



THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE MAGHREB: WHAT IS THE STATUS OF COMMITMENT ONE YEAR AFTER "ARAB SPRING"?

**Second report on sustainable
security in the Maghreb**





This report is based on a number of interviews held with senior institution officials and field workers in the course of several study trips to the region. It was drawn up by Antonin TISSERON, research fellow at the Institut Thomas More in charge of the Maghreb-Sahel area and the region's geopolitical stakes. As well as being the author of many articles on the subject, he co-wrote the report entitled *Towards a sustainable security in the Maghreb: An opportunity for the region, a commitment for the European Union* (April 2010). He also works as a consultant for defence groups and consultancy firms.



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◆ Executive Summary

One year after the beginning of "Arab Spring", the situation in Libya is far from stable and the southern banks of the Mediterranean remain unsettled and fragile. As neighbours and the primary economic partners of the Maghreb countries, the European Union and Europeans need to review their strategy in the light of the new local parameters. New circumstances require a new response. A global approach is therefore needed to take into account the four challenges which are currently facing the countries and people of the Maghreb.

The challenge of democratisation. Although the recent revolutions have drawn our attention to the hopes for political change felt by populations anxious for long term modernisation processes, such as greater access to education, changes in family life or in individual behaviour, many observers have been brought brutally back down to earth by the election results. However, we must all accept the reality principle, not least our Maghreb partners. As we endeavour to strengthen the democratic framework and practices, we must avoid demonising the new teams in power, but should instead work with them and judge them on the merits of their actions alone.

The economic and social challenge. Political reform is not sufficient to provide hope or future prospects unless it is combined with economic and social modernisation and takes young people's concrete expectations into account. Political leaders must regard the employment issue as a key concern. Maghreb countries require a complete overhaul of their development models and training systems as an incentive for continued political openness. At the same time, more needs to be done to fight against corruption, which does huge amounts of damage. This is all the more important since "Arab Spring", which has weakened the region's economies to a greater or lesser extent and the impact of which will still be felt for years to come.

The security challenge. Despite unrest within radical groups, particularly Salafist groups in Tunisia, Al Qaida and other terrorist movements which attempted to profit from the recent insurgency have so far met with limited success in the Maghreb. However, the significant increase in insecurity in the Sahel-Saharan strip represents another danger for Maghreb countries, given the combined effects of terrorist groups taking root in the area and the repercussions of the war in Libya. Difficulties establishing true regio-

nal cooperation hang constantly in the background.

The challenge of cooperation. With the European financial crisis looming, the main priority for the region's governments must be economic and social stability. As they strive to achieve this goal, intra-Maghreb cooperation remains one of their main projects. Despite a few timid steps forward, the "non-Maghreb" remains a reality, especially as the border between Algeria and Morocco is still closed. "Arab Spring" should represent an opportunity for increased awareness of the need for regional integration. However, failure to settle the western Saharan conflict will no doubt hamper progress of any kind, despite the proposal for autonomy put forward by Morocco in 2007, this being the most realistic and most credible solution. In any case, Europeans can but gain from supporting initiatives to achieve as much synergy as possible.

At the end of the day, successful European commitment in the Maghreb still implies a European ability to embrace the new neighbourhood policy and to build a true Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-Arab geopolitical project with prospects, objectives and clear political will. The cacophony which is sometimes heard is counterproductive. On the other hand, the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) is an encouraging sign. But the process will no doubt take time. Time which the Maghreb countries just don't have, in many people's opinions.

◆ Introduction

On 14th January 2011, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled Tunisia after 28 days of unrest. On 11th February, Hosni Mubarak was chased out of Egypt after thirty years in power. On 20th October, Libyan "brother leader" Muammar Gaddafi was killed during a joint operation between NATO and National Transitional Council troops.

The political upheaval of the year 2011 took different forms in each of the five Maghreb countries, i.e. Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. But on a regional scale, it seems as if a turnaround has been reached after the decade which began with the terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001. We are now at the start of a new historic cycle full of hope and change. Long-diagnosed democratic aspirations have finally been brought into the light, even if they remain closely controlled by the region's regimes. However, if we look beyond these feelings of hope, we still find uncertainties and fears about an unpredictable future. More than ever before, the Maghreb appears to be at a crossroads, torn between democratic renaissance and the high expectations of the people, between major political change and huge challenges. In a speech made on 12th December 2011 on the subject of access to the job market for qualified young people, which is one of the region's guiding threads, Beji Caid el Sebsi, Prime Minister of the interim Tunisian government¹, commented that contrary to claims made by marketers of an 'Arab Spring' around the world, "There is no 'Arab Spring', but there is the beginning of a spring in Tunisia".

The coming months and years will be decisive for the Maghreb's inhabitants. However, to Brussels and other European capitals, "Arab Spring" initially seemed to be calling into question the approaches they had adopted in the past. No, dictatorships are not a better rampart against extremists and terrorism. No, relegating the political and social demands of the Arab people to the background is not a long-term solution for achieving stability in the Mediterranean. Consequently, the political upheaval which occurred in the Maghreb in 2011 represents an opportunity to restructure the relationship between Europe and its southern Mediterranean neighbours and to increase European commitment when it comes to continuing

the process of political reform, strengthening the economy and reducing inequalities.

Two years after its first report², the Institut Thomas More is taking another look at the challenge of sustainable security in the Maghreb, providing an updated interpretative framework for the attention of European decision-makers. Far more than an approach focussing on security and on pushing back migrant populations, the Maghreb needs a global approach that will tackle the symptoms of instability and insecurity, as well as and especially their causes, by meeting four challenges: the challenge of democratisation; the economic and social challenge to reduce inequalities and create jobs; the security challenge in the light of persisting terrorist risks and increased violence in the Sahel-Saharan strip; and the challenge of cooperation, which is the only way of rising to the challenges facing the Maghreb in the long term.



1. The interim government held office during the transition between the departure of Ben Ali and the formation of the Constituent Assembly (27th February - 24th December 2011).

2. "Towards a sustainable security in the Maghreb: An opportunity for the region, a commitment for the European Union", special report by the Institut Thomas More, April 2010.



◆ The challenge of democratisation

« Arab Spring » put the spotlight on political demands in the Maghreb and inspired a reform process coupled with hopes and concerns. The first challenges facing the region are democracy and political change. The situation remains uncertain despite the progress made in the last few months. The European Union and other international organisations need to demonstrate their commitment to taking action alongside local and regional players.



1) Islamists in power

Islamist parties have come to power as a result of the elections in North Africa following the political upheaval of the first half of 2011. Parties which were previously confined to the opposition or even prohibited now find themselves cornered, having to prove their ability to govern and to respect democracy at the same time.

a. Shock election results

After the Tunisian elections, in which the Ennahda Muslims obtained a voting score of 40%, it was the turn of the Moroccan electors, who put the Justice and Development Party (PJD) in the lead with 27% of votes. Although both these parties chose to form coalition governments, the after-effects of the elections soon became known. Whereas some young people felt as if the revolution had been stolen from them, several voices made themselves heard in Europe to denounce the dangers of the arrival of Islamist groups in power.

The electoral success of the Islamists can be explained by several different factors. The liberal western model no longer finds favour amongst a section of the Arab population, which looks towards Turkey and the economic successes of the AKP. The Tunisian and Moroccan Islamist parties, which are well established locally, managed to convince voters of the relevance of their programme based on social justice, Arab-Muslim identity and development. Ben Ali even attended religious ceremonies at Al-Zaytuna and filled his speeches with verses from the Koran. Ennahda car-

ried out a large-scale campaign, distributing large numbers of tracts and organising very well-attended public meetings, achieving more presence in the field than their opponents³. Finally and most importantly, in comparison with other political groups, the PJD and Ennahda incarnated the idea of a new start and even gave the impression that they would be bringing order as opposed to the fear felt by some members of the population, or so it seemed in Tunisia, where years of fierce repression had destroyed all opposition parties apart from those which gathered in the mosques⁴.

Despite alarmist talk, democracy was just as victorious in the ballot boxes as the political groups which won

3. Several opponents of Ennahda have in fact accused the Islamist party of accepting money from Qatar, although obtaining funding from abroad is forbidden in accordance with a decree governing the electoral campaign. So far, however, no proof has been found.

4. Alain Frachon, "Le 'printemps arabe', les islamistes et les autres", *Le Monde*, 8th December 2011.



the elections. In Morocco, voter turnout was 45%. In comparison, the attendance rate at the Moroccan legislative elections in 2007 was 37%. In Algeria, 35.51% of the population voted in the legislative elections in May of the same year.

The Islamists' decision to become involved in political life, to test their ideas against the reality of power and to agree to form alliances, also represents a real opportunity for the future. Whereas neo-fundamentalism came about through the defeat of political Islamism in its power-taking strategy of the 1980s and early 1990s, the integration of Ennahda or the PJD has so far proven quite harmonious – as a result of their extensive social efforts. This may reduce the influence of more radical movements by offering Maghreb populations a reassuring means of access to modernity⁵, as was the case with communism and trade unions in the history of countries in Mediterranean Europe. The election results might also act as shock treatment for the traditional secular parties who proved unable to convince the electors in the recent elections, encouraging them to make more of an effort to get closer to potential electors in order to try and win them over. The Moroccan elections illustrate the efforts that still need to be made. The electoral campaign, during which the only party which showed any real commitment was the PJD, was described as tepid and the voters as apathetic by several commentators.

b. The test of power

Now that their opponents have got over their surprise and their followers have finished celebrating, it is time for the Islamists to prove them-

As a result of the Tunisian and Moroccan election results, the Algerian authorities find themselves albeit temporarily in a completely new regional situation which could lead the way to political change in the country. Ever since the 1992 electoral process was stopped, the authorities have been justifying their political closure by the need to contain political Islamism. Now that Ennahda and the PJD are in power, the Algerian leaders may well need to review their arguments and the Islamists may start making new demands. What is more, although the law on political parties adopted on 6th December 2011 put a stop to any possibility of the leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) returning to power, the current climate is ideal for repositioning and restructuring. On 1st January 2012, the Movement for the Society of Peace (MSP), an Islamist party claiming ties with the Muslim brotherhood, announced that it was leaving the presidential alliance it had been part of since 2004 alongside the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the National Rally for Democracy (RND). However, it has shown no clear desire to form a main opposition party and the four MSP ministers are still part of the government. By standing as a facade opposition party, the MSP will be able to channel the Islamist vote, which is expected to increase at the next legislative elections, giving the impression that Algeria has not been left on the sidelines when it comes to political transition⁶.

selves. In the coming months, they will be risking their credibility. The "Islam is the solution" slogan cannot replace politics, and the reference to the "Turkish model" alone is not enough to form a political programme when it comes to public liberties and the economic and social challenges facing each country. The period which began with the Tunisian and Moroccan elections will be a moment of truth and a time for making choices for the core Islamist parties, other

5. Pierre Vermeren, *Maghreb, les origines de la révolution démocratiques*, Paris, Arthème Fayard, 2011 (first edition published in 2004 under the title *Maghreb: la démocratie impossible*), "Pluriel" collection, p. 340.

6. Selma Belaala, researcher at the University of Warwick (United Kingdom), RFI, 2nd January 2012.

circles of influence and their opponents.

These concerns lead us on to the hypothesis of a "hidden agenda". For the time being, this remains a mere supposition, but the rumour has thrived on statements made by Ennahda leaders. When speaking at a political meeting in the city of Sousse a few weeks after the Constituent Assembly elections, Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali referred to a "sixth caliphate", i.e. a theocratic system of government abolished at the beginning of the 20th century after the fall of the Ottoman empire which the Salafists of the Hizb ut-Tahrir party traditionally claim to follow. Whatever Jebali's aim, his use of this historic reference reminds us that Islamist parties are not monolithic blocks, but entities which will have to conciliate religious identity and political modernity in the coming months and years. Whilst the Salafists are attempting to carve out a place for themselves in the public arena, some observers are denouncing discrepancies between what is expected from an Ennahda-based party concerning the role of women, polygamy and the veil, and the official party line, which consists of promises to maintain the Code of Personal Status.

For the time being, Tunisia seems a long way away from Islamic revival "from above". The work done by and the line taken by the Tunisian Constituent Assembly will serve as a test. Since the Algerian civil war, Maghreb Islamists have mostly abandoned their claims for exclusive representation of society and have accepted the electoral rite of passage as a way of reaching power. In the same way, the country's leaders only have limited leverage for action. In Tunisia, Ennahda will have to deal with a mobilised civil society, powerful trade unions, an independent business world and law enforcement which proved during the revolution that it did not intend to act merely as a repressive tool for those in power. It was General Rachid Ammar who struck the fatal blow to Ben Ali's regime, not by following takeover logic but by refusing to shoot demonstrators and then suggesting to the dictator that he should leave the country as quickly as possible.

However, the key issue in the more immediate future is the experience that will be gained by the leaders brought to power in the recent elections. There are nonetheless slight differences between the situation in Morocco and Tunisia. In Morocco, the PJD only controls twelve portfolios out of thirty, and the ministers of Islamic affairs and agriculture have not changed. In Tunisia, the new government's ability to meet the challenges facing the country is under more doubt. As declared by Mahmoud Achour, spokesman of the Tunis section of the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) at the union's 22nd congress, "We do not know their policy on the economy or unemploy-

ment. These people have never been in power. We'll see. We will try and work with them."⁷ This lack of experience probably explains why Ennahda does not want to be in power all by itself, even if it is also a way of not being held solely responsible for the country's difficult economic situation⁸.

Given the context, the attitudes adopted will be decisive in determining the future of the region. European countries have little to gain by demonising or ostracising the parties which won the recent elections. Do they have any choice? Advocates of radical opinions – who may or may not enjoy support from outside the region – are waiting for exactly that sort of European reaction in order to impose their idea of religion, consisting of populist talk based on the idea of a scorned Muslim identity and a clash between civilisations. The Islamist parties which won the recent elections and the Maghreb countries seem to have moved on since the period in history which began with the Algerian civil war. Consequently, it is now up to the Europeans to get to know the election winners, to work with them and to judge them on the merits of their actions alone.

1. Europe and Europeans must get to know the parties which have just come to power and learn to work with them. Although European involvement is expected in North Africa, Europe has nothing to gain by ostracising and demonising the election winners.

2. We need to remain vigilant to make sure that democratic principles and human rights are not called into question, as radical trends rally supporters in favour of opening up public areas, particularly in countries which have experienced a revolution.

7. RFI, 24th December 2011.

8. See *infra*, p.13.

2) Halfway between change and expectations: democratisation caught between two stools

It is proving difficult for the Algerian authorities to implement the promises for political reform made in the first few months of 2011 just after the emergency state had come to an end. Despite a newly formed commission in charge of "consultations", several Councils of Ministers and the support of President Bouteflika, no measures have been adopted to "revolutionise" public and political life. Some recent decisions even seem to be doing quite the opposite. Journalists are subjected to the pressures of power – the director of *El Watan* was questioned fourteen times by the police in the first three months of 2009 – and in February 2011, the Department of Intelligence and Security (DRS) admitted the existence of secret prisons operating outside judicial control⁹. Article 40 of the law on associations adopted on 13th December 2011 for instance gives administrative bodies the right to suspend or withdraw an association's accreditation in the event of "interference in Algeria's internal affairs" or an attack on "national sovereignty". The law also includes a measure making it compulsory to obtain prior permission from the Algerian authorities for foreign funding, thereby reinforcing the state's control over associations.

The obstacles standing in the way of change are not specific to Algeria. On a regional scale, work needs to be done to embrace and overcome political theories and traditional ideas of power before democracy can be strengthened and transparency improved. In the Maghreb as a whole, public areas are all too often regarded as places for the arbitrary appropriation of riches rather than as common property¹⁰. The idea of power "from above" still prevails in the tradition and political practices of Arab societies. The people are simply not part of the country's historiography and the President is a "rais", which literally means "person at the head of" rather than a chief of state. The power relationship has not changed an iota [since the Mid-

dle Ages], according to Egyptian thinker Abdel Jawad Yassine in 2009. The people in charge of the country still act like kings governing over their subjects. The concrete context of this relationship has not moved on despite formal adjustments borrowed from the dictionary of modernity, sometimes transforming the "king" into a "president" and his "subjects" into "people" or adopting the terms "citizen", "citizenship" and "homeland".¹¹ The Ben Ali clan's monopoly over riches and power is precisely in keeping with such ideas and even helps to perpetuate them, going as far as turning them into caricatures. On a different note, the results of the Moroccan referendum on the introduction of a new constitution revealed that more or less conscious practices continue with regard to the King's position in society.

And yet, contrary to the predicted clash between civilisations or to the idea of North Africa being stuck in time, there are four indicators showing a convergence between East and West: the decrease in fertility (2.05 children per woman in Tunisia in 2009 and 2.3 in Algeria for example), the improvements made in terms of education, the influence of hopeful young people emphasising their generation's autonomy and the strength of their age, the arrival of a society of individuals in which the community and family no longer have the same weighting¹². Despite the progress made at varying rates depending on and within each society, ongoing discrepancies between coastlines and inland regions for instance, Maghreb societies are undergoing great changes which are having a long term effect and changing the face of the region.

The attitude of young people and of Tunisian trade unions standing up as "sentinels" against the Constituent Assembly government and the political parties in power is a sign of political modernisation in the Maghreb, showing that the region has reached the "post-modern age". Expectations are expressed on an individual rather than a collective scale. The demonstrations organised in Casablanca and other Moroccan cities by the February 20 Youth Movement¹³ on 25th December 2011 in support of extensive new political and social reforms are another sign of the country's political vitality. Demonstrations have been held more and more frequently in Morocco, making more or less sustainable material demands, ever since King Mohammed VI came to power in 1999¹⁴. The February 20 Youth Movement can be described as an heir to past movements, but is also regarded as innovative in terms of its politici-

9. Amel Boubekeur, *Countries at the Crossroads 2011: Algeria*, Freedom House, 2011, pp. 5-6.

10. Pierre Vermeren, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

11. Quoted by Mathieu Guidère, *Le choc des révolutions arabes*, Paris, Éditions Autrement, 2011, p. 31.

12. For more information about convergences between East and West, see the book written by Youssef Courbage and Emmanuel Todd, *Le Rendez-vous des civilisations* (Paris, Seuil, 2007).

13. On 19th December 2011, Al Adl wal Ihsane announced that it was suspending its involvement in the February 20 Youth Movement and wished to renegotiate their relationship.

14. Karine Bennafla, "Introduction", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2011/3, n°78, pp. 9-24, p. 15.



zation and use of the Internet¹⁵. Even Mauritania is quaking at the demands of young people who have rallied together and taken to the streets of Nouakchott several times, initially to demand economic and social reform, and subsequently to call for the resignation of President Aziz.

Civil society is a regime which generates debate and discussion, and its vitality represents a guarantee of democracy. However, it also relies on the existence of stabilising institutions, which is the role played by the reforming monarchy in Morocco, and on a balance between political groups. Recent experience in Turkey illustrates how African Islamists were tempted to exercise power in an authoritarian way and did not place enough distance between themselves and the AKP. It is true that on the one hand, the Turkish Islamist party showed its ability to become a permanent feature of the political landscape and to achieve flattering economic results. In the same way, veiled women and women dressed in western clothing can sit side by side at café terraces. Yet at the same time, in February 2010, 48 soldiers were arrested and accused of plotting, and on 26th October, the non-governmental organisation Reporters without borders condemned the harassment of independent media by the authorities if journalists were bold enough to mention the Kurd issue or AKP domination...

Tunisia has not yet reached the same stage, and the situation in Tunisia is not the same as in Turkey. However, the country is still in the early stages of democracy, and the attitudes adopted by the parties in power in the coming year will therefore be decisive for the country's future political vitality, not least as far as the length of the Constituent Assembly's mandate is concerned. On 15th September 2011, Ettakatol and Ennahda agreed that its duration would not exceed twelve months¹⁶. Similarly, to prevent too much disparity between different groups with regard to political party funding, the efforts made during the Constituent Assembly elections must be continued in accordance with the principles of balance and fairness. Despite a law voted to regulate party funding, a third of which is to consist of public subventions and two thirds of capital (the limit varies depending on the population of a constituency, but foreign funding is prohibited), the European Union's delegation to observe the elections in Tunisia criticised the fact that no definition of capital was given and that delays occurred in the payment of public funds, slowing down several small lists of candidates early on in the campaign¹⁷.

As the Maghreb moves towards democratisation, the political parties are first in line to try and meet the expectations of the younger generations. This is above all true of non-religious parties, which suffered an unmistakable defeat at the recent elections in both

Morocco and Tunisia. But the European Union also has a role to play alongside local and regional players to defend democratic values and standards whilst ensuring that they become part of the cultural practices and mentalities which are currently undergoing such great change. The stability of our Mediterranean neighbours depends on it. Otherwise, a reflux of collective hope could produce a new revolutionary force and, as a result, could bring "moral issues" to the forefront of public debate and give the impression that Islamic tradition is the only response to disorder.

3. The democratisation process on the south shores of the Mediterranean is still in progress. It is important for the European Union and Europeans to support it. Their support, which must become anchored in mentalities as a long term reality, can be given by exporting democratic values and standards as part of the neighbourhood policy. Democracy is not just about elections but is above all a means of regulating political life that is accepted by all the people in a country.

4. To strengthen democracy, support is needed for civil society, political parties, the media and associations, in the name of a conception of political life based on plurality of expression and balance as a rampart to authoritarian conceptions.

15. Montserrat Emperador Badimon, "Où sont les diplômés chômeurs? Un exemple de pragmatisme protestataire à l'époque du '20 février'", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2011/3, n°78, pp. 77-91.

16. The three coalition parties in power, Ettakatol, Ennahda and the Congress for the Republic (CPR), have not set a limit for the duration of the Constituent Assembly in article 1 of the Assembly regulations, despite requests from the opposition to do so (one year plus a possible six-month extension). Ettakatol justifies this decision through the existence of an agreement signed on 15th September and the difficulties in applying such a limit if the constitution is not written for a year. On the same subject, see: <http://fdt.official.blogspot.com/2011/12/ettakatol-et-duree-de-lassemblee.html>). However, it is true that the CPR was not one of the political groups which agreed that the mandate of the Constituent Assembly would not exceed twelve months...

17. Preliminary conclusions of the delegation sent by the European Union to observe the Tunisian elections, 25th October 2011, p. 3.

◆ The economic and social challenge

« No more poverty, no more unemployment », shouted a youth in the city of Sidi Bouzid as he committed suicide by touching a power line to give himself an electric shock after climbing an electricity pole in a street at the start of the revolution¹⁸. The challenge of development remains omnipresent behind the political and democratic demands being made. On the one hand, its failure is at the heart of political upheaval. On the other hand, not responding to economic and social expectations will prevent lasting stabilisation by fostering discontent and frustration.



1) Structural fragility, economic aggravation

The Maghreb's weak economies and social inequalities form a backdrop for the population's demands. Recent political upheaval has not improved the situation. In fact the opposite is true. The economy has been fully hit by the "Arab Spring" shockwave, especially in the countries which have undergone revolution.

a. Development as a backdrop to political upheaval

Political upheaval leads us on to the subject of the fifty-year failure of regimes in the Maghreb to set their countries on the road towards development. Political demands cannot be dissociated from economic and social demands. The young Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire, earned a living selling fruit and vegetables. He is the symbol of a young generation suffering the full effects of the shortage of prospects.

There is nothing new about this situation. The UNDP's 2002 report on development in Arab countries showed

the extent of the economic crisis throughout the Maghreb at the time. One Moroccan in five was living on less than one dollar a day, and two out of five were living on less than 2 dollars. Since then, the launch of the National Human Development Initiative has lessened the most extreme poverty. But the degree of inequality persists in the long term, and the gap is actually widening¹⁹ whereas in 2007, according to figures provided by the authorities, 9 % of the Moroccan population was still living under the poverty threshold²⁰. In Algeria, on the other side of the border, the positive economic indicators are only a result of hydrocarbon exports and oil prices. Growth is "crippled" by a lack of diversification, the constant rise in services being imported and continuing inequality. The economic policies adopted in the name of "economic patriotism" have not benefitted local private players, and have even added to inequalities, especially in rural areas.

Young people are particularly affected by these difficulties. In September 2010, unemployment in Tunisia

18. "Des Tunisiens dans la rue contre le chômage", *Le Figaro*, 28th December 2010.

19. Larabi Jaïdi, professor of economics at Mohamed V University in Rabat, quoted by Florence Beaugé, "L'économie du Maroc reste fragile, malgré des résultats flatteurs", *Le Monde*, 30th September 2011.

20. Figures supplied by the Moroccan Ministry of Economy and Finance, Department of Economic Studies and Financial Forecast, social indicators, January 2011 edition, p. 28.



stood at 14%, but was approximately twice as high for young people under the age of 25. As well as this difference between the unemployment rate of young people and other categories of the population in the region, discrimination appears at two other levels: university graduates are less employed than unqualified workers and are more likely to find themselves without a job. In this situation, a moral crisis begins, fed by corruption and predation. The American diplomatic cables made public by Wikileaks revealed the extent of corruption by the Ben Ali clan in Tunisia, adding to the frustration felt by young people with a ringside seat in the revolution. Disadvantaged young people decided to rebel against an unfair govern-

ment, inefficient administration and widespread unjustifiable preferential treatment. The protest movement began in the housing estates in Alger, in shanty towns in Casablanca and the Al-Nour district in Kasserine... before being joined at a later stage by young people from richer areas.

"Arab Spring" in the Maghreb is therefore the result of the regimes' failure to meet the expectations of young people, whose frustration burst out in the streets. However, revolutions do not reassure investors and do not reduce inequalities; quite the opposite is true.

b. The shockwave of Arab Spring

Coming on top of existing structural fragility, Arab Spring has had an impact on the region's economies in general, although contrasts can be seen between each different country. Political reforms, social measures and revolutions do not come cheap for the countries on the southern banks of the Mediterranean.

Morocco suffered a drop in the growth of tourism, mainly affecting French and Spanish tourists, not only due to the demonstrations being held in the country and the terrorist attack in the Argana café in Marrakech but also because of the economic crisis in European Union countries. According to data supplied by the tourism watchdog, the number of overnight stays recorded between January and September 2011 fell by 4.5% compared to the first nine months of 2010, even if the result in terms of revenue was a 5.3% increase. The response to popular aspirations in the economic and social fields also comes at a cost to the kingdom of Morocco, adding to the effects of the decline in tourism growth. The policy implemented by Moroccan authorities to meet the inhabitants' expectations at the beginning of the year is proving expensive for the public accounts. The increase in subventions for necessities (gas, sugar, flour, etc.), the rise in the minimum wage and in civil servants' salaries and the creation of more than 40 000 civil servant positions over two years are all examples of measures which have multiplied the budget deficit by two. The deficit stood at an estimated figure of 5.7% in 2011 and will be 7.5% in 2012 if the new government fails to take action.

Tunisia is even worse off than Morocco. In its September 2011 report, the FMI forecast zero growth for the year due to the economic repercussions of the revolution and the civil war in Libya²¹.

◆ The number of tourists visiting the country in the first ten months of 2011 as published by the Tunisian

national tourist office dropped by 33.3% and stood at just 4 million visitors. The fall in numbers even represented over 45% as far as European visitors were concerned (1.9 million) and 41% for Algerian tourists. In the more specific field of medical tourism, numbers fell by 60% for 2011 as a whole.

◆ The war in Libya has greatly affected the economic relationship between Libya and Tunisia, whose average annual growth rate was 9% between 2000 and 2010. Whereas Tripoli purchased 6.9% of Tunisian exports, mainly products from the food industry, building materials, iron and steel, Tunis mostly imported oil, managing to satisfy a quarter of Tunisian requirements. At the end of the year, commercial exchanges and investment flows between the two



21. IMF World Economic Outlook. *Slowing growth, rising risks*, International Monetary Fund, September 2011, p. 103. According to the African Development Bank, which is not quite so pessimistic, the growth of the Tunisian GDP, which stood at over 3% in 2010, could represent 0.7% in 2011. The figures supplied by the Tunisian National Statistics Institute indicate a gradual recovery of growth during the first three quarters: - 3.2% for the first quarter, - 0.3 % for the second and + 1.2% for the third.

countries had fallen significantly, and the border was even closed for security reasons during December. Tunisians working in Libya (approximately 100 000 people) came back over the border²², increasing the number of people without jobs, which is thought to be approximately 20% of the active population.

◆ Lastly, investors have fled due to the perseverance of social movements and a fear of seeing them persist as a result of the change in regime. Foreign Direct investment (FDI) is dropping and companies are delocalising their production²³. On 20th December, Japanese cable manufacturer Yazaki announced the closure of one of its centres employing 500 people due to continued road blockages and repeated wild-cat strikes since the revolution, according to a company announcement, despite the decision which had been made in February to increase salaries well above the legal minimum wage and to hire non-essential workers²⁴.

It is essential for the European Union to take the economic consequences of "Arab Spring" into account in order to prevent the revolutionary process from gaining new speed and undergoing radicalisation, and to stop the democratic process from derailing. Economic and social crises jam the mechanisms for controlling society and can set the ideal conditions for unsatisfied social demands to be met with radical views by seeping away the confidence needed for democracy of the people from its elite²⁵.

5. Development must be at the heart of the approach adopted by the international community in the region to meet the population's primary expectations and to produce long term stability. "Arab Spring" has accentuated economic and social fragilities in North Africa, particularly in countries which have undergone a revolution.

6. In the light of unsatisfied expectations and at the risk of reviving revolutionary processes which would bring radical groups to power, it is important for political leaders, trade unions and representatives of civil society to teach others about the choices made and the need to work together on an economic front.

2) Projects for growth

Economic policies to reduce inequalities are proving expensive. The Ennahda Islamists claim that they need 84 billion Euros for their projects and have turned to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for help. PJD Islamists in Morocco are envisaging the possibility of increasing national debt and are relying on Islamic funding. But whatever the type of funding found, there are at least three issues to be addressed.

22. Any improvement of the border situation appears a long way off. On 31st December, a dozen Libyans kidnapped four Tunisian policemen at the border between Tunisia and Libya, three of whom managed to escape. In the night between the 1st and 2nd of January, Tunisian policemen repelled armed Libyans under the influence of alcohol who were attempting to cross the border by shooting at security forces (AFP, 2nd January 2012).

23. In an announcement dated 24th November 2011, Nourredine Zekri, General Director of the FIPA (Foreign Investment Promotion Agency) mentioned a drop of 25 % in foreign investment for 2011 and the closure of 120 foreign small and medium-sized businesses.

24. Announcement made by the Yazaki company, TAP, 23rd December 2011.

25. Emmanuel Todd, *Après la démocratie*, Paris, Gallimard, "folio actuel" collection, 2008, p. 260.

26. Benjamin Stora, conversation with Edwy Plenel, *Le 89 arabe*, Paris, Stock, "un ordre d'idées" collection, 2011, p. 112.

a. Employment and development model

The first project for growth is to create jobs, which leads us on to the subject of education systems and professional training. UNESCO data published in 2010 shows that higher education institutions in the Maghreb are missing from all the international rankings, even the "Shanghai" ranking of the 500 best universities in the world. There are very few requests for patents. Between 1963 and 2008, the number of patents registered by the relevant American administrative body that had been submitted by citizens of Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya was 113, whereas the figure was 54 349 for Switzerland and 16 514 for Belgium for example²⁶.



Although efforts are required in the fields of education and professional training, Maghreb countries also need to rethink their developmental model.

In the opinion of economist Lahcen Achy, from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Tunisian economy can no longer continue to specialise in sectors which require a large unqualified workforce. It is suffering as a result of competition from Asian countries, an increase in the number of graduates on the job market and vulnerability due to the high concentration of exchanges with Europe, which is in the middle of a crisis. Yet there are not many solutions, according to the economist. Developing new sectors likely to employ qualified managers is encountering reticence from Tunisian entrepreneurs reluctant to take the risk of entering more complex investment niches, which are automatically more risky. Investments in sectors with high added value are running up against competition from experienced foreign entrepreneurs. The domestic market is too limited without regional integration. In short, the only remaining possibility is to re-orientate the Tunisian economy towards other markets in accordance with

a medium and long term strategy which implies increasing the competitiveness of the private sector, putting an end to protectionist political measures and encouraging private investment, orientating the economy towards booming sectors, without neglecting the main employers of unskilled labour²⁷.

As an oil-exporting country, Algeria is suffering from similar problems. Although the authorities seem optimistic and the indicators are pointing to green, the 2011 FEMISE report warns that the country has not yet found a growth model to reduce inequalities, unemployment and poverty. Algeria's foreign accounts are solid and the World Bank is forecasting a continued drop in public debt to 2.9 billion dollars in 2012, whilst the foreign balance surplus is constantly increasing. But in the light of what is happening in the Arab world, Algeria still has the same choices to make: whether to reform its institutions to make them more democratic and transparent, thereby revitalising economic development, or to favour the political status quo and continue to rely on income from gas and oil²⁸.



b. Governance as a priority

In the more immediate future, governance and the fight against corruption and predation are at the heart of the expected reforms, both to attract foreign investors and to meet the people's desire for social justice.

In the ranking drawn up by the NGO Transparency International regarding the index of perception of corruption, Morocco dropped from the 72nd to the 80th place between 2007 and 2011, despite the ratification of the United Nations Convention against corruption by the Moroccan parliament in 2007 and the creation of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). As admitted by the ICPC Chairman himself in an interview given to the newspaper *La Vie éco* on 29th March 2011, the organisation needs more prerogatives to carry out its tasks. Above all, it needs to be given "sufficient authority" to do so. Although it can request information, the ICPC does not have any investigative powers. Nor does it have the right to initiate legal proceedings. Consequently, it cannot obtain information or data, nor can

27. Lahcen Achy, *Tunisia's Economic Challenges*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Middle East Center, December 2011.

28. *Toward a New Med Region: Achieving Fundamental Transitions*, Femise report on the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, November 2011, p. 94.

it punish offenders²⁹. Still, compared with other countries in the region, Morocco remains well placed. Tunisia was ranked 73rd in 2011 but Algeria came 112th, Mauritania 143rd and Libya 168th.

Eradicating the scourge of corruption is a huge undertaking. Corruption can take root in traditional structures such as tribal solidarity in Libya. Putting a stop to it is like attacking a complex, collaborative equilibrium, which involves permanently mobilising different players in the public sphere and leads us to question the very relationship which exists between such figures and the state and its leaders³⁰. The rea-

son why the people governing a country generally refuse to fight too severely against corruption is precisely to avoid alienating large parts of the population, particularly agents – or supporters – of the state. “Institutional twinning” is a particularly useful tool in this case because it can strengthen administrative practices “from the bottom up” through a combination of harmonisation, education and sensitisation. Provided of course that there is a desire to take action. In Algeria within the last few years for instance, the government refused to cooperate with an Algerian association fighting against corruption affiliated with Transparency International³¹.

c. Reducing inequalities between territories

The third project involves fighting against inequalities between coastline regions and inland regions. According to the 2011 Tunisian budget, 80% of expenditure was intended to cover the expenses of the ten coastline governorates, and the interim government had to launch an emergency plan to help inland regions meet the cost of social services, jobs, transport and water facilities, etc. This challenge is all the more important because urbanisation is struggling to act as a driving force for development, and agricultural jobs are likely to be threatened by liberalised exchanges within the Euromed free trade area.

Stressing the value of local territories could take the form of decentralisation. In places where regional entities exist, their powers are still weak. There are several reasons for this: centralist tradition, role of the state as provider of basic services after independence, or the increase in security concerns in the 1990s. Consequently, in Morocco, the body representing the regional councils of the sixteen economic regions formed in 1997 is weak and suffers from a lack of human and financial resources, and the power is still in the hands of the wali and central government. Since the consultative regionalisation commission submitted its report in March 2011, the Moroccan government has made the decentralisation and devolution movement a major subject on the 2012 political agenda along with the regional elections, with a view to strengthening democracy on a local scale and to supporting economic development.

29. Jaouad Mdidech, “Lutte contre la corruption: le coup de gueule d’Abdeslam Aboudrar”, *La Vie éco*, 29th March 2011.

30. Baudouin Dupret and Jean-Noël Ferrière, “Maroc: le “printemps arabe” de la monarchie”, *Moyen-Orient*, n°12, October-December 2011, p. 61.

31. Amel Boubekeur, *art. cit.*, p. 11.

There is a long list of expectations, including strengthening local democracy, population investment, improved monitoring of projects and, as a long-term possibility, the emergence of transnational regions. However, when making such reforms, it is important to remain attentive to a possible increase in corruption within local authorities lacking resources but which find themselves faced with powerful national and international economic interests. Successful decentralisation requires the existence of local skills, as well as sufficient human and material resources to carry out the assigned tasks. If necessary, devolution by the state is a better option to choose.

7. It is vital to strengthen the education system, not only to improve training quality but also to make education correspond better to developmental policies and national requirements.

8. In the immediate future, we must encourage measures which support foreign and local investments throughout the different Maghreb countries: strengthening the fight against corruption, modernising legal and technical frameworks for creating and managing companies, territorialised approaches.



◆ The security challenge

The security situation in the Maghreb has significantly deteriorated following the civil war in Libya and the resulting circulation of weapons. As the "war on terrorism" is waged, terrorist groups remain a security threat due to their establishment and expansion in the Sahel-Saharan strip through their connections with local players, despite the fact that they have been somewhat marginalised by "Arab Spring" and the hopes it has instilled.



1) Criminality, trafficking and terrorism in the Maghreb

The failure of development encourages Maghreb societies to resort to criminality and delinquency. In addition to common-law criminality, the region also has to cope with terrorism, especially in Algeria, which is home to the head of the Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI), Abdelmalek Droukdal. Nor are neighbouring countries spared from terrorists eager to start an upsurge.

a. Criminality, delinquency and trafficking

Criminality feeds on poverty and the lack of prospects for young people. It is of great concern to the authorities, be it damage to property and people, economic and financial delinquency or miscellaneous trafficking ranging from cannabis growing in Morocco to the contraband of Libyan petrol in south Tunisia. During August 2011, which coincided with Ramadan, police forces in Algeria increased the number of operations being carried out, generating a 73% increase in the number of individuals questioned for carrying prohibited weapons and a 65% increase for possession or use of drugs and psychotropic substances³². The national strategy to fight against drugs implemented in Morocco since 2005 seems to be producing encouraging results, as noted by the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) in its March 2011 report. The production of cannabis resin had dropped from 3 070 to 820 tonnes between 2003 and 2009³³.

In addition to local criminality with regional connections, the Maghreb and western Africa have become an established thoroughfare for cocaine originating in Latin America entering the European market. Given

that the North-American market is now saturated, South-American cartels are sending their production to Europe. The number of users in Europe has increased from 2 to 4.5 million in the space of ten years, thereby absorbing 20% of the production from Latin America. This African route crosses countries such as Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde before moving up towards the European continent, taking advantage of the low standard of living to corrupt local police services. Trafficking via western Africa, which had increased dramatically between 2004 and 2007, seems to have fallen in 2008 and 2009 according to the UNODC. However, African groups, particularly from Nigeria, have muscled in on the international trafficking business, and the situation may still evolve³⁴.

32. General Directorate of National Security, *Bilan des opérations de police du mois d'août 2011*, Alger, 24th September 2011.

33. International Narcotics Control Board, *2010 Report*, Vienna, March 2011, p. 56.

34. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug report 2010*, 2010, pp. 12 and 52.

The regional context does not inspire much optimism. The war in Libya and country's unstable situation is likely to encourage this type of violence by enabling criminals of all kinds to equip themselves with weapons from the war or to make a profit from arms trafficking or selling explosives. At the end of December, Algerian security services dismantled a network south of the town of Djanet comprising twelve people from Algeria, Mali and Niger, in pos-

session of several light weapons and large quantities of ammunition from Libya, which they were intending to sell. Just as worrying, or even more so, is the fact that some of these weapons might end up in the hands of terrorist units. Again according to Algerian authorities in the Djanet region, the weapons found in two Toyotas from Libya on 12th December 2011 by an army unit on patrol, were intended for the AQMI's Sahel branch.

b. Al Qaida and the Jihadists eager to start a new upsurge

Whilst AQMI is still a mainly Algerian phenomenon in the Maghreb, "Arab Spring" can be seen as a disavowal of the Jihadist strategy based on terrorism and violence. Worse still for a structure which has developed a network of sites and franchised forums on the Internet which enable it to exert an influence which is much greater than its real impact, Jihadist news scarcely made the headlines in 2011 (apart from the death of Bin Laden) given the extent of the political change in the region. The internet and social networks have become relays for passing on the views of militants for human rights and democracy, heralds of political openness and tolerance. According to Jean-Pierre Filiu, the virtual echo-chamber of the Jihadists, with its limited register and pseudo-religious message, has lost its power of attraction in the face of the effervescence that goes hand in hand with democratic uprising on the web³⁵. And yet, in the midst of the Tunisian revolution, a lone informatician and AQMI follower recommended the installation and use of a free software package called Tor to jam traces of navigation on the Internet³⁶, mentioning incidentally that the software had been developed by the American army.

Given their difficulty in becoming an established part of political agendas, Al Qaida attempted to catch up with the revolution but ended up giving the impression that it was simply jumping on the bandwagon. In a message dated 8th June 2011, Bin Laden's successor, the Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri, welcomed popular uprisings in Tunisia, in Egypt, Libya, Syria and the Yemen, and assured opponents of the regimes in these countries of Al Qaida's support "against the United States and their agents". Four months later, in another video, he made an appeal for assistance



from Al Qaida's Libyan and Algerian "brothers". Looking beyond such appeals in aid of revolutionary movements and accusations that the United States is to blame for all the problems in the Arab world, the speeches made by Jihadist chiefs and fighters tend to adapt to the new context. The "enlightened avant-garde" was of course not responsible for the political upheaval. The protest movement originated in the Arab streets. But it maintains that it was always right to fight against fallen regimes and right not to believe that the West would allow the establishment of democracy and support the legitimate aspirations of the Arab and Muslim people.

Another strategy is to overthrow the political process in favour of a counter-revolution. The Jihadist move-

35. Jean-Pierre Filiu, *La Révolution arabe. Dix leçons sur le soulèvement démocratique*, Paris, Fayard, 2011, p. 171.

36. Tor is a software programme which enables the user to escape analysis of Internet traffic – at least partly – by bouncing back signals within a relay network.



ment has a lot to lose from a democratic victory, and a lot to gain from an authoritarian overthrowing followed by heightened repression. With this in mind, the attack against the Agrana, a tourist café in Marrakech on 28th April 2011, was seen as a Jihadist attack on the process of political reform in Morocco, echoing information passed on by the Moroccan press a few months earlier, according to which AQMI was attempting to set up a branch in the country. For good reason, since a counter-revolutionary campaign carried out by the governments of the region with the support of Europeans and Americans, one of the consequences of which would be to put a stop to any dissent, would form a hotbed of Jihadist renewal which would feed on conflictuality.

From an ideological point of view, Al Qaida has lost the battle in the Maghreb because the revolutions have shown it to be in the wrong. However, from a strategic point of view, the organisation can still bounce back. It is therefore important for the European Union, Europeans and their American allies to avoid closing off any kind of open areas suffering the effects of revolts and revolutions in the Arab world. The risk of terrorism remains high, in security or even economic terms, with an effect on tourism for instance. On the other hand, from a political point of view, the battle seems to have been lost for good. Unless the revolutions stop halfway, pushing disappointed followers of revolutionary groups into the arms of the nebulous terrorist organisation, convinced, as is Al Qaida, that the armed fight is the only

solution left and that their Muslim brothers have "betrayed" them³⁷.

Al Qaida seems determined to try its luck in this uncertain context. According to British authorities, two leading figures from the terrorist organisation left Pakistan for Libya at the end of 2011, whilst others were arrested during the journey³⁸. We must not forget that the situation in Libya and the rise of insecurity in the Sahara area represent opportunities that cannot be ignored.

9. Strengthen the police forces, legal centres and border control services, by associating regional and international organisations.

10. Maintain European commitment to political change and economic reform to limit the appeal of criminality and terrorism.

2) The dangers of the Sahara

The civil war in Libya and the fact that the countries in the region are having trouble acting together have made the security situation in the Sahara considerably worse. Insecurity and instability have grown, making it all the more necessary for the European countries and the European Union to maintain their commitment in the region, but to proceed with care so as not to stir up tension.

a. Rising insecurity

Looking back, 2011 was a black year for the Sahel-Sahara area. Without going as far as to talk about "Afghanistanisation" of the region, the situation is explosive and insecurity has grown.

The last few months of 2011 were marked by several events. On 23rd October, three humanitarian aid workers (two Spaniards and an Italian woman) were kidnapped near Tindouf. A month later, on 24th November, it was the turn of two French nationals in northern Mali, followed by three Europeans the next day (one Swede, a Dutch citizen and a British/South African holder of dual nationality). A fourth westerner

was killed trying to resist kidnapping in Timbuktu in broad daylight. The weapons and ammunition scattered as a result of the Libyan conflict (assault rifles, ground to air missiles³⁹, heavy mortar, mines, etc) are

37. Jean-Pierre Filiu, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

38. Jason Burke, "Al-Qaida leadership almost wiped out in Pakistan, British officials believe", *The Guardian.co.uk*, 25th December 2011.

39. French foreign minister Alain Juppé mentioned the figure of 10 000 ground to air missiles which had disappeared from Libyan warehouses in a statement to French MPs at the beginning of November 2011.

just some of the examples of arms available to criminals and mercenaries of all kinds at a loose end.

More worrying still, terrorism and radicalism in the region are spreading. Whilst it is true that in the course of the year, the Mauritanian army has carried out various raids and combed several areas of Wagadou forest in western Mali, and that Niger has embarked on a programme to modernise its security forces, on a sub-regional scale the number of territories subject to terrorist threats seems to be on the increase. According to the local authorities, members of Al-Qaida in the Maghreb (AQMI) have been coming into national schools in southern Mali to demand an end to coeducation. Responsibility for the kidnappings which



40. The presumed leader of this group is Mauritanian.

41. "Sahara occidental: divorce consommé entre le Mali et le Polisario", *Jeune Afrique*, 27th December 2011.

42. At the 13th congress of the Polisario Front, which was held in Tifariti in December 2011, Mohamed Abdelaziz – the only candidate for his own succession – was re-elected with 96 % of votes for the 11th consecutive time since 1976, at the head of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).

43. Adamou Rabani in a speech given at the conference on "Sahara de tous les enjeux. Géopolitique, sécurité et développement", Paris, FMSH, 14th December 2011.

took place on 23rd October was claimed by a group described as a dissident of AQMI calling itself the Unity Movement for Jihad in West Africa. This group was previously unknown, but its name clearly expresses its sub-regional claims⁴⁰, and echoes the affiliation of the Boko Haram sect and Somali Shabaabs with Al Qaida.

Terrorism is just one of the challenges facing the countries in the Sahel-Saharan area. Factors of instability which AQMI uses to its own advantage to spread its influence include cocaine trafficking, demographic growth, the shortfalls of education systems, recurring food crises and weapon circulation. Polisario Front chiefs have distinguished themselves several times by taking part in drug trafficking. Out of the eight drug traffickers arrested by the Mauritanian army in December 2010, two were Sahrawis with close links to the head of Polisario military intelligence, Mohamed Ould Laakik, and had been seen in his company three months beforehand. In the same way, the Mali authorities publicly mentioned a Saharan branch of AQMI said to be involved in kidnappings⁴¹. In any event, the straitjackets placed on political life⁴², the lack of economic prospects plus the drying up of subsidies supplied by Gaddafi can but add to the appeal of different types of trafficking to young people in the Tindouf camps or Polisario chiefs on the lookout for extra income.

Lastly, the return of Touareg fighters from Libya is increasing tension and the risk of violence. In December 2011, the President of the Regional council of the Agadez region in Niger estimated that only a fourth of the fighters returning from Libya had been disarmed⁴³. However, although in Niger, a revival of a movement of rebellion centred on political claims does not seem to be on the agenda due to the integration of the Touaregs within the country's structures and the establishment of a regionalisation process, the situation in Mali is more worrying. The MNLA (the result of the merge of the Northern Mali Tuareg movement (MTNM) and the Azawad nationalist movement (MNA)) launched a military offensive on 17th January 2012 in the name of independentist claims, the after-effects of which could be felt in neighbouring countries.

b. Limited room for manoeuvre

The international community, and above all the United States and Europeans, has limited room for manoeuvre. Support and assistance from players outside the region is essential in technical areas, for training and governance purposes. However, internationalisation remains a trap which may well aggravate



existing problems, strengthening the position of extremists by the publicity they gain from it and giving added weighting to the logic of conflict which they can use to their own advantage. Foreign involvement should only be used as a complement to commitment and active cooperation amongst the local actors directly concerned.

Although the war in Libya has encouraged an awareness of the risk that they situation may erupt into violence, particularly due to bilateral cooperation between Algeria and Niger, or between Algeria and Mali, the process to strengthen the security forces in the Sahel is far from complete and regional cooperation is still in its infancy. For instance, the Committee of Joint Chiefs (Cemoc) formed in April 2010 to bring together military chiefs from Algeria, Mauritania, Mali and Niger to fight against the activities of AQMI and cross-border traffickers in the Sahel, has not yet managed to establish effective regional cooperation.

The development of terrorism makes it crucial to strengthen cooperation that goes beyond borders. Although priority should be given to consolidating this strategy, it is also important to extend the number of countries involved, particularly when it comes to sharing information. At a time when terrorists are attempting to take over new areas – and the more successful the security forces are in the areas in which terrorist groups are located today, the more likely such groups will be to move on, sliding on from one area to another – cooperation cannot be limited to the countries which are currently represented in the Cemoc. This is the case in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa such as Burkina-Faso or Chad, as well as in countries bordering the Mediterranean such as Libya (which has requested assistance to control its Saharan border as part of the country's reconstruction and transition process), Morocco or Tunisia.

What is more, interconnecting efforts does not only concern the countries in the Sahara region, but also western countries themselves. For Europeans, the European Union is the legitimate organisation to play the role of coordinator. The EU's Sahel strategy is initiating an approach based on four lines of action: development, good governance and settlement of internal conflicts; helping to promote a common vision and strategy for Sahel countries; strengthening the capacities of the countries concerned in terms of security and justice; and finally, preventing and combating violent extremism and radicalisation⁴⁴.

Although a global approach remains the most appropriate way of meeting the security challenges facing the Sahel-Saharan area, it can only work if states agree to act together. In this respect, we must not forget that the fight against terrorism is not the only

objective of the United States on the African continent⁴⁵. The commitment shown by the world's major power in North Africa is also part of Washington's desire to promote economic exchange and to ensure access to the continent's natural resources, especially to make allies of the African countries in the United States' relationship with its partners in the Middle East. In the same way, the countries neighbouring the Sahara must deal with "subtle political balances given the complex communitarian balances of power in these countries", involving players who, sometimes within the state, "have something to gain in the permanence of a lucrative insecure situation or even voluntary abandoning of sovereignty"⁴⁶.

11. European countries must encourage and strengthen support of local governments in the Sahel-Saharan area, according to a global approach which is not limited to modernising security forces, but also takes into account the local populations, their expectations and their development.

12. Extension and consolidation of regional cooperation should be encouraged in the light of transnational violence which ignores borders and extends into sub-regions.

13. To ensure the success of the EU-Sahel strategy, European countries must embrace the strategy and invest in it in the long term by taking action in a coordinated, concerted manner.

44. European External Action Service, *Strategy for security and development in the Sahel*, 2011.

45. For more information about the different scales within the fight against terrorism, see Antonin Tisseron, "Enchevêtrements géopolitiques autour de la lutte contre le terrorisme dans le Sahara", *Hérodote*, n°142, 3rd quarter of 2011, pp. 98-107.

46. Charles Toussaint, "Vers un partenariat euro-sahélien de sécurité et de développement?", *Annuaire Français de Relations internationales*, Volume XI, Bruxelles, Bruylant/La documentation française, 2010, pp. 759-774, p. 770.

◆ The challenge of cooperation

The challenge of cooperation needs to be met in order to establish the conditions needed for sustainable security in the Maghreb, be it in terms of development or in finding a solution to the region's security challenges. The challenge of cooperation is in fact on two levels: firstly, between the countries of the Maghreb themselves and secondly, in their relationship with the European Union.



1) A persisting non-Maghreb

Despite the announcement of regional integration between the countries of the Maghreb in 1989, the Maghreb is still a fragmented area, characterised by a lack or weakness of exchange and cooperation between different partners. And yet political upheaval in the region is starting to change all that.

a. Opening borders: hope and progress

The issue of borders and their closure is an age-old problem which has traditionally affected the countries in the Maghreb. Opening up borders would be of great potential to the region. The progress made on this front since "Arab Spring" and the civil war in Libya deserves a mention.

In July 2011, as part of efforts to strengthen cooperation between Algeria and Tunisia, Algerian foreign minister Mourad Medelci and his Tunisian counterpart Mohamed Mouldi Kafi signed an agreement to define the maritime borders between Algeria and Tunisia. On this occasion, the Tunisian minister expressed his desire to develop and strengthen the relationship between the two countries, in the best interests of both parties to promote human transit and financial exchanges, particularly on the Tunisian side. Ennahda's arrival in power, which might have caused deterioration in the relationship between the

two neighbours, does not appear to be on the agenda. Although prior to the Tunisian revolution, Rachid Ghannouchi was forbidden from entering Algeria, where he had stayed in the early 1990s, his trip to Alger on 19th, 20th and 21st November and the welcome he was given as a head of state illustrate the Algerian government's desire to form ties to rebuild a close relationship with its new neighbours, forgetting the political colour of its leaders.

On the other side of Algeria, there have been signs of a thaw in diplomatic relations between Alger and Rabat ever since "Arab Spring". On 30th July of last year, Abdelaziz Bouteflika sent a message of friendship to Morocco. "Convinced of the shared destiny which links us, I again wish to inform Your Majesty that I would like us to combine our efforts to rebuild our links of brotherhood, cooperation and neighbourly relations to build an exemplary bilateral relationship which will serve the best interests of our two countries and peoples, bound by historic relationships and affected by the challenges of the future", he declared on the occasion of the celebration of the Moroccan throne festival⁴⁷. On the other side, on the occasion

47. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, message sent to Mohammed VI on the occasion of the celebration of the throne, 30th July 2011.

of the 36th anniversary of the "Green market", on 6th November, King Mohammed VI called upon Algeria to become a "true driving force for Arab unity" alongside Morocco. On 23rd November, as a sign of their growing friendship, Algeria and Morocco signed several agreements on agricultural cooperation. A few days later, they went on to sign a contract for supplying Algerian natural gas to two electric power stations in Morocco over a ten-year period. Finally, on 23rd January, the new Moroccan foreign minister, Saad-Eddine El-Othmani, embarked on a two-day visit to Algeria, the first visit made by a head of Moroccan diplomacy since 2003.

Despite signs of bridge-building between Algeria and Morocco and the appeal made by Mohammed VI in the course of his speech from the throne on 30th July 2011, the border between the two countries remains closed. The considerable consequences of border closure are already well known. In 2008, exchanges between Algeria and Morocco only represented 570 million dollars according to the Algerian delegate responsible for Maghreb and African Affairs. By means of comparison, exchanges between Algeria and France stood at 10 billion Euros in 2008. And yet there are some real synergies taking place, for instance in the energy

field, and even in fertiliser production. Algeria and Morocco could form a relationship similar to the one which exists between Algeria and Tunisia. Morocco could become a tourist resort for Algerians, and Moroccan entrepreneurs could invest in Algeria to boost the local economy.

In any event, the local inhabitants have nothing to gain from keeping the borders between the two countries closed. Algeria and Morocco are the region's driving forces, and border closure has a direct impact on economic development and stability in the Maghreb. The efforts and capacity to start afresh are in line with the benefits to be gained from reopening the borders. After the appeal made by Mohammed VI in favour of opening the borders, the ball is in the Algerian court, although Algeria is suffering less from border closure than neighbouring Morocco. Although these are not the first signs of a "thaw" since 1994 and despite General Abdelkader Kherfi's replacement at the head of counter-intelligence by General Bachir Tertag, who is described as a harsh man appointed to "eradicate the last remaining Al-Qaida hotbeds in the Islamic Maghreb"⁴⁸, great prudence is required regarding the position of the Department of Intelligence and Security. "Arab Spring" and the civil war in Libya have modified the external and internal politics of the countries in the region.

b. The issue of the Arab Maghreb Union

Opening the border between Morocco and Algeria is an essential prerequisite for reviving the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). The UMA, which was formed in 1989 by the Marrakech treaty between the five Maghreb countries, has not met since 1994, despite statements in principle which regularly point out the "rich potential of the institution's varied, efficient structures". In fact, the political project is mostly defended by companies and economic players⁴⁹.

Re-establishing the UMA would boost local economies by increasing trade within the Maghreb and by encouraging foreign direct investment (FDI). Speaking at a Maghreb economic meeting organised by the Arab Institute of Business Managers last December, the Chairman of the National Council of the PJD, Saâdeddine El Othmani, reminded listeners of the importance of this type of cooperation given the increasingly difficult context of the world economy and the increase in protectionist views in several European countries. Whereas trade between the countries in the Maghreb Union and the European Union represent between 60 and 70% of foreign trade, trade within Maghreb countries only represents 2%, leading to estimated losses of two points of economic growth, i.e. over 10 billion dollars for

the region as a whole. Given the fragile nature of the region's societies and economies, and with the economic downturn in the Euro area looming in the background, one possible solution would be to eliminate tariffs and improve transport and communication infrastructures. This would produce stable, mutual growth in the Maghreb and represent a source of sustainable security for both shores of the Mediterranean.

The UMA ministerial meeting scheduled for 17th February 2012 offers hope of finding a solution. However actions speak louder than words, and there is still the problem of which method to choose.

48. Fayçal Métaoui, editor of *El Watan*, RFI, 27th December 2011.

49. Luis Martinez, *Violence de la rente pétrolière. Algérie-Irak-Libye*, Paris, Les Presses de Sciences-Po, 2010, pp. 197-198.

◆ On the one hand, the creation of a free trade area⁵⁰ needs to be progressive, following a realistic, gradual approach which takes the complementarities between different countries into account whilst limiting the repercussions of trade agreements already signed by certain North African countries over the rest of the region.

◆ On the other hand, it is important not to make the issue of western Sahara a prerequisite for reviving the UMA. Efforts to re-establish a normal relationship between Morocco and Algeria may well run up against the failure to settle of the western Sahara conflict once again. This is the main obstacle preventing the two countries from coming to an agreement, particularly due to Algerian partisans of the hard line. Despite the autonomy proposal put forward by Rabat in 2007, which is the most credible and realistic solution⁵¹, the situation came to a standstill during negotiation rounds between the Polisario and Morocco in Manhasset.

Given the sensitive nature of the situation, the European Union and Europeans must endeavour to promote regional integration which is based primarily on economic and commercial achievements. Projects in the energy field for producing renewable energy in the Maghreb and for building power lines connecting Africa to Europe (Plan Solaire, Medgrid, Desertec), represent opportunities to develop common approaches and to harmonise very different legal frameworks. The EU is already lending its support to "important South-South projects like the Tunisia-Algeria interconnection or the synchronisation of the Libyan network with the Maghreb". In the longer term, plans for "electricity highways" should serve as a forum for discussion and exchange concerning the regulatory framework, means of management, network definition or even the type of technology to be used⁵². In any case, the fall of Gaddafi, the emergence of democracy in Tunisia, the announcement of political reform in Algeria and a feeling within the newly elected parties that development is a major stake, may help bring the two countries together.

50. Ras Lanouf's programme, which was adopted in Libya in 1991, distinguishes between three stages in the modalities of regional integration: free trade area (elimination of customs duties and limits on the quantity of products which can be imported between member countries), customs union (free trade area with common external tariffs) and common market (possibility for production factors to circulate freely from one country to another).

51. For more details, see "Towards a sustainable security in the Maghreb: An opportunity for the region, a commitment for the European Union", *op. cit.*, pp. 16-19.

52. "EU proposes 'Energy Community' to Southern Mediterranean states", an interview with Fabrizio Barbaso (Deputy Director-General responsible for external energy, European Commission), *Europolitique*, 23rd November 2011.



14. The Arab Maghreb Union must be encouraged as a medium and long term solution for sustainable development in the Maghreb, with a progressive approach to assist booming or pilot sectors on a sub-regional scale.

15. Bilateral cooperation requires support in order to create a cooperation process, in particular to foster diplomatic exchange with a view to reopening the border between Morocco and Algeria.

16. The European Union must support the Moroccan proposal for autonomy, as this is the most realistic and credible solution for bringing the western Sahara conflict to an end.

2) Europe faced with upheaval in the Maghreb

Although the Arab Maghreb Union remains on hold, the European Union is a major political and commercial partner for Maghreb countries. The EU reaction to “Arab Spring” was to launch a new neighbourhood policy. However, a geopolitical project and strategic vision are needed before there can be any real revival of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

a. Between the new neighbourhood policy...

It initially seemed to the European Union as if the revolts in North Africa were casting doubt on community policies in the region, as far as both method and strategy are concerned. There had been no shortage of efforts to implement change through stability, as nearly ten projects had been set up to link the two sides of the Mediterranean between 1995 and 2013 at a cost of nearly 20 billion Euros. But nine years on, the “ring of peace, stability and prosperity” to be achieved through the European neighbourhood policy referred to by Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission in 2003, seems like a distant memory.

In the light of the political upheaval of “Arab Spring”, the European Union’s initial reaction was paralysis. As well as being reluctant to take any diplomatic risks in the face of uncertainty, the EU engaged in the reorganisation of the departments in charge of diplomacy and foreign relations⁵³, with the feeling that it had overlooked the expectations of Maghreb populations. Worse still, in the following weeks, any European views expressed remained too cautious, making them inaudible on the international scene, despite measures taken to assist countries in the region, albeit rather clumsily. When Catherine Ashton visited Tunisia and announced to the press that 17 million Euros were being released to support democratic transition and to help the inland areas affected by poverty, the Tunisian delegate thought that the High Representative was taking in billions, not millions... In total, the European Union did double its financial assistance to Tunisia, increasing the amount of aid from 80 to 160 million Euros in 2011, on top of which it gave 80.5 million Euros of humanitarian aid to house Libyan refugees⁵⁴.

The main turning point was the announcement of a new EU strategy to help its neighbours in two joint communications issued in March and May 2011⁵⁵. After the revolts and revolutions in the Arab world, democratisation appears to be a necessity in order to strengthen the stability demanded by the people and given the danger of a lack of political reform. According to the announcement made on 25th May, Recent events and the results of the review (of the NEP during the summer of 2012 in consultation with

partner countries and other stakeholders) have shown that EU support to political reforms in neighbouring countries has met with limited results. There is for example a need for greater flexibility and more tailored responses in dealing with rapidly evolving partners and reform needs – whether they are experiencing fast regime change or a prolonged process of reform and democratic consolidation.”⁵⁶

In concrete terms, taking political evolution and popular expectations into account mean adopting the principles of conditionality and differentiation. On the one hand, increasing EU support to its neighbours must depend on the progress made in carrying out political reform. There are three types of prospects for partner countries on the southern banks of the Mediterranean: additional funding to continue reform and initiate programmes for economic and social development; wider access to the European market; “encouragement” to support citizen mobility. On the



53. The Council decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the EEAS was adopted by the Council of the European Union on 26th July 2010. The first Executive Secretary General, Pierre Vimont, was appointed on 25th October and took office on 1st December 2010.

54. Stefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, “Tunisie et l’UE: 1 an après la “révolution du jasmin””, 19th December 2011.

55. European Commission, *A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean* and *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood*, dated 8th March and 25th May 2011 respectively.

56. European Commission, *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood*, 25th May 2011, p. 1.

other hand, objectives and reforms must be defined in coordination with partner states depending on a country's needs, capacities and on the regional context. We need to make allowance for unknown factors and the heterogeneity resulting from "Arab

Spring" on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, whilst integrating the need for a regional approach to meet the social and economic challenges heightened by the international crisis.

b. ... and a difficult geopolitical project

The announcement of a revival of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the release of funds are just one way of strengthening ties between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

The decision made by the Council on 14th December to allow trade negotiations to open with Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia to set up extensive, complete free trade areas⁵⁷ represents a step towards economic integration in industrial production and in other fields. The next day however, the European Parliament – joint decision-maker in foreign policy by virtue of the Lisbon treaty – rejected the extension of an annual fishing protocol with Morocco, which had nonetheless been defended by the Commission and by Spain⁵⁸. Whilst a draft agricultural agreement between Morocco and the European Union is set to be put to the vote in March 2012 and European observers of the legislative elections have recommended that cooperation with the kingdom should be strengthened, the parliament's decision is the result of the "schizophrenia" which commonly occurs within the European Union, which seems unable to speak with a single voice.

If we look beyond these economic and financial issues, the relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean is in need of a project. A shared outlook would get the decision-makers moving and spur on the people living on both sides of the Mediterranean. If the relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean is to be strengthened, the various European institutions and member states need to consolidate their ability to provide a political content within the framework of the neighbourhood policy, to define a global strategic vision on Europe's role in the

world today, and to stick to it. We need to take full stock of the situation and put in a lot of hard work before we can get past the deadlock within the European Union which affected the Union for the Mediterranean and rendered it meaningless, and before we can break with the image our southern European neighbours have of us as a "cold monster" that is only interested in controlling its borders, securing its energy supplies and protecting itself against a terrorist attack⁵⁹. European offers made as part of the Barcelona process were practically "take it or leave it", causing frustration amongst our partners who felt that we were not listening to them and that they were being "driven rather than guided"⁶⁰.

Finally, European efforts – which will take time and require true political commitment – will only make sense if other partners invest in the region and in particular if the North Africans themselves group together to ensure the efficiency of outside help, their economic and social development and the responses to the political expectations of the population. These are the conditions for sustainable security in the Maghreb.

17. Encourage all European players to embrace the European neighbourhood policy, and make use of other existing tools to ensure that it is implemented and not simply rendered meaningless, as well as offering real compensation to partners in exchange.

18. The European External Action Service must uphold a strong Euro-Mediterranean project – and indeed a Euro-Arab project, with a true strategic vision in support of the neighbourhood policy, each aspect of which is accepted and defended.

57. These areas must do more than simply eliminate customs duties, since the aim is to take into account all regulatory issues regarding trade, such as investment protection and public contracts.

58. As a reaction to the vote, the Moroccan authorities asked fishing boats flying a European flag to leave the kingdom's territorial waters.

59. Luis Martinez, « Il y a une opportunité historique importante pour l'Union européenne en Méditerranée », Fondation Robert Schuman, *Entretien d'Europe*, n°54, 28th March 2011.

60. Hubert Colin de Verdière, "Le Maghreb, l'UMA, l'Union européenne et la France", *Maghreb-Machrek*, Summer 2011, n°208, pp. 11-21, p. 17.

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