostmaghreb.com), 25 September 2017.

³⁹ These are the ISIE, the Independent High Authority for Audiovisual Communication, the Authority for Human Rights, the Authority for Sustainable Development and the Rights of Future Generations, the Authority for Good Governance and the Authority for the Fight against Corruption. See the Tunisian constitution of 26 January 2014.

sion – thus going against the democratic trajectory launched by the departure of Ben Ali, and which the constitution is supposed to uphold.⁴⁰

The three remaining independent administrative bodies set up outside the constitutional framework – the Truth and Dignity Commission (IVD) in charge of the transitional justice process, the Authority for Access to Information and the Authority for the Prevention of Torture (INPT) – have encountered similar problems.⁴¹ In September 2017, in an interview with the Tunisian press, President Essebsi criticised these independent bodies, stating that they represented a threat to “the existence of the state and its cohesion”.⁴²

C. *An Increasingly Presidential Regime*

Though his interventionism, which is incompatible with the spirit of the constitution but in line with his legitimacy as an elected official voted into office by universal suffrage, Essebsi is trying to monopolise the channels of political discussion, which is personalising crisis management mechanisms that are becoming increasingly dependent on his remaining the head of state.⁴³

First, he continued to invest himself in his party, Nida Tounes, by playing the role of occasional mediator and increasing internal tensions by promoting the rise of his son in the party.⁴⁴ He actively intervened on the balance and operation of the coalition. He took personal initiatives that had not been the object of a prior agreement in order to strengthen the alliance and keep the Islamist party, Nida Tounes' main electoral opponent, under pressure. He sometimes promoted rivalry between Nida Tounes and An-Nahda by stressing Nida Tounes' “modernist” political identity,

⁴⁰ Organic Law N°2012-23 of 20 December 2012 concerning the Independent High Authority for Elections; see also Draft Organic Law N°2016/30 concerning the Common Constitutional Provisions for the Constitutional Bodies, in which the ARP approved the most controversial articles. See also: “Chawki Tabib: La loi sur l'Instance de la bonne gouvernance votée par le parlement réduit ses pouvoirs”, Shems FM (www.shemsfm.net), 21 June 2017; “Quand l'ARP adopte des articles inconstitutionnels”, Nawaat (www.nawaat.org), 7 November 2017; “Tunisie: la HAICA se plaint, et porte de graves accusations contre le pouvoir”, African Manager (www.africanmanager.com), 3 November 2017.

⁴¹ Crisis Group interviews, members of the independent administrative bodies, high-ranking civil servant, community activists, politician from the Democratic Current, Tunis, September–November 2017.

⁴² Hechmi Noura, “Le président Béji Caïd Essebsi à Assahafa et à La Presse: ‘Le système politique actuel ne peut assurer le développement et la stabilité du pays’”, *La Presse de Tunisie* (www.la.presse.tn), 6 September 2017.

⁴³ In its last sub-paragraph, Article 76 of the constitution sets forth that “the president of the republic shall not cumulate his/her responsibilities with any other partisan responsibility”. See the Tunisian constitution of 26 January 2014.

⁴⁴ In June 2015, he played the role of mediator between Mohsen Marzouk and his son Hafedh concerning a dispute on the date of a party congress. In October 2015, on the eve of an important meeting of the executive bureau following a thirty-member cap in the parliamentary group, he attempted a reconciliation. On 29 November 2015, in a speech on TV, he proposed the composition of a thirteen-member committee entrusted with “the mission to unite two wings in conflict”. Finally, on 9 January 2016, he was the guest of honour at the so-called “consensual” congress of Nida Tounes, during which he called for an in-depth dialogue between the various factions of the party. See Eric Gobe, “La Tunisie en 2015: La présidentialisation de l'impuissance politique?”, *L'année du Maghreb*, N°15 (2016), pp. 281–307. See also S. Ben Farhat, “La bataille de Verdun à Nida”, *La Presse*, 12 November 2015.

especially in order to prevent a protest vote against these two pillars of the coalition in forthcoming elections.⁴⁵

Even as he defended and promoted the stability of the alliance diplomatically, Essebsi is the instigator of the current national government of unity, which took office at the end of August 2016 and caught all political parties by surprise. This sabotaged the increasingly privileged relations between An-Nahda – which had gained in international credibility after its May 2016 congress – and Habib Essid, head of government at the time.

Because Essid had demonstrated that he could act independently, in line with his constitutional prerogatives (as the top leader of the executive branch), the head of state demanded that he resign. Following the advice of his advisors, Essid sought to respect the provisions of the constitution and requested a parliamentary vote of confidence – which as expected he was not granted.⁴⁶ Essebsi then managed to impose a new head of government, Youssef Chahed, a member of Nida Tounes but a rather marginal figure in the party, and exercised considerable influence on the composition of the ministerial cabinet.

Since the first half of 2017, Essebsi is in latent conflict with the new head of government. He has tried to withdraw some of his prerogatives by increasing the power of the National Security Council, which he presides.⁴⁷ Chahed had indeed begun creating a new political movement in view of the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2019, positioning himself as the centre of a new political axis that would be able to shift away from political corruption and attract the skills of “technocrats”, while at the same time joining forces with social powers (namely the trade unions). In this way, he hoped to exploit the weaknesses of the coalition and its pivotal parties, which displeased the head of state.⁴⁸

Chahed also took advantage of the arrest of a controversial businessman, Chafik Jarraya,⁴⁹ which several Tunisian political analysts have described as one of the main

⁴⁵ “La circulaire de 1973 interdisant le mariage d’une Tunisienne à un non musulman officiellement annulée selon la porte-parole de la présidence de la République”, Huffington Post Maghreb (www.huffpostmaghreb.com), 14 September 2017. See also Aziz Krichen, “Essebsi et Ghannouchi tombent le masque”, Huffington Post Maghreb (www.huffpostmaghreb.com), 25 September 2017.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group interviews, An-Nahda and Nida Tounes militants, Tunis, May–October 2017.

⁴⁷ Government Decree N°2017-70 of 19 January 2017 regarding the National Security Council; Decision of the president of the republic and president of the National Security Council of 30 October 2017 concerning the Standing Committees at the National Security Council; Crisis Group interviews, politicians, journalists, Tunis, May–September 2017.

⁴⁸ Crisis Group interviews, politicians, journalists, Tunis, May–September 2017.

⁴⁹ Chafik Jarraya had indeed been arrested by the military security forces for “collusion with a foreign army during times of peace” in the context of a case related to the delivery of weapons for Libyan warring factions linked to the Tripoli government. On several occasions, he supported the Hafedh Caïd Essebsi clan, in view of his gain of power over Nida Tounes structures. He has many opportunities in Sfax and in the south of the country thanks to his connections with businessmen and smugglers from the emerging elite. Crisis Group interviews, Nida Tounes sympathisers, businessmen, An-Nahda and Nida Tounes sympathisers, Tunis, July–October 2017. See also Samy Ghorbal, “Tunisie: aux origines de la chute de Chafik Jarraya, l’homme qui personnifiait l’impunité de la corruption”, *Jeune Afrique*, 16 June 2017; see also Crisis Group Report, *Blocked Transition*, op. cit.

sponsors of Nida Tounes' political bloc.⁵⁰ He thus declared a "war against corruption", which An-Nahda and Nida Tounes militants say serves his political interests.⁵¹

Moreover, Essebsi has been holding a rising number of closed meetings with the leaders of the main political powers and trade unions in order to position himself as the sole arbitrator along with Ghannouchi, who does the same on his side. A sociologist has noted that one of the aims is to "make the contents of negotiations less transparent, in order to deflect criticism and to avoid constantly having to justify the usefulness of the alliance or the strategic choices struck in a consensual and discreet manner".⁵²

The search for an upstream compromise between Ghannouchi and Essebsi, and to a lesser extent, between the coalition parties, tends to undermine and weaken the role of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People (ARP). The president of the ARP, Mohamed Ennaceur, member of Nida Tounes, "manages his parliament like a ministry", noted the manager of an NGO in charge of capacity-building in the Assembly:

The MPs' interventions are all for show. Laws are adopted with few amendments. The MPs are disillusioned. They get involved in various projects but have no structure. They have no clear idea of their work. The legislative agenda is imposed on them at the last minute, they do not know it. All transactions between political parties are performed at the Consensus Commission.⁵³

As a result, despite the democratic atmosphere that the opposition tries to preserve by triggering controversies, the parliament is at risk of becoming a rubber-stamping assembly for pre-arranged political decisions, as was the case under Ben Ali's regime. Many MPs "change positions after receiving a phone call", observed a former parliamentary assistant.⁵⁴

For the majority, boosting the role of the Assembly is far from being a priority. On several occasions, Nida Tounes and An-Nahda have struck down the examination of a draft organic law by means of its financial administrative authority, which, according to several experts on parliamentary matters, would have allowed it to obtain the necessary means to operate *de facto*, in accordance with the constitutional framework.⁵⁵ The gap between the constitutional principles drafted in a consensual fashion during the first transitional stage and the reality of the political scene today is becoming more and more obvious.

By under-investing in the strengthening the democratic institutions, the political class is keeping the country in an endless state of transition, which is weakening the state. Essebsi and Ghannouchi, through their numerous secret meetings, are maintaining the coalition and reducing polarisation, but are also personalising the channels for political discussion and crisis management, thus increasing the likelihood of violent conflict if one of them disappears. Even if, in his New Year wishes for 2018,

⁵⁰ Crisis Group interviews, political analysts, Tunis, 2014-2015.

⁵¹ Crisis Group interviews, An-Nahda and Nida Tounes militants, Tunis, May-October 2017.

⁵² Crisis Group interview, sociologist, Tunis, October 2017.

⁵³ This ad hoc commission was founded in June 2013 in order to streamline the compromise between the various political groups at the time of the rise in pro-Troika and anti-Troika polarisation.

⁵⁴ Crisis Group interview, parliamentary assistant under the Troika (2011-2014), Tunis, October 2017.

⁵⁵ The Tunisian constitution of 26 January 2014.

the head of state declared that the Constitutional court would be set up during the year, the absence of this institution – the only one with the power to determine the provisional or definitive vacancy for the post of president of the republic – creates the risk of an unconstitutional transition of presidential power.⁵⁶ Such a scenario would strengthen the supporters of an authoritarian restoration.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ “Beji Caid Essebsi: 2018 sera une année décisive (vidéos)”, Mosaïque FM (www.mosaïquefm.net), 31 December 2017.

⁵⁷ Crisis Group interview, lawyer, member of an international NGO, Tunis, October 2017.

III. To Establish the Constitution or Rewind?

A. *The Dilemma of Political Decision-makers*

Political decision-makers face a very delicate problem when doubts appear as to the efficiency of democracy to overcome challenges. At risk of weakening the institutions and losing part of their international legitimacy, they must implement the constitution in accordance with the principles defined by the former parliament. At the same time, in January 2014, the revolutionary wave brought by the so-called “Arab Spring” was receding, the Islamic State had gained phenomenal ground in Syria and Iraq as from 2013, there was a coup in Egypt in July in 2013, and civil war broke out in Libya in July-August 2014.

Simultaneously, political decision-makers must try their best to maintain a coalition which prevents polarisation between “pro-” and “anti-” An-Nahda, but whose current mode of operation is rather opaque and strengthens the opposition of the “revolutionaries” and nostalgia for the authoritarian regime. They must also manage day-to-day security issues, and most especially economic problems that threaten the stability of the country.

Since 2016, the considerable degradation of economic fundamentals has increased the likelihood of uncontrollable riots, meaning that politicians are under pressure to take immediate action. Growth has remained weak (between 1 and 2 per cent). The Tunisian dinar has dropped by one third of its value in a year, without increasing the external competitiveness of national production or narrowing the trade deficit, which continues to rise.⁵⁸ Public wages consume practically half the state's budget, leaving little for development projects. Ordinary citizens suffer from price hikes and experience an inflation rate that is much higher than the official rate of 6.3 per cent.⁵⁹ International bodies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have expressed their concern and regularly underscore their discontent at the situation.⁶⁰

Since mid-2017, despite new regional opportunities,⁶¹ entrepreneurs from the established elite have suffered from an increase in tax audits that aim to “obtain revenue for the state coffers at any cost”.⁶² Businessmen from the informal economy consider that the war against corruption launched by the head of government in May 2017 is putting them under pressure.⁶³

The relentless drop in the standard of living for the middle class is exacerbating tensions within the political parties, especially in An-Nahda, whose grassroots supporters suffer from price increases like any other ordinary citizen. This leads the militants to accuse their leaders of being incapable of improving the situation. Daily hardship,

⁵⁸ In the first ten months of 2017, it reached 3.2 billion dinars, ie, 5.2 billion dollars. See “Balance commerciale mensuelle”, Institut national de la statistique (INS).

⁵⁹ “Tableaux de bord économique”; “synthèses mensuelles des principaux indicateurs de la conjoncture économique”, Institut national de la statistique (INS). Crisis Group interviews, economists, Tunis, September 2017.

⁶⁰ Crisis Group interviews, executives from an international organisation, May-November 2017.

⁶¹ Taoufik Habaieb, “Omar Behi et 130 opérateurs économiques tunisiens en commando export au Qatar”, *Leaders*, 14 November 2017.

⁶² Crisis Group interview, entrepreneur from Sfax, Tunis, November 2017.

⁶³ Crisis Group interviews, businessmen from South of Tunisia, Tunis, July 2017.

inflation and the relative degradation of public infrastructure (transport, health care, education) which are hitting the working-class areas are giving rise to nostalgia for the 1990s-2000s, ie when Ben Ali was in power, making the citizens more receptive to the nationalistic discourse of some representatives from the old regime. These figures are gaining visibility in the media, and they do not hesitate to equate democracy and the defence of human rights with the weakness of the state, support for jihadist terrorism and Western interference.⁶⁴

B. *Reviving an Authoritarian Regime: A Risky and Unrealistic Gamble*

The weakening of state institutions lends credence to “anti-Arab Spring” voices which are often nostalgic for the Ben Ali era. They implicitly posit that the only way to save the country is by centralising power and resources in the hands of an empowered executive with a homogenous ideology, and return an all-powerful presidency.⁶⁵ Adherents of this reckless backsliding argue that the institutions created following the departure of Ben Ali are artificial, ill-suited to Tunisian political culture, and dysfunctional. From their perspective, the democratic transplant is not taking hold, as shown by the multiplication of centres of power and corruption and useless debates of politicians.⁶⁶ This “background noise, according to which democracy is dysfunctional in Tunisia”, as one European diplomat put it, is becoming louder and encouraging some public intellectuals in the media to attack the Tunisian transition as a whole, and particularly the constitution, if only out of populism.⁶⁷

Many politicians and public officials consider that the independent provisional administrative authorities (ISIE, HAICA, INLUCC) are weakening central government.⁶⁸ In a sense this is true, if only as they lack the necessary technical and financial means to carry out the monitoring and regulatory duties they are supposed to carry out instead of the regular bureaucracy. As a high-ranking public official explains, echoing Essebsi's accusation that these bodies pose a threat to “the existence of the state and its cohesion”:⁶⁹

These institutions erode the state's power. They represent a legal and administrative authority, but in fact they have no independence from the political parties or central government. They have exclusive areas of competence, but lack the means to apply them.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ “Lotfi Laameri s'en prend aux organisations des droits de l'homme et à la directrice de Human Rights Watch en Tunisie, tollé sur les réseaux sociaux”, *Huffington Post Maghreb* (www.huffpostmaghreb.com), 10 November 2011.

⁶⁵ Crisis Group interviews, politicians and senior government officials, Tunis, 2017.

⁶⁶ Habib Ayadi, “Une Assemblée inutile, l'Assemblée des représentants du peuple”, *Leaders*, 30 October 2017.

⁶⁷ Crisis Group interview, European diplomat, Tunis, October 2017.

⁶⁸ Crisis Group interviews, politicians and senior government officials, Tunis, 2017.

⁶⁹ Hechmi Nouira, “Le président Béji Caïd Essebsi à Assahafa et à *La Presse*: ‘Le système politique actuel ne peut assurer le développement et la stabilité du pays’”, *La Presse de Tunisie* (lapresse.tn), 6 September 2017.

⁷⁰ Crisis Group interview, senior government official, Tunis, September 2017.

By giving them a legal status that confers on them wide-ranging de jure prerogatives, yet without supporting their actual prerogatives, political decision-makers are undermining public administration. In turn, the latter is refusing to work with these authorities, which then defend their corporatist domain.⁷¹ The situation is comparable to the one paralysing the Assembly of People's Representatives (ARP), subject to the bills proposed by the executive branch yet the necessary financial and administrative autonomy to achieve its role as enshrined in the constitution.⁷²

In the view of some Nida Tounes dissidents and party members, since the current regime operates virtually on a presidential basis, this reality should be reflected in the constitution, as proposed by the head of state, and "move toward a system of majority voting that would have the benefit of a stable majority without needing to resort to a perverse coalition".⁷³

But given the latent polarisation between pro- and anti-An-Nahda factions, opening a debate on amending the constitution would be a risky gambit, creating the possibility that one of these groups will form a majority excluding the other. The constitution's ambiguity about the prerogatives of the two leaders of the executive can be thought of as a peace treaty between political forces let loose by the 2010-2011 uprising. Attempts to alter it, as one civil society activist put it, "[when] it has not yet been implemented and given that politicians have not given the mixed parliamentary system the means to carry out its work",⁷⁴ may either rekindle ideological conflicts supposedly resolved during the constitutional process (2011-2014), or lead to an increasingly hardline regime.

An-Nahda's leaders, despite supporting parliamentarianism at the time of drafting of the constitution, are now divided on this issue. Some consider that the regime's shift toward presidentialism, with all the risks it entails, is already underway and that negotiations are needed to ensure the party has a minority but stable role within an authoritarian regime in the making.⁷⁵ An-Nahda would then wait for better days to take its helm, with many expecting that the 2019 presidential elections will be held during this more auspicious period. Others argue that a presidential regime would allow the dominance of a single leader or party over the future Constitutional court and independent constitutional authorities, and this would signal the end of democracy, a red line they say they are willing to cross "even if half of the party were to return to prison", according to one party member.⁷⁶

For the time being, the political class has not yet succumbed to this authoritarian temptation, observed by many international analysts and criticised as a "restauration" by various civil society activists who often exaggerate the point.⁷⁷ Given the various socio-economic, political and administrative rifts, as well as the freedom of expres-

⁷¹ Crisis Group interviews, senior government officials, September 2017.

⁷² Tunisian constitution of 26 January 2014.

⁷³ Crisis Group interview, Nida Tounes leader, Tunis, October 2017.

⁷⁴ Crisis Group interview, civil society activist, Tunis, October 2017.

⁷⁵ Crisis Group interviews, civil society activist with close ties to An-Nahda, An-Nahda supporters, Tunis, November 2017.

⁷⁶ Crisis Group interview, An-Nahda official, Tunis, November 2017.

⁷⁷ Sarah E. Yerkes, "Democracy Derailed? Tunisia's Transition Veers Off Course", *Foreign Affairs*, 2 October 2017.

sion gained since 2011, reverting to a Ben Ali style regime appears unrealistic. It would imply that a political force or security coalition could lock down the country and reconstruct the system of surveillance and control over the population that rested upon the defunct RCD (the former hegemonic ruling party, dissolved some seven years ago and whose members are now scattered politically) and the now-fragmented interior ministry.⁷⁸ For the time being this option remains technically impossible.

In any case, even by expanding the executive branch and resuming an authoritarian regime, Tunisia would by no means overcome the structural security and economic challenges it faces. On the contrary, such a move would further aggravate political and social tensions. Tunisia would enter a spiral of repression intended to reinstate an atmosphere of fear among members of the opposition and civil society. Freedom of expression would be curtailed, making political decision-makers less responsive to large sections of society, lowering quality of life and heightening the sense of socio-regional discrimination and further increasing the likelihood of a revolt against the state.

Reviving an authoritarian regime would also jeopardise the culture of negotiating and searching for peaceful compromise, an approach that has been strengthened since the former regime's downfall. Even with a strong executive able to take expedient decisions, the result would most probably be to hollow out the reforms to increase the public administration's efficiency (transparency, responsibility, improved government-citizen relationships). It would also restrict the initiatives and creativity required for business innovation to increase economic competitiveness. Finally, squandering the democratic credibility that Tunisia gained on an international scale would deprive the country of a significant part of the financial and political support it receives from abroad.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Report N°163, *Reform and Security Strategy in Tunisia*, 23 July 2015.

⁷⁹ There would be a risk that a large amount of international financial support, accounting for nearly 20 per cent of the government's budget in 2017, would not be renewed should the country slide back toward the authoritarianism and brutal repression of the former regime. Crisis Group interviews, members of international organisations and authorities, Tunis, 2016-2017.

IV. Conclusion

Instead of making a futile attempt to recreate the institutions of the former regime, which would be tantamount to adventurism, Tunisia should consolidate its institutions by respecting and implementing its constitution. Even though the post-Ben Ali revolutionary euphoria has worn off and the coalition is spending more time trying to keep itself alive than implementing reforms, the country continues to move forward, albeit in a non-linear fashion.

But for Tunisia to consolidate its transition and prepare itself for unforeseen challenges, the political class should avoid amending the constitution. Instead, it must find the necessary willingness to establish the Constitutional court as soon as possible, increase parliament's autonomy, set up effective independent constitutional authorities, and hold municipal elections in 2018. Tunisia's international partners should continue supporting these reforms, which are the only means of bolstering the state and maintaining long-term stability.

Tunis/Brussels, 11 January 2018

Appendix B: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a monthly early warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 70 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on its website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board of Trustees – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policymakers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lord Mark Malloch-Brown. Its Vice Chair is Ayo Obe, a Legal Practitioner, Columnist and TV Presenter in Nigeria.

Crisis Group's President & CEO, Robert Malley, took up the post on 1 January 2018. Malley was formerly Crisis Group's Middle East and North Africa Program Director and most recently was a Special Assistant to former U.S. President Barack Obama as well as Senior Adviser to the President for the Counter-ISIL Campaign, and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region. Previously, he served as President Bill Clinton's Special Assistant for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices in ten other locations: Bishkek, Bogota, Dakar, Kabul, Islamabad, Istanbul, Nairobi, London, New York, and Washington, DC. It has presences in the following locations: Abuja, Algiers, Bangkok, Beirut, Caracas, Gaza City, Guatemala City, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Juba, Mexico City, New Delhi, Rabat, Sanaa, Tblisi, Toronto, Tripoli, Tunis, and Yangon.

Crisis Group receives financial support from a wide range of governments, foundations, and private sources. Currently Crisis Group holds relationships with the following governmental departments and agencies: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrian Development Agency, Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), European Commission, Directorate General for Neighbourhood Enlargement Negotiations, Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, French Development Agency, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, German Federal Foreign Office, Global Affairs Canada, Irish Aid, Principality of Liechtenstein, Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

Crisis Group also holds relationships with the following foundations: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Henry Luce Foundation, Humanity United, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Oak Foundation, Omidyar Network Fund, Open Society Foundations, Ploughshares Fund, Robert Bosch Stiftung, and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

January 2018

Appendix C: Reports and Briefings on the Middle East and North Africa since 2015

Special Reports

Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, Special Report N°1, 14 March 2016 (also available in Arabic and French).

Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action, Special Report N°2, 22 June 2016.

Counter-terrorism Pitfalls: What the U.S. Fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda Should Avoid, Special Report N°3, 22 March 2017.

Israel/Palestine

The Status of the Status Quo at Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade, Middle East Report N°159, 30 June 2015 (also available in Arabic and Hebrew).

No Exit? Gaza & Israel Between Wars, Middle East Report N°162, 26 August 2015 (also available in Arabic).

How to Preserve the Fragile Calm at Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade, Middle East Briefing N°48, 7 April 2016 (also available in Arabic and Hebrew).

Israel/Palestine: Parameters for a Two-State Settlement, Middle East Report N°172, 28 November 2016 (also available in Arabic).

Iraq/Syria/Lebanon

Arming Iraq's Kurds: Fighting IS, Inviting Conflict, Middle East Report N°158, 12 May 2015 (also available in Arabic).

Lebanon's Self-Defeating Survival Strategies, Middle East Report N°160, 20 July 2015 (also available in Arabic).

New Approach in Southern Syria, Middle East Report N°163, 2 September 2015 (also available in Arabic).

Arsal in the Crosshairs: The Predicament of a Small Lebanese Border Town, Middle East Briefing N°46, 23 February 2016 (also available in Arabic).

Russia's Choice in Syria, Middle East Briefing N°47, 29 March 2016 (also available in Arabic).

Steps Toward Stabilising Syria's Northern Border, Middle East Briefing N°49, 8 April 2016 (also available in Arabic).

Fight or Flight: The Desperate Plight of Iraq's "Generation 2000", Middle East Report N°169, 8 August 2016 (also available in Arabic).

Hizbollah's Syria Conundrum, Middle East Report N°175, 14 March 2017 (also available in Arabic and Farsi).

Fighting ISIS: The Road to and beyond Raqqa, Middle East Briefing N°53, 28 April 2017 (also available in Arabic).

The PKK's Fateful Choice in Northern Syria, Middle East Report N°176, 4 May 2017 (also available in Arabic).

Oil and Borders: How to Fix Iraq's Kurdish Crisis, Middle East Briefing N°55, 17 October 2017 (also available in Arabic).

North Africa

Libya: Getting Geneva Right, Middle East and North Africa Report N°157, 26 February 2015 (also available in Arabic).

Reform and Security Strategy in Tunisia, Middle East and North Africa Report N°161, 23 July 2015 (also available in French).

Algeria and Its Neighbours, Middle East and North Africa Report N°164, 12 October 2015 (also available in French and Arabic).

The Prize: Fighting for Libya's Energy Wealth, Middle East and North Africa Report N°165, 3 December 2015 (also available in Arabic).

Tunisia: Transitional Justice and the Fight Against Corruption, Middle East and North Africa Report N°168, 3 May 2016 (also available in Arabic and French).

Jihadist Violence in Tunisia: The Urgent Need for a National Strategy, Middle East and North Africa Briefing N°50, 22 June 2016 (also available in French and Arabic).

The Libyan Political Agreement: Time for a Reset, Middle East and North Africa Report N°170, 4 November 2016 (also available in Arabic).

Algeria's South: Trouble's Bellwether, Middle East and North Africa Report N°171, 21 November 2016 (also available in Arabic and French).

Blocked Transition: Corruption and Regionalism in Tunisia, Middle East and North Africa Report N°177, 10 May 2017 (only available in French and Arabic).

How the Islamic State Rose, Fell and Could Rise Again in the Maghreb, Middle East and North Africa Report N°178, 24 July 2017 (also available in Arabic and French).

How Libya's Fezzan Became Europe's New Border, Middle East and North Africa Report N°179, 31 July 2017 (also available in Arabic).

Iran/Yemen/Gulf

Yemen at War, Middle East Briefing N°45, 27 March 2015 (also available in Arabic).

Iran After the Nuclear Deal, Middle East Report N°166, 15 December 2015 (also available in Arabic).

Yemen: Is Peace Possible?, Middle East Report N°167, 9 February 2016 (also available in Arabic).

Turkey and Iran: Bitter Friends, Bosom Rivals, Middle East Briefing N°51, 13 December 2016 (also available in Farsi).

Implementing the Iran Nuclear Deal: A Status Report, Middle East Report N°173, 16 January 2017 (also available in Farsi).

Yemen's al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base, Middle East Report N°174, 2 February 2017 (also available in Arabic).

Instruments of Pain (I): Conflict and Famine in Yemen, Middle East Briefing N°52, 13 April 2017 (also available in Arabic).

Discord in Yemen's North Could Be a Chance for Peace, Middle East Briefing N°54, 11 October 2017 (also available in Arabic).

Appendix D: International Crisis Group Board of Trustees

CO-CHAIR**Lord (Mark) Malloch-Brown**

Former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

PRESIDENT & CEO**Rob Malley**

Former White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region

VICE-CHAIR**Ayo Obe**

Chair of the Board of the Gorée Institute (Senegal); Legal Practitioner (Nigeria)

OTHER TRUSTEES**Fola Adeola**

Founder and Chairman, FATE Foundation

Celso Amorim

Former Minister of External Relations of Brazil; Former Defence Minister

Hushang Ansary

Chairman, Parman Capital Group LLC; Former Iranian Ambassador to the U.S. and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs

Nahum Barnea

Political Columnist, Israel

Kim Beazley

Former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia and Ambassador to the U.S.; Former Defence Minister

Carl Bildt

Former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Sweden

Emma Bonino

Former Foreign Minister of Italy and European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid

Cheryl Carolus

Former South African High Commissioner to the UK and Secretary General of the African National Congress (ANC)

Maria Livanos Cattai

Former Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce

Wesley Clark

Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander

Sheila Coronel

Toni Stabile Professor of Practice in Investigative Journalism; Director, Toni Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, Columbia University

Frank Giustra

President & CEO, Fiore Financial Corporation

Mo Ibrahim

Founder and Chair, Mo Ibrahim Foundation; Founder, Celtel International

Wolfgang Ischinger

Chairman, Munich Security Conference; Former German Deputy Foreign Minister and Ambassador to the UK and U.S.

Asma Jahangir

Former President of the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan; former UN Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Religion or Belief

Yoriko Kawaguchi

Former Foreign Minister of Japan; former Environment Minister

Wadah Khanfar

Co-Founder, Al Sharq Forum; former Director General, Al Jazeera Network

Wim Kok

Former Prime Minister of the Netherlands

Andrey Kortunov

Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council

Ivan Krastev

Chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies (Sofia); Founding Board Member of European Council on Foreign Relations

Ricardo Lagos

Former President of Chile

Joanne Leedom-Ackerman

Former International Secretary of PEN International; Novelist and journalist, U.S.

Helge Lund

Former Chief Executive BG Group (UK) and Statoil (Norway)

Shivshankar Menon

Former Foreign Secretary of India; former National Security Advisor

Naz Modirzadeh

Director of the Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict

Saad Mohseni

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of MOBY Group

Marty Natalegawa

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Permanent Representative to the UN, and Ambassador to the UK

Roza Otunbayeva

Former President of the Kyrgyz Republic; Founder of the International Public Foundation "Roza Otunbayeva Initiative"

Thomas R. Pickering

Former U.S. Under Secretary of State and Ambassador to the UN, Russia, India, Israel, Jordan, El Salvador and Nigeria

Olympia Snowe

Former U.S. Senator and Member of the House of Representatives

Javier Solana

President, ESADE Center for Global Economy and Geopolitics; Distinguished Fellow, The Brookings Institution

Alexander Soros

Global Board Member, Open Society Foundations

George Soros

Founder, Open Society Foundations and Chair, Soros Fund Management

Pär Stenbäck

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and of Education, Finland; Chairman of the European Cultural Parliament

Jonas Gahr Støre

Leader of the Labour Party and Labour Party Parliamentary Group; former Foreign Minister of Norway

Lawrence H. Summers

Former Director of the U.S. National Economic Council and Secretary of the U.S. Treasury; President Emeritus of Harvard University

Helle Thorning-Schmidt

CEO of Save the Children International; former Prime Minister of Denmark

Wang Jisi

Member, Foreign Policy Advisory Committee of the Chinese Foreign Ministry; President, Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Peking University

PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL

A distinguished group of individual and corporate donors providing essential support and expertise to Crisis Group.

CORPORATE	INDIVIDUAL	
BP	(5) Anonymous	Herman De Bode
Shearman & Sterling LLP	Scott Bessent	Alexander Soros
Statoil (U.K.) Ltd.	David Brown & Erika Franke	Ian R. Taylor
White & Case LLP	Stephen & Jennifer Dattels	

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Individual and corporate supporters who play a key role in Crisis Group's efforts to prevent deadly conflict.

CORPORATE	INDIVIDUAL	
(2) Anonymous	(2) Anonymous	Geoffrey R. Hoguet & Ana Luisa Ponti
APCO Worldwide Inc.	Mark Bergman	David Jannetti
Atlas Copco AB	Stanley Bergman & Edward Bergman	Faisal Khan
Chevron		Cleopatra Kitti
Edelman UK	Elizabeth Bohart	Michael & Jackie Lambert
HSBC Holdings plc	Eric Christiansen	Leslie Lishon
MetLife	Sam Englehardt	Virginie Maisonneuve
Noble Energy	The Edelman Family Foundation	Dennis Miller
RBC Capital Markets		The Nommontu Foundation
Shell	Seth & Jane Ginns	Brian Paes-Braga
	Ronald Glickman	Kerry Propper
	David Harding	Duco Sickinghe
	Rita E. Hauser	Nina K. Solarz
		Enzo Viscusi

AMBASSADOR COUNCIL

Rising stars from diverse fields who contribute their talents and expertise to support Crisis Group's mission.

Amy Benziger	Lindsay Iversen	Nidhi Sinha
Tripp Callan	Azim Jamal	Chloe Squires
Kivanc Cubukcu	Arohi Jain	Leeanne Su
Matthew Devlin	Christopher Louney	Bobbi Thomason
Victoria Ergolavou	Matthew Magenheimer	AJ Twombly
Noa Gafni	Madison Malloch-Brown	Dillon Twombly
Christina Bache Fidan	Megan McGill	Annie Verderosa
Lynda Hammes	Hamesh Mehta	Zachary Watling
Jason Hesse	Tara Opalinski	Grant Webster
Dalí ten Hove	Perfecto Sanchez	

SENIOR ADVISERS

Former Board Members who maintain an association with Crisis Group, and whose advice and support are called on (to the extent consistent with any other office they may be holding at the time).

Martti Ahtisaari Chairman Emeritus	Lakhdar Brahimi	Carla Hills
George Mitchell Chairman Emeritus	Kim Campbell	Swanee Hunt
Gareth Evans President Emeritus	Jorge Castañeda	Aleksander Kwasniewski
	Naresh Chandra	Todung Mulya Lubis
	Eugene Chien	Allan J. MacEachen
Kenneth Adelman	Joaquim Alberto Chissano	Graça Machel
Adnan Abu-Odeh	Victor Chu	Jessica T. Mathews
HRH Prince Turki al-Faisal	Mong Joon Chung	Barbara McDougall
Óscar Arias	Pat Cox	Matthew McHugh
Ersin Arıoğlu	Gianfranco Dell'Alba	Miklós Németh
Richard Armitage	Jacques Delors	Christine Ockrent
Diego Arria	Alain Destexhe	Timothy Ong
Zainab Bangura	Mou-Shih Ding	Olara Otunnu
Shlomo Ben-Ami	Uffe Ellemann-Jensen	Lord (Christopher) Patten
Christoph Bertram	Gernot Erlor	Victor Pinchuk
Alan Blinken	Marika Fahlén	Surin Pitsuwan
	Stanley Fischer	Fidel V. Ramos