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# Research Paper 3/2011

The Changing Security Situation in the Maghreb

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This paper is the independent analysis of the authors. Views expressed in the report are not necessarily those of Association for International Affairs.



## Executive Summary

The Maghreb is at the moment a particularly sensitive and fragile region, because of a distinctive combination of various security challenges, including “frozen” border disputes, which have in turn discouraged attempts at meaningful and effective regional integration. However, this situation is currently overshadowed and aggravated by a wave of pro-democracy protests that have hit, to various degrees, all countries of the region. In general, there are two security threats in the region: The first is the unprecedented dynamics of the pro-democracy protests and deep processes of the regional social and political transformation. The second one is the “frozen” border disputes and territorial conflicts such as the one in the Western Sahara. Against the backdrop of recent dramatic developments across the Maghreb, it is obvious that the current status quo in this region is no longer sustainable.

Since December 2010, Tunisia has undergone the most dramatic wave of political and social unrest for several decades which has led to the ousting of the long-time President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011. The ‘Tunisian Revolution’ has been characterized by unprecedented pro-democracy protests and a campaign of civil resistance. These events were precipitated by the rapidly deteriorating living conditions of the majority of the Tunisian population particularly during the global economic crisis, which brought rising unemployment, high inflation, and was further aggravated by growing public frustration at rampant corruption, the lack of freedom of speech and other political freedoms. There has been a growing sense particularly among the educated, young people in Algeria, as well as in the other North African nations, that the rest of the world has passed them by and that it is the young Arab generation who should try to find a sustainable solution to their countries’ economic and socio-political woes. The Tunisian Revolution inspired similar pro-democracy and civil resistance movements throughout North Africa and the Middle East with protests taking place in Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain and other regional states. In Libya, public discontent with the regime of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi has boiled over into a full-scale rebellion beginning in February 2011. Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika’s government, worried about the growing and increasingly well organized popular movements, has somewhat hastily scrambled to stem the mounting anti-government sentiments by offering some concessions to the protesters (including ending the country’s 19-year state-of-emergency laws).

Morocco responded to these protests by using minimum force and tried to handle the situation in a relatively peaceful manner, including offering dialogue and concessions. In fact, Morocco’s own democratization process, as well as its social and economic reforms, was tangibly encouraged by its current ruler Muhammad VI long before the wave of current protests were triggered by the revolution in Tunisia. So far, it seems that Morocco may well withstand and positively address any potential discontent and grievances of its own people. As a matter of fact, the protests in Morocco were also met by a relatively swift conciliatory reaction from King Muhammad VI who, in his speech of 9 March 2011, promised broad constitutional reforms and greater political rights and freedoms while Moroccan authorities generally tolerate dissidence on Facebook as long as it respects the Moroccan constitution. In



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short, it could be argued that Morocco is gradually moving towards a true constitutional monarchy. If we take into consideration the ongoing civil war in Libya, Algeria's hesitant move towards greater civil freedoms and Tunisian fragile stability, Morocco appears to be the most stable and relatively free country in the Maghreb even though it has not by any means been immune to the current wave of protests which have engulfed the whole region.

The current wave of pro-reform and pro-democracy protests will certainly deeply influence the speed, form and scale of regional integration as well as dealing with regional territorial disputes. The EU as well as the Maghreb governments should seize this opportunity and take the lead instead of being dragged along by events. Both regions – the EU and the Maghreb – are bound by many common interests. In light of the growing instability in Northern Africa, the EU should take greater interest in the Maghreb and place its relations with this region at the top of its agenda. It is also increasingly clear that the different aspects of Euro-Mediterranean relations should be thoroughly reconsidered. As a matter of fact, the EU should look forward and not hesitate to adopt a daring vision of further regional integration short of the EU's enlargement. The reason is clear: owing to its particular “un-integration” and relative underdevelopment, the Maghreb is perhaps the only area for substantial expansion of the sluggish European economies for many years to come.

The Maghreb countries constitute one region that is culturally, geographically and historically integrated. Yet, the Maghreb countries have largely failed to achieve “functional integration” particularly at the political and economic cooperation level. In fact, the failure of the Maghreb countries to boost their economic cooperation is such an enduring phenomenon that it has been given a name – the “non-Maghreb”. Thus, even though the Maghreb nations agreed in December 2010 to create the Maghreb Free Trade Area to be launched in 2011, the implementation details remain up in the air. Modelled on the European Union, the project was hampered by various political and economic obstacles long before the Tunisian “Jasmine revolution” threw the spotlight on the region. Integration attempts have fallen short of expectations and various economic models show potential numbers that are in sharp contrast to the reality of underperformance. The regional governments are far from taking a pragmatic approach towards economic integration that would attract foreign investment and initiate new opportunities in global markets. An IMF report from October 2009 posits that the lack of regional integration is undeniably a major factor exacerbating the effect of the recent economic and financial crisis and is also contributing to the general social instability in the Maghreb region. Nevertheless, the first item on the checklist is to find a solution to the political conflicts between and within the states, which are an obstacle to creating a unified Maghreb. If the countries are further fragmented and are fully absorbed in their internal problems, it could only lead to more protectionism and even the complete rejection of the Maghreb Free Trade Area project.

The closed border since 1994 between Algeria and Morocco is a long-term problem for establishing greater economic and security cooperation between the two countries and the lack of integration in the Maghreb in general. Underlying this “closed border” issue is the competition over the spheres of influence in the region as well as inconclusive efforts to resolve the question of the Western Sahara. This conflict, one of the most divisive and hotly contested issues on the geopolitical landscape of North Africa, has already been going on for over 30 years. The main actors involved in the Western Sahara dispute, Morocco and Algeria, have engaged in protracted negotiations for more than three decades but these have,



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owing to their uncompromising positions, always ended in an impasse. For Morocco, holding on to the Southern Provinces relates to the fundamental principle of territorial integrity, while for Algeria, there is an attachment to the principles of autonomy and the people's right to self-determination, as much as the perception that it has a major geo-economical interest in the disputed territory. Finally, for the Polisario Front, it is unthinkable to abandon the fight without losing its reason to exist.

In his recent – historical and unprecedented in the Arab world – speech, Morocco's King Mohammed VI stressed the importance of the regionalization process that lead to a greater decentralization of power as well as democratization and economic benefits for all people throughout Morocco. In his speech, Mohammed VI also elaborated on the 2007 Moroccan autonomy initiative for the Western Sahara region that was earlier hailed by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon as a credible alternative to the continuing deadlock. This alternative and widely acclaimed plan has the merit to be put on the negotiating table and should be seriously discussed. Moreover, the autonomy initiative has played an important role in direct United Nations-led discussions between the interested parties resumed in 2007 generally known as the Manhasset (I, II, III and IV) negotiations.

The current status-quo situation produces immense economic, political and human costs while generally contributing to the overall lack of security in the region. In fact, this situation, with the negotiations stalemated, generates an overall atmosphere of instability with dire effects on the economic prospects for the whole Maghreb. Some other worrying tendencies have been the political decline and break-up of the Polisario Front and Western Sahara's proximity to Mauritania which have created an ungoverned area that has been exploited by members of this organization to generate money from arms smuggling. To make the whole picture even more complicated, it is increasingly clear that some links exist between the Sahrawis and some terrorist cells and that any break-up or disintegration of POLISARIO could well reinforce the instability. To this end, the threat of radical Islamism in Maghreb countries constitutes another major challenge to the regional security and stability. The threat of modern transnational terrorism in the region clearly emerged in 2007 when the original local group GSPC became a member of the al-Qaeda transnational Islamist terrorist network. This group was renamed AQIM and has begun to expand its activities from Algeria to other countries in the Sahara (Sahel) region. Possibly the most significant development was Al-Qaeda's first attack after 9/11 aimed at the Jewish community on the Tunisian island of Djerba. The AQIM members are involved in various illegal activities in the regional black market, including crime, kidnapping and extortion. For the Maghreb and Sahel countries, this insecurity has truly catastrophic consequences – especially in economic terms because it constitutes perhaps the main obstacle to the growth of tourism, one of the most important sources of development in this part of the world.

In the future, the European Union should seek to rebuild its approach in the Maghreb while taking into consideration the importance of empowerment and the protection of human security. Whereas traditional security approaches focus on state security (fixing mainly economic and military objectives), human security strategy brings the human condition (social inequality, development issues, human rights...) to the centre of high security concerns. One of the lessons to be drawn from the recent events in the Maghreb is the transformation of security challenges from interstate (Morocco/Algeria, Libya/Tunisia, Algeria/Tunisia...) to intrastate conflicts (Tunisia, Libya, Algeria...). Previously, in its



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relationship to the Maghreb, the EU has prioritized stability, military cooperation and economic development. Therefore, European countries were taken aback and challenged to some extent, by the recent social and political movements. While Euro-Maghrebian cooperation had a positive impact on improving legislation, the education system and the economy, it did not help to bring the expected transformation in the social and political conditions of the Maghreb.

Because the security settings in the Maghreb are shifting in an unconventional way, Europe needs to rebuild its approach and strategies. The EU should take into account the complex human security concerns in the Maghreb as well as its own strengths and weaknesses. Firstly, the EU should support the democratization process that should be dealt with as a human security issue. Such an approach should consider security building as trust building. Beyond that, the EU should benefit from its democratic credibility aiming at building regional governance in the Euro-Maghreb area. Secondly, Europe should also highlight development as a human security issue in the Maghreb, which is an approach concerned about protecting the “vital core” of human life. Thirdly, the EU should promote, above all, the empowerment of Maghrebian societies for, in the light of the revolutionary wave in the Maghreb, it is obvious that for modern Maghrebian societies, especially among the younger generations, human dignity is a priority. It has a secular meaning and it is associated with freedom and justice. Fourthly, the EU should realize that effective conflict prevention should primarily combine traditional preventive security measures such as intelligence and foreign policy, and be involved in democratization, development and security-from-below processes. Finally, if the current changes bring freedom to the Maghreb, Central and Eastern Europe countries would be urged to launch an “experience sharing process” with Maghrebian countries. Overall, Maghrebian economists and political scientists perceive the democratic wave of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe as the closest event to the 2011 uprisings in the Maghreb. They see opportunities for learning from the European experience on the democratic transition level as well as measures for economic upgrading. From our standpoint, Central and Eastern Europe should grasp the opportunity of being a model for Arab revolutions to promote its position in the Maghreb.



# 1. Insecurity and Instability in the Maghreb

## 1.1 Turmoil in Contemporary Maghreb

The Maghreb is at the moment a particularly sensitive and fragile region, because of a distinctive combination of various security challenges, including “frozen” border disputes, which have in turn discouraged attempts at meaningful and effective regional integration. However, this situation is currently overshadowed and aggravated by a wave of pro-democracy protests that have hit, to various degrees, all countries of the region. The lack of integration is a long-term challenge and as such only partially explains the dynamics of the contemporary regional upheaval. Therefore, to fully understand the current state of affairs ‘on the ground’ and its implications for the Maghreb’s future, we need to take into account a number of other underlying factors, such as public anger at rampant corruption and the lack of basic civil rights and the distinct role traditional as well as social media (Facebook) have played in shaping public opinion among the people.

In general, there are two security threats in the region. The first one is inner, bottom-up, and structural. This is the unprecedented dynamics of the pro-democracy protests and deep processes of the regional social and political transformation. The second one lies in the regional states’ periphery but permanently threatens the stability of the core. This is dealt with predominantly by the top-down approach and consists of “frozen” border disputes, and territorial conflicts such as the one in the Western Sahara. Against the backdrop of recent dramatic developments across the Maghreb, it is obvious that the current status quo in this region is no longer sustainable.

## 1.2 Tunisia and Libya Revolution

Since December 2010, Tunisia has undergone the most dramatic wave of political and social unrest for several decades which has led to the ousting of the long-time President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011. The ‘Tunisian Revolution’ has been characterized by unprecedented pro-democracy protests and a campaign of civil resistance which has seen a series of street demonstrations and other forms of unrest taking place all over this North-African country. Sparked by the self-immolation of a young unemployed Tunisian man, the series of pro-democracy demonstrations were later violently suppressed by the police security forces resulting in many injuries and deaths.

These events were precipitated by the rapidly deteriorating living conditions of the majority of the Tunisian population particularly during the global economic crisis, which brought rising unemployment, high inflation, and was further aggravated by growing public frustration at rampant corruption, the lack of freedom of speech and other political freedoms. The subsequent developments in other countries throughout the Arab world have highlighted the very fact that their populations share similar grievances with those of the Tunisian people. The Tunisian Revolution inspired similar pro-democracy and civil resistance movements throughout North Africa and the Middle East with protests taking place in Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain and other regional states.



In Libya, public discontent with the regime of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi has boiled over into a full-scale rebellion beginning in February 2011. The continuing uprising against the regime of the region's longest-ruling dictator quickly engulfed most of the country. Despite Libya's economic wealth and relative prosperity, the public discontent was driven by the people's increasing frustration at the absence of freedoms as well as the brutality and injustices of the regime. As Gaddafi lost control of much of the Libyan territory in March 2011, he was repeatedly accused of massacring the protesters and an increasing level of brutality against the coalition of opposition forces.

It was in this context that the United Nations Human Rights Council issued a condemnation of the crackdown as violating international law with several Western nations imposing economic sanctions against Libya. This was followed by Resolution 1973 passed by the UN Security Council that sanctioned a no-fly zone and the use of all means necessary to protect civilians in Libya. At the time of writing, the conflict in Libya had effectively become a civil war with the Eastern part of the country under rebel control seeking to organize a broad-based opposition to the Colonel Gaddafi regime.

### **1.3 Algeria's and Morocco's Response to the Pro-Democracy Movement**

The authorities in Algeria, worried about the growing and increasingly well organized popular movements, have immediately moved to suppress the anti-government demonstrations that started to gain momentum since the dictatorship in neighbouring Tunisia was overthrown. The people of Algeria also demand a competent government, less corruption and more economic growth which could give them enough jobs and generally hope for a better future. There has been a growing sense particularly among the educated, young people in Algeria, as well as in the other North African nations, that the rest of the world has passed them by and that it is the young Arab generation who should try to find a sustainable solution to their countries' economic and socio-political woes. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's government has somewhat hastily scrambled to stem the mounting anti-government sentiments by offering some concessions to the protesters (including ending the country's 19-year state-of-emergency laws) but only time will tell whether his regime will soon follow the fate of the other regional autocracies.

Morocco responded to these protests by using minimum force and tried to handle the situation in a relatively peaceful manner, including offering dialogue and concessions. In fact, Morocco's own democratization process, as well as its social and economic reforms, was tangibly encouraged by its current ruler Muhammad VI long before the wave of current protests were triggered by the revolution in Tunisia. So far, it seems that Morocco may well withstand and positively address any potential discontent and grievances of its own people.

The protests in Morocco were also met by a relatively swift conciliatory reaction from King Muhammad VI who, in his speech of 9 March 2011, promised broad constitutional reforms



and greater political rights and freedoms.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Morocco seems to be changing to a true constitutional monarchy because the King pledged, among other future constitutional changes, that he would relinquish some of his powers to parliament and the prime minister.

However, the protests are far from over and the stakes are high. Security forces in Morocco should avoid confrontations with demonstrators and use minimum coercion in order not to stir up further revolutions as those in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. This situation could easily get out of control for example by an occasional violent crackdown against peaceful rallies such as the one that took place on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2011 in Casablanca.<sup>2</sup> The excessive use of force would foster the public's resentment against their government, thus undermining the government's legitimacy. The revolution in Tunisia broke the barrier of fear and created high expectations among the general public along with the determination to achieve these expectations which can in the end prove to be higher than the government's preparedness to offer concessions. However, one point must be clear: events in other regional countries have proven that the use of force is no longer the solution and will not deter the people anymore.

According to a 2010 survey conducted by Freedom House, a U.S.-based non-governmental organization, Morocco is rated as a "partly free" country. Morocco's rating '5' for political rights and '4' for civil liberties makes it the freest country in the Maghreb region before the wave of pro-democracy protests in 2011.<sup>3</sup> If we take into consideration the ongoing civil war in Libya, Algeria's hesitant move towards greater civil freedoms and Tunisian fragile stability, Morocco appears to be the most stable and relatively free country in the Maghreb even though it has not by any means been immune to the current wave of protests which have engulfed the whole region.

### 1.4 Maghreb and the EU: The Rules of the Game Must Change

The current wave of pro-reform and pro-democracy protests will certainly deeply influence the speed, form and scale of regional integration as well as dealing with regional territorial disputes. The EU as well as the Maghreb governments should seize this opportunity and take the lead instead of being dragged along by events.

The Maghreb and the European Union share a common history marked by daunting periods of colonial rule and the subsequent fight for independence. Furthermore, both regions are bound by many common interests. Neither side wants instability or insecurity if only because both hamper trade, jeopardise investments and curb integration efforts. The consequences of such a sombre scenario are obvious: the growth of terrorism, the spread of radicalism and often hardly predictable migration flows.

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<sup>1</sup> "Morocco's King Mohammed Pledges Constitutional Reform," BBC,  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12695092>

<sup>2</sup> "Police Break Up Morocco Protest", Al-Jazeera,  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2011/03/2011313212948314417.html>

<sup>3</sup> Freedom in the World: The Authoritarian Challenges to Democracy, Freedom House,  
[http://www.freedomhouse.org/images/File/fiw/FIW\\_2011\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/images/File/fiw/FIW_2011_Booklet.pdf); The rating is based on a scale of 1 to 7, Level 1 is the freest and Level 7 the least free.





The EU should take greater interest in the Maghreb and place its relations with this region at the top of its agenda. Top Western experts on this region point to the absolute necessity of re-building and re-emphasizing the European Union's strategy for the Mediterranean. Yet, as a recent press release by the Thomas More Institute argued, "concerning the European strategy in the Mediterranean region, the strategic question and the tools to build it are still uncertain."<sup>4</sup> In the wake of the upheavals in the Maghreb, it is clear that the different aspects of Euro-Mediterranean relations should be thoroughly reconsidered. As a matter of fact, the EU should look forward and not hesitate to adopt a daring vision of further regional integration short of the EU's enlargement. The reason is clear: owing to its particular "un-integration" and relative underdevelopment, the Maghreb is perhaps the only area for substantial expansion of the sluggish European economies for many years to come and for the enhancement of renewable energy supplies for the EU as well (e.g. solar energy brought from the Sahara by the DESERTEC project<sup>5</sup>).

Rebuilding the European approach to security in the Maghreb also involves dealing with the above mentioned issues as interrelated aspects of a given human security environment. The EU should consider the fact that any security strategy in the Maghreb should go well beyond securing energy, markets or immigration guards. With regard to this, the main task of an institutional security framework would be to coordinate the human security strategies and the bodies in charge of implementing them. This being the case, there is a consensus among European and Maghrebian policy-makers on the necessity to maintain an institutional security Euro-Maghreb framework. Still, the many Euro-Maghreb instances of cooperation have not so far succeeded in establishing a structure/system that could be employed to deal effectively with conflicts or crises that arise in the Western Mediterranean.

## 2. Impediments to the Maghreb Integration

### 2.1 The Lack of Economic Integration as a Security Challenge

The Maghreb countries constitute one region that is culturally, geographically and historically integrated. The population is ethnically mixed and ethnic frontiers often do not reflect national borders. Maghreb countries also share the grim historical experience of colonialism, the fight for independence and the subsequent build-up of the state. Yet, the Maghreb countries have largely failed to achieve "functional integration" particularly at the political and economic cooperation level. In fact, the failure of the Maghreb countries to boost their economic cooperation is such an enduring phenomenon that it has been given a name – the "non-Maghreb".

The vision of a common market composed of the Maghreb countries set out in 1989 in the Founding Treaty of the Arab Maghreb Union is slowly fading with the turbulent events in the region. Even though the Maghreb nations agreed in December 2010 to create the

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<sup>4</sup> Intervention in Libya: The Necessity of a Practical Option, a press release, Institut Thomas More, 15 March 2011.

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.desertec.org/>



Maghreb Free Trade Area to be launched in 2011, the implementation details remain up in the air. Modelled on the European Union, the project was hampered by various political and economic obstacles long before the Tunisian “Jasmine revolution” threw the spotlight on the region. Integration attempts have fallen short of expectations and various economic models show potential numbers that are in sharp contrast to the reality of underperformance. The regional governments are far from taking a pragmatic approach towards economic integration that would attract foreign investment and initiate new opportunities in global markets.

In this context, Table 1 shows that the region has the most integrated economic relationship with EU countries, which is also illustrated by the high percentage share of the Maghreb-EU two-way trade exchange in total trade during the 2007-2009 period. Conversely, trade within the region is almost negligible because of low trade complementarities, uneven import protection levels across the region, nontariff barriers to trade and the lack of investment and labour mobility. Table 2 shows the trade complementarity index that measures how well the exports of one country meets the import needs of another country - the higher the index number the better the prospects for that country’s trade with other countries. It is obvious that the Maghreb countries generally have a very low trade complementarity among themselves while they fare slightly better when it comes to their exports to the EU and the United States. Nevertheless, the difference is particularly striking in the case of the Maghreb countries’ imports from the EU and the United States. The data speaks for itself: only about 1.2% to 2% of each of the five Maghreb countries’ trade is with one of their regional neighbours.

**Table 1: Main Indicators for Intra-Maghreb Countries’ Trade**

	Exports (2009, US mil)	Imports (2009, US mil)	Share of Total Trade (%, 2007 – 2009)			
			Maghreb	EU	USA	Gulf
Algeria	45 193.9	39 258.3	1.5	50.1	18.5	0.3
Morocco	13 937.8	33 032.4	2.7	56.3	5.2	4.7
Tunisia	14 445.1	19 096.2	7.4	67.5	2.6	1.1
Libya	38 299.9	19 033.1	-	68.5	5.7	-

Source: Own calculations from the International Trade Centre, Trademap

The lack of regional economic integration makes the Maghreb more vulnerable externally and internally. According to a World Bank analysis, “in the absence of further efforts to integrate the Maghreb economies, the real GDP per-capita growth between 2005 and 2015 would increase by 30 % for Algeria, 41 % for Tunisia and 27 % for Morocco”. However, this report argues that “with gradual reforms of their service sectors and regulatory framework to completely liberalize services and an improvement in the investment climate by 2015, the Maghreb countries would add an additional 34, 27 and 24 percent for Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia respectively.”<sup>6</sup> An IMF report from October 2009 posits that the lack of regional integration is undeniably a major factor exacerbating the effect of the recent

<sup>6</sup> López-Cálix, J. R., Trade Competitiveness of the Middle East and North Africa: Policies for Export Diversification, World Bank, 2010.



economic and financial crisis and is also contributing to the general social instability in the Maghreb region.

**Table 2: Index of Trade Complementarity between Maghreb Countries and Their Main Partners 2007-2009 (Yearly Average)**

From/to	Algeria	Morocco	Tunisia	Libya	Mauritania	EU	USA	Gulf
Algeria	-	14,40	13,68	16,82	18,70	15,78	16,27	4,89
Morocco	28.46	-	38.23	33.80	31.18	37.04	37.52	32.58
Tunisia	35.96	49,13	-	48.81	50.13	49,64	54,44	39,32
EU	61.22	64.68	61.75	60.85	57.29			
USA	65.47	72.18	69.51	70.38	60.80			
Gulf	17.71	26.98	23.57*	28.60	29.05*			

Source: Own calculations from the World Bank, WITS data for 2006 – 2008. The index is zero when no goods are exported by one country or imported by the other and 100 when the export and import shares exactly match.<sup>7</sup>

Helping the emergence of production links across the region would also favourably shape the direction of economic integration. It has been observed that “over the past two decades, such networks have been established in the automobile industry in Eastern Europe and in the electronics industry in East Asia [thus significantly contributing] to the international economic success of these regions.”<sup>8</sup> Generally speaking, the admission of new CEE member countries to the EU was, among many other factors, encouraged by the existence of various infrastructure projects that were of common interest to several states and had the potential for a substantial political impact and visibility for voters. These infrastructure projects were closely followed by other needs in the industrial and subsequently energy and services sectors. If the Maghreb countries were to espouse this essentially ‘domino-effect’ model from the CEE region, it would allow them to get closer not only physically but gradually also psychologically. Furthermore, deeper economic cooperation and increasing intra-regional trade among the Maghreb countries would also enable them to promote their negotiating positions with the European Union. Considering the importance of the EU as a trading partner, deepening economic cooperation within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership should also be high on the Maghreb countries’ priority list.

Boosting intra-economic cooperation also requires further trade policy reforms, particularly reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers. Table 3 shows the applied MFN tariffs<sup>9</sup> in 2009 compared to the tariffs levels in ASEAN 5 and the CEE region in 2004, the year when the CEE countries joined the EU. It is clear that the protection level in individual Maghreb countries is very high and that this significantly contributes to the limited intra-Maghreb trade flows. Non-tariff barriers to trade are also more substantial in the Maghreb and the Middle East compared to any other region in the world. Because of the long legacy of restrictive trade measures in the Maghreb, the tariff reduction process might ultimately prove

<sup>7</sup> UN ESCAP definition

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> MFN – Most Favoured Nation.



to be the most significant challenge on the arduous path to greater trade liberalization within the region.

**Table 3: MFN Tariffs applied by Maghreb countries (simple average, %), 2009**

	Simple average MFN applied			Total Merchandise Imports	
	Total	Agriculture	Non-agriculture	Bound Rate	Binding coverage
Algeria	18.6	23.3	17.8	-	-
Morocco	18.1	42.1	14.4	41.3	100
Tunisia	21.5	40.9	18.6	57.9	58.0
Maghreb avg.	19.4	35.4	16.9	49.6	79.0
CEE (2004)	8.2	12.2	7.6	11.3	100
ASEAN5 (2004)	7.4	10.1	7.0	22.0	78.2

Source: World Tariff Profiles 2010, WTO Tariff Database

Nevertheless, the first item on the checklist is to find a solution to the political conflicts between and within the states, which are an obstacle to creating a unified Maghreb. If the countries are further fragmented and are fully absorbed in their internal problems, it could only lead to more protectionism and even the complete rejection of the Maghreb Free Trade Area project. In such a dire scenario, the governments would have to rely on the economic growth in their respective countries which would in turn slow down the “catch-up” process with the faster developing regions of Asia and the CEE region, while also widening the already substantial gap between the North and South Mediterranean regions.

## 2.2 The Problems of Closed Frontiers and the Western Sahara Conflict

The closed border since 1994 between Algeria and Morocco is a long-term problem for establishing greater economic and security cooperation between the two countries and in the Maghreb in general. Underlying this “closed border” issue is the competition over the spheres of influence in the region as well as inconclusive efforts to resolve the question of the Western Sahara. This conflict, one of the most divisive and hotly contested issues on the geopolitical landscape of North Africa, has already been going on for over 30 years. It is arguably the principal reason for the long-lasting closure of the border between the two neighboring countries and the lack of integration of the whole Maghreb region. The only way out of this ‘Cold War’ is political negotiation, because neither of the countries could afford a military confrontation at the moment.

The main actors involved in the Western Sahara dispute, Morocco and Algeria, have engaged in protracted negotiations for more than three decades but these have, owing to their uncompromising positions, always ended in an impasse. For Morocco, holding on to the Southern Provinces relates to the fundamental principle of territorial integrity. For Algeria,



there is an attachment to the principles of autonomy and the people's right to self-determination, as much as the perception that it has a major geo-economical interest in the disputed territory. Finally, for the Polisario Front, it is unthinkable to abandon the fight without losing its reason to exist. The 'Western Saharan' issue was initially exploited for domestic political purposes in both countries – mainly to deflect the public's attention away from other internal problems in Algeria and to rally the Moroccan people around the 'nationalistic cause'. It could be argued that, at the moment, Algerian elites are still inclined to use the 'Western Saharan' issue internally, while the Moroccan leadership would like to see this conflict end soon because the regional integration agenda has now assumed a much higher political priority in Rabat.

In his recent – historical and unprecedented in the Arab world – speech of 9 March 2011, Morocco's King Mohammed VI stressed the importance of the regionalization process. The main stated objectives were greater decentralization of power as well as democratization and economic benefits for all people throughout Morocco; thus the King emphasized the importance of the Southern "desert" provinces (i.e. Western Sahara). In his speech, Mohammed VI also elaborated on the 2007 Moroccan autonomy initiative for the Western Sahara region that was earlier hailed by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon as a credible alternative to the continuing deadlock.<sup>10</sup>

The question of how this proposal and the whole process could be implemented in practical terms is currently being discussed by a special Moroccan Consultative Commission for reforming the constitution, which took over the work of a commission in charge of regionalization. The proposal suggests partially transferring power to regional councils along with other constitutional changes. Admittedly, for the time being, it cannot be predicted with certainty whether the autonomy of the Western Sahara will ultimately be implemented by Morocco, because the Moroccan government still has to work hard to make conservatives in the Kingdom accept the autonomy plan. However, this alternative and widely acclaimed plan has the merit to be put on the negotiating table and should be seriously discussed. Moreover, the initiative has played an important role in direct United Nations-led discussions between the interested parties resumed in 2007 generally known as the Manhasset (I, II, III and IV) negotiations<sup>11</sup>. As a matter of fact, expert Laurence Ammour has argued in a NATO Research Paper<sup>12</sup>, that "legal arbitration of the dispute has proved inadequate and ineffectual because the judicial principles governing settlement proposals [...] have remained unchanged for 30 years." There are still a number of outstanding issues to be considered, i.e. the lack of consensus on how to compile electoral lists, whether the UN is actually in a position to impose a referendum in Morocco and, last but not least, the lack of political freedoms in POLISARIO-run refugee camps.

The current status-quo situation produces immense economic, political and human costs while generally contributing to the overall lack of security in the region. In fact, this

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<sup>10</sup> Masiky, Hassan, United Nations Secretary General Boosts Morocco's Western Sahara Autonomy Initiative, Morocco Board, 15 April 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Western Sahara: UN-led Talks End with Parties Pledging to Step Up Negotiations, UN News Centre, 9 January 2008, <http://www.un.org/News/>

<sup>12</sup> Ammour, Laurence, "The Frozen Conflict in Western Sahara: Who Benefits?", NATO Research Paper no. 30, November 2006, p. 3.



situation, with the negotiations stalemated, generates an overall atmosphere of instability with dire effects on the economic prospects for the whole Maghreb. In particular, the economic costs of the protracted conflict have been most significant for both Morocco and Algeria, with the former country's massive military budget being allocated to the Western Sahara and the latter country providing financial aid for refugees from the conflict-stricken region, as well as massive diplomatic support for the Polisario Front.

There are also some other worrying tendencies. The political decline and break-up of the Polisario Front and Western Sahara's proximity to Mauritania have created an ungoverned area that has been exploited by members of this organization to generate money from arms smuggling. From a general point of view, POLISARIO is regularly accused of corruption as well as arms and drug trafficking. The reform movement that has struck Tunisia, Egypt and other Arab-Islamic countries recently has not avoided Sahrawi refugee camps in the Tindouf Province of Algeria. The growing discontent among the refugees has highlighted the gnawing gap between this main political movement and its representatives on one side and the current generation of disenchanted young Sahrawi refugees with their future expectations on the other side. To what extent this development will affect finding a solution to the dispute over the Western Sahara is not yet clear. If the old political class, the POLISARIO, were replaced by new leaders, it could mean either a breakthrough in the negotiations or – quite the opposite – more militancy in the Sahrawi attitude.

To make the whole picture even more complicated, it is increasingly clear that some links exist between the Sahrawis and some terrorist cells and that any break-up or disintegration of POLISARIO could well reinforce the instability. For example, on 9 December 2010, an AFP communiqué quoting a source from the Malian security forces reported the arrest of six drug traffickers in the Sahara Desert on the eastern Mauritanian border with Mali who are apparently members of the three main drug smuggling networks in the region and also come from the ranks of the Polisario Front.<sup>13</sup> From a more general point of view, it seems that one of the strategies of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb terrorist organization (AQIM) is based on exploiting the Sahrawis as mercenaries to carry out AQIM's criminal operations (in other words, outsourcing part of their activities) in the wider Sahel region. If this is definitely proven, it will give more credence to the long-term Moroccan theory of a connection between Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and POLISARIO members.

## 3. The Maghreb Faces Challenges

### 3.1 Terrorism in the Maghreb

As the 2010 Special Report entitled "Towards Security in the Maghreb" argued, the threat of radical Islamism in Maghreb countries is taken very seriously.<sup>14</sup> The threat of modern transnational terrorism in the region clearly emerged in 2007 when the original local group GSPC became a member of the al-Qaeda transnational Islamist terrorist network. This group

<sup>13</sup> "Six 'Major' Traffickers Arrested in Mali", AFP, 9 December 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Towards Sustainable Security in the Maghreb, Special Report 2010, Institut Thomas More, Paris, April 2010, p. 13.



was renamed AQIM and has begun to expand its activities from Algeria to other countries in the Sahara (Sahel) region.

The most obvious evidence of the growing threat of terrorism in the Maghreb region is the massacres committed by the GIA in the 1990s and the affiliation of local radical Islamist groups with Al-Qaeda in the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States. Possibly the most significant development was Al-Qaeda's first attack after 9/11 aimed at the Jewish community on the Tunisian island of Djerba while Maghreb's probably most dangerous radical Islamist organization Salafist Group for Call and Combat – SGCC (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat – GSPC*)<sup>15</sup> transformed itself and changed its name to Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb – AQIM (*Al-Qaida au Maghreb islamique – AQMI*). There are also other Al-Qaeda affiliations/franchises – e.g. Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group – MIFG (*Groupe Islamique Combattant Marocain – GICM*) which was responsible for a number of terrorist attacks in Morocco as well as the Madrid train bombings in 2004. The case of the Libyan Fighting Group – LIFG (*Groupe islamique combattant en Libye – GICL*) also has some similarities to the terrorist organizations discussed above. This most radical Islamist group in Libya was founded in the mid-1990s by Libyan Islamist veterans from the Afghanistan war. In 1996, LIFG unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate Gaddafi and also committed some attacks on Libyan armed forces. LIFG members (contrary to Moroccan MIFG) deny any connection with Al-Qaeda<sup>16</sup> and emphasize that they have never carried out any attacks against civilians outside of Libya.

AQIM fighters in the region are not very numerous and are convulsed by the struggle for leadership between the various cells within the organization. Their members are involved in various illegal activities in the regional black market, including crime, kidnapping and extortion. Admittedly, some experts and commentators have argued that the importance of this organization in the area is exaggerated, while others questioned the real political threat that AQIM represents for the whole Maghreb and pointed out an apparent decline in the overall activity of Al-Qaeda itself. Yet, the situation 'on the ground' provides enough evidence that AQIM remains an important security threat for the region. AQIM has employed conventional terrorist tactics, including guerrilla-style ambushes against the government and military targets as well as foreigners (both tourists and workers). In particular, it kidnaps Westerners and holds them for ransom and/or the release of imprisoned Islamic militants. For example, in December 2008 AQIM kidnapped two Canadian diplomats and as recently as February 2011 an Italian woman was taken hostage while on a tourist trip to the Sahara desert in Southern Algeria.<sup>17</sup> For the Sahel countries, this insecurity has truly catastrophic consequences – especially in economic terms because it constitutes

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<sup>15</sup> GSPC splintered-off Algerian GIA. One of the main goals of GSPC headed by Hassan Hattab was overthrowing the Algerian government and establishing an Islamic state in Algeria. For more see Čejka, Marek, *Encyklopedie blízkovýchodního terorismu* (Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern Terrorism), Barrister & Principal, Brno, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> This contradicts the fact that some members of the al-Libi family leading LIFG were high ranking members of Al-Qaeda – notably Abu Yaha al-Libi.

<sup>17</sup> Hansen, Andrew and Vriens, Lauren, Al-Queda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Council on Foreign Relations, 21 July 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/north-africa/al-qaeda-islamic-maghreb-aqim/p12717>



perhaps the main obstacle to the growth of tourism, one of the most important sources of development in this part of the world.

Another source of concern is that the recent wave of unrest around the region has produced a very volatile environment in which terrorist groups could find it easier to operate. To this end, one of the ominous consequences of the civil war in Libya is that it has made weapons more readily available. This development could in turn help radical Islamist groups to acquire more sophisticated arms including, for example, very dangerous man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS). More generally, contestation and the lack of stability in the region hampers the security forces' capability to address future challenges and make the population understand what is at stake if the threat of terrorism remains unchecked. It is difficult to predict how the turmoil in the Middle East will affect Islamists movements and the Islamist fighters' ability to achieve their objectives which, in the Maghreb countries, have often been in opposition to the old regimes while operating under the regime's strict control.

### 3.2 Relationship between Political Regimes in the Maghreb and the Islamists

Political regimes in the Maghreb (especially in Tunisia and Algeria) tend to be much more secular than theocratic and all of them are, to various degrees, authoritarian regimes.<sup>18</sup> The Islamist elements usually operate in opposition to these regimes or to their respective autocratic rulers. In terms of the relationship between the regimes and the Islamists in the Maghreb, Tunisia has always been the most secularized country, especially due to the policies of its former autocratic president Habib Bourguiba.<sup>19</sup> Most of the Islamist movements were banned and the strongest Islamist faction Hizb An-Nahda ("Renaissance party"), headed by its charismatic leader Rashid Ghannushi (in French Rached Gannouchi, born 1941), was banned (despite initial tolerance by the Ben Ali regime after he seized power in 1987) after its electoral success in 1989 with its leaders and activists being persecuted. Ultimately, Ghannushi and some others were forced to leave for political exile in Europe. After the fall of the Ben Ali regime, Ghannushi returned to Tunisia in March 2011 and was allowed by the interim government to legalize his party.<sup>20</sup> As to the Hizb An-Nahda, it was originally more radical in its ideology (under the inspiration of the radical factions of the Egypt Muslim Brotherhood) but during Ghannushi's exile it significantly moderated towards a more participative/legal model of Islamist movements. The current Hizb An-Nahda's view of Tunisian future could be described as a democracy very close to the Turkish model.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> According to Freedom House, all of the Maghreb countries are authoritarian regimes: Morocco is in 116<sup>th</sup> place (out of 167 countries) with 3.79 (out of 10 points), Algeria (125 / 3.44), Tunisia (144 / 2.79), Libya (158 / 1.94); [http://graphics.eiu.com/PDF/Democracy\\_Index\\_2010\\_web.pdf](http://graphics.eiu.com/PDF/Democracy_Index_2010_web.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> He ruled autocratically from 1957 to 1987 and was deposed by his former ally Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali who was overthrown in an uprising against his regime in January 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Jazeera English, Tunisia's Islamists to Form Party, 1 March 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Ghannushi, Public Made Revolution, Our model is Turkey, 25 January 2011, <http://www.worldbulletin.net/index.php?aType=haber&ArticleID=68984>





When compared with Tunisia, Morocco is a less secular country that combines a democratic and theocratic model<sup>22</sup> of governance which allows some Islamist parties limited participation in domestic politics. The largest opposition group in the current Moroccan parliament is the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party/Parti de la Justice et du *Développement* (after parliamentary elections in 2007 it has 46 of 325 seats) which could be characterized as a participative/legal Islamist party whose main objective is to promote a combination of Islamic and democratic values. Morocco also has a very influential hybrid/non-political Islamist association called Al-Adl wal Ihsane (Justice and Charity – Justice et Bienfaisance). Al-Adl wal Ihsane is balancing on the verge between legality (becoming a regular political party) and illegality (becoming an underground movement). Its transformation into a political force was prevented mainly by inner dissensions and further aggravated by the association's opposition to the Moroccan king (its leader Yassine denied his sacredness) and the political establishment which, according to the movement, should be more Islamic and Sharia-led.

Religion and Islamism in Algeria are under strict state control, a situation, which is to some degree one of the consequences of the protracted civil war (1991–2002). This internal conflict broke out when the electoral process was cancelled after the greatly popular and moderate Islamic Salvation Front – ISF (Front islamique du salut – FIS) won the first round of the parliamentary elections in 1991. FIS is still banned<sup>23</sup> although it generally holds rather moderate Islamist views. After the 2007 elections, the Algerian parliament has two participative Islamist groups: one is the Algerian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood called the Movement of Society for Peace (*Mouvement de la société pour la paix*) and the other the Islamic Renaissance Movement (*Mouvement de la Renaissance Islamique*).

In Libya, the situation is very specific because of the long reign of the dictator Muammar Gaddafi (in power since 1969) who attempted to develop his own version of Islamism combined with socialism and anti-imperialism. The basic principles of the Gaddafi-made political system were published in his “Green Book” pamphlet (1976) where he explained the main principles of sui generis autocratic regime called *jamahirya*<sup>24</sup> without political parties and elections. During the uprising against Gaddafi in the spring of 2011, many oppressed Islamist movements reactivated, including Senussi, which is a traditional Libyan Islamic reform movement/order originating in the territory of contemporary Libya in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, Idris I. (1889–1983), the first and only king of independent Libya, was the grandson of the founder of this movement. Although King Idris I. was deposed by

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<sup>22</sup> Article 19 of the Moroccan Constitution states that the King is the Commandant of the Faithful – *amīr al-mu'minīn* – and is the descendant of the Prophet Mohammed. His power is sacred and his actions are rarely criticized publicly. The religiosity of the king is one of the most important components of its political communication.

<sup>23</sup> Its leaders are Abbassi Madani (more moderate) who is now in exile and Ali Belhadj (Salafist and more radical) who is living in Algeria and often imprisoned.

<sup>24</sup> An Arabic term generally translated as “state of the masses”; analogy with the term “People’s Republic”.

<sup>25</sup> The movement is named after its founder Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ali as-Senussi (1789–1859). It was influenced by Sufism and Salafism and from the beginning was very active in resistance against the French and later Italian occupation of contemporary Libya. During the 1930s the Senussi movement lost some of its original religious spirit as Italians destroyed the traditional Senussi religious and educational centres.



Gaddafi and the Senussi movement was banned by his regime, Senussi has been active underground while managing to regain some popularity especially in the eastern part of Libya. The traditional royal flag of the Senussi kingdom then became the main symbol of the uprising against Gaddafi in 2011. One of the scenarios of the future Libyan political system – after the possible departure of Colonel Gaddafi and the demise of his regime – is the renewal of a monarchy and the revival of ideas underlying the Senussi movement.

Another important group reactivated during the public uprising in early 2011 was the Libyan offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood (founded 1929 in neighboring Egypt) which has been, due to its geographical proximity to Egypt, traditionally very active in contemporary Libya.<sup>26</sup> After Colonel Gaddafi came to power in 1969, the Muslim Brotherhood was persecuted as a potential and potent opposition to his regime and many of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood-based dissidents were expelled from the country. Despite the persecution during the Gaddafi regime, the Muslim Brotherhood continued its underground activities until the late 1970s. From the early 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood changed its name to the Libyan Islamic Group and the regime's repressions against its members slowly started to wane.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.3. The Changing Dynamics of Democratic Processes and the Media

If we take into consideration the current civil war in Libya, Algeria's hesitant move towards greater civil freedom and Tunisia's fragile stability, we may infer that Morocco is – even in these turbulent times – still arguably the most stable and free country in the Maghreb. Moroccan democratization and its social as well as economic reforms were tangibly boosted by its current ruler Muhammad VI long before the current protests started. Therefore, Morocco appears to have the capacity to withstand the consequences of the recent pro-democratic movement and retain its stability. As a matter of fact, the protests in different parts of Morocco were met with a relatively swift conciliatory reaction from King Muhammad VI who promised broad constitutional reforms along with greater political rights and freedoms<sup>28</sup> while Moroccan authorities generally tolerate dissidence on Facebook as long as it respects the Moroccan constitution.<sup>29</sup> In short, it could be argued that Morocco is gradually moving towards a true constitutional monarchy.

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<sup>26</sup> King Idris I. gave refuge to some members of the MB who were persecuted in Egypt. The thoughts and activities (in Libya mostly peaceful) of the MB started to be very influential in some segments of Libyan society (especially with students).

<sup>27</sup> If the Gaddafi regime definitely falls, the MB could become stronger partly due to its activities in neighbouring Egypt but also partly because of the return of many Libyan followers of the MB from exile. In post-Gaddafi Libya, social activities organized by the MB could be expected to grow along with a call for more theology (or even theocracy) in the governance system.

<sup>28</sup> "Morocco's King Mohammed Pledges Constitutional Reform," BBC, 9 March 2011,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12695092>

<sup>29</sup> Royaume du Maroc, la Constitution (The Kingdom of Morocco, The Constitution),

<http://www.maroc.ma/NR/rdonlyres/B6B37F23-9F5D-4B46-B679-B43DDA6DD125/0/Constitution.pdf>



However, the protests are far from over and the stakes are high. Security forces in Morocco and elsewhere in the Maghreb should avoid confrontations with demonstrators and use the minimum possible level of coercion in order not to instigate revolutionary dynamics, which can be seen in Tunisia or Egypt. The already tense situation could easily escalate, for example, as a result of a violent crackdown against peaceful rallies like the one which took place on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2011 in Casablanca.<sup>30</sup> Excessive use of force is bound to alienate the government in the eyes of the public while concurrently destroying its legitimacy. The revolution in Tunisia broke the barrier of fear and gave rise to high expectations along with the determination to achieve these expectations that can prove to be higher than the government's preparedness to offer concessions. However, one point must be clear: events in other countries of the region have proved that force is not the solution and will not deter people anymore.

To this end, it is also important to consider the role of the so-called “new media” in instigating and fuelling the current pro-democracy movement.<sup>31</sup> Dissident bloggers, pan-Arab satellite channels, social media, citizen journalism, micro-blogging and other kinds of “new media” have altered forever the perceived balance between the regime's ability to control the flow of information and the public's ability to spread the message, criticise the government and freely share opinions. This democratization and flexibility of electronic communication – with social media used for interpersonal as well as mass communication – effectively provides a new space for people who were previously marginalised. In this context, censorship is not the option anymore and propaganda cannot stay unchallenged. The family of the Tunisian fruit seller Mohammed Bouazizi who quickly became the symbol of the Ben Ali's regime's brutality and the plight of common people in Tunisia is a sad but convincing example. After a few weeks protests sparked by his self-immolation – and aided by the use of social media – brought down Ben Ali's government in Tunisia.<sup>32</sup>

Social and other electronic media is essentially a ‘double-edged weapon’: while their use can potentially incite violence, they can also contribute to a more transparent, effective, accountable and participatory governance both at the top as well as in local communities. Interestingly, the media and cyberspace are areas where security concerns overlap with democratic aspirations. The less democratic regimes especially should make more efforts to address people's demands while these are still in ‘electronic form’ rather than being confronted with these demands later in the streets. The “new media” (including the social media) can serve as an effective means of communication between the government/security forces and the public.<sup>33</sup> In fact, achieving a stable and flourishing society as well as effective governance is nowadays impossible without an effective use of electronic media including social networks. Qatar can be used as a good example of pioneering work in this field with its Supreme Council of Information & Communication Technology (also called “ICTQatar”)

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<sup>30</sup> “Police Break Up Morocco Protest”, Al-Jazeera, 13 March 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2011/03/2011313212948314417.html>

<sup>31</sup> “The new media” is not primarily about computers and the internet. Rather, it revolves around principles such as interactivity, automation and modularity.

<sup>32</sup> Worth, Robert F., “How a Single Match Can Ignite a Revolution”, The New York Times, 21 January 2011.

<sup>33</sup> “Egyptian Army Takes to Facebook, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrpfvHm1D78>



leading the government's efforts to connect people through the latest technologies, enrich their lives and inspire future generations.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, Al-Jazeera and other pan-Arab TV stations have repeatedly proven that they can be instrumental in fostering regional self-consciousness and identity which could in turn lead to a greater impetus for regional economic and political integration. This can be seen, for example, in al-Jazeera's coverage of the unrest in the Maghreb and the Middle East. However, since al-Jazeera is primarily Arab television, there may well be a potentially huge space for a pan-Maghreb media. While their use in support of regional integration would be relatively cheap and effective, the media could also help to strengthen a common identity across national boundaries. So, why not create a regional TV or internet radio focused predominantly on the young, educated generation that will determine the future destiny of the Maghreb region?

## 4. Towards Rebuilding the European Approach

### 4.1 Human Security in the Maghreb: Shifts in the Security Setting (January - February 2011)

Empowerment and the protection of human security are important for rebuilding any European approach in the Maghreb. Whereas traditional security approaches focus on state security (fixing mainly economic and military objectives), human security strategy brings the human condition (social inequality, development issues, human rights...) to the centre of high security concerns. One of the lessons to be drawn from the recent events in the Maghreb is the transformation of security challenges from interstate (Morocco/Algeria, Libya/Tunisia, Algeria/Tunisia...) to intrastate conflicts (Tunisia, Libya, Algeria...). A state collapse or regime change is not carried out by military forces of external powers.

Besides, the waves of social and political protests that are shaking the Maghreb testify to "the growing insecurity of security".<sup>35</sup> While current transformations highlight the link between different security mechanisms, it is also evidence of the importance of "people-centred security".<sup>36</sup> Subsequently, unrest in the Maghreb pinpoints the need of institutional security settings. In the absence of the Union for the Maghreb, the Arab League and the African Union in recent developments, no institutional security framework has been effective.<sup>37</sup> For the EU, in its relationship to the Maghreb, the priorities were stability,

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<sup>34</sup> Supreme Council of Information & Communication Technology website, <http://www.ict.gov.qa/en>

<sup>35</sup> McDonald, Matt, "Human Security and the Construction of Security", *Global Society*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2002, p. 277.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Frerks, Georg and Kees, Homan, "Human Security: a Launching Pad for Debate and Policy?", *Security and Human Rights*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2008, p. 5.



military cooperation and economic development. Therefore, European countries were taken aback and challenged to some extent, by the recent social and political movements. Illegal immigration, terrorism, unrest or any form of violence and fear appeared to be the effects of failed development strategies adopted by Maghreb states in the aftermath of their independence. While Euro-Maghrebian cooperation had a positive impact on improving legislation, the education system and the economy, it did not help to bring the expected transformation in the social and political conditions of the Maghreb. As a result of modernization, Maghrebian regimes acquired more effective instruments of political stabilization while inequality and absolute rule were undermining the small advance that has been made.

### 4.2 Rebuilding Europe's Security Strategies in the Maghreb

Because the security settings in the Maghreb are shifting in an unconventional way, Europe needs to rebuild its approach and strategies. The EU should take into account the complex human security concerns in the Maghreb as well as its own strengths and weaknesses.

#### 4.2.1 Democratization

Many observers have remarked that, "since the Barcelona Process, when the EU took on to frame a democracy promotion stance towards the Maghreb, the major difficulty of the EU policy is that it is primarily driven by security motives."<sup>38</sup> In its distant involvement in the democratization process, Europe prioritized stability in the region and preventing an Iranian scenario. Thus, Europe accepted authoritarian regimes while it pressed for the democratic process through partnerships and cooperation. The democratic wave in the Maghreb showed that there is no long-term stability at the expense of democracy. The regimes governing the Maghreb failed to secure a minimal level of democratization or stability in the region. Above all, one of the major motivations of the Euro-Maghreb "stability deal", namely the fear of Islamism, did not play a role of any sort in the recent developments.<sup>39</sup>

In a recent declaration, Catherine Ashton implicitly mentioned that sustainable democratization is an essential component of European foreign policy in the Maghreb. She asserted that

[a] crucial aspect of what is going on is that the demand for change comes from within. When I visited Tunisia and Egypt, I heard several times: this is our country and our Revolution. But also: we need help. These two principles should guide our actions: the democratic transitions have to be home-grown. It is for the people of the region to determine what lies next. But we should be ready to offer our full support, if asked, with creativity and determination.... [...] The crisis in Libya and the

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<sup>38</sup> Gillespie, Richard and Whitehead, Laurence, "European Democracy Promotion in North Africa: Limits and Prospects", in *The European Union and Democracy Promotion: The Case of North Africa*, Eds. Richard Gillespie, Richard Youngs, London: Frank Cass, 2002, p. 198.

<sup>39</sup> Dris-Aït Hamadouche, Louisa, "Europe, Security and Islamism: Misunderstandings and Manipulations", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 2009, pp. 339-351.



democratization processes in Tunisia and Egypt will test the EU's resolve to establish an area of peace and stability in our Mediterranean neighbourhood.<sup>40</sup>

The democratization process should be dealt with as a human security issue. Such an approach should consider security building as trust building.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the EU has a major role to play in supporting the new democratic regimes in Tunisia and Libya. Beyond that, the EU should benefit from its democratic credibility aiming at building regional governance in the Euro-Maghreb area.

### 4.2.2 Human Security-Centred Development

It is a reality that societies cannot sustain democracy without an advanced level of development.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, human development is as important as democracy for security in the Maghreb. To think of development in terms of economism has been the main strategy of Maghreb states as well as of European partners. However, the Union for the Mediterranean and other Euro-Maghreb forums have gradually attempted to move beyond economism. Thus, they expressed the view that more is to be done on cultural, social and political levels of development. The events of January-March 2011 demonstrated that security and development are deeply rooted in the social conditions of Maghrebian societies. They also showed that the latter should be the primary focus in any future strategy of security and development. Moreover, failed development policies would endanger the region and raise its vulnerability to permanent insecurity.

For this purpose, Europe should highlight development as a human security issue in the Maghreb, which is an approach concerned about protecting the “vital core” of human life.<sup>43</sup> The EU is supposed to be aware that an underdeveloped Maghreb would be a weak link in the necessary chain of development that Europe needs for its own economic recovery. So much so that the EU should be fully aware that development in the Maghreb as a European security concern requires looking for ways of making a more active commitment in the region,<sup>44</sup> especially with reference to democratization and development.

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<sup>40</sup> Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, speech on the situation in the Southern Neighbourhood and Libya, European Parliament Strasbourg, 9 March 2011, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/11/159>

<sup>41</sup> Bilgic, Ali, "Security Through Trust-Building in the Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation: Two Perspectives for the Partnership", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 2010, pp. 457-473.

<sup>42</sup> Vankovska, Biljana, "The Human Security Doctrine for Europe: A View from Below", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2007, p. 273.

<sup>43</sup> Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko, "New Threats to Human Security in the Era of Globalization", *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2003, p. 171.

<sup>44</sup> *Towards Sustainable Security in the Maghreb*, Special Report 2010, Institut Thomas More, Paris, April 2010, p. 5.



### 4.2.3. Security from Below

Increasingly, immigration from the Maghreb is a source of anxiety and fear that fuels hard-line policies in EU governments. Europeans' attempt at reacting to a feeling of insecurity among European populations with regard to their basic social concerns. In addition, terrorism has become a major insecurity risk for European citizens as they are the main target of terrorist attacks. In order to deal effectively with these two threats, the EU should increasingly consider an approach taking into account the root causes of immigration and terrorism. Rather than limiting its action to police cooperation, it should tackle the radical social conditions of large Maghrebian populations. Since human security implies both freedom from fear and freedom from want,<sup>45</sup> the security of individuals and communities in the Maghreb should be pledged.

Therefore, the EU should promote, above all, the empowerment of Maghrebian societies. In Morocco, where some progress has been made in this regard, the EU offered support in 2005 for “decentralisation and greater empowerment of local authorities”.<sup>46</sup> Currently, Morocco is benefiting from EU assistance with more than 200 million Euros a year that are used in social programs such as gender equity, health and alphabetization.<sup>47</sup>

In the light of the revolutionary wave in the Maghreb, it is obvious that for modern Maghrebian societies, especially among the younger generations, human dignity is a priority. It has a secular meaning and it is associated with freedom and justice. As an illustration, human dignity was the main slogan of the Tunisian revolution, called by Tunisians themselves the revolution of dignity, *thawrat al-karāma*. The Tunisian and Libyan societies were able to claim human security basics. As is the case in other Arab countries, Tunisians and Libyans succeeded in combining “demands for bread-and-butter issues with calls for specific political reforms and measures to combat corruption”.<sup>48</sup> Conversely, the EU, as was articulated by Vittorio Longhi, “has ignored human rights abuses in Libya and other north Africa states in the past. If it is serious about helping them now, it will invest as much in development as border controls”.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the EU has a crucial role to play, markedly, in empowering human rights organizations and putting pressure on the regimes to respect human rights.

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<sup>45</sup> Kaldor, Mary, Martin, Mary, Selchow, Sabine, "Human Security: A New Strategic Narrative for Europe", *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 2, 2007, p. 273.

<sup>46</sup> Fifth meeting of the EU-Morocco Association Council, Brussels, 22 November 2005, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/87085.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/87085.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> L'aide européenne au Maroc en hausse de 20%, [http://www.econostrum.info/L-aide-europeenne-au-Maroc-en-hausse-de-20\\_a4845.html](http://www.econostrum.info/L-aide-europeenne-au-Maroc-en-hausse-de-20_a4845.html)

<sup>48</sup> De Vasconcelos, Alvaro (ed.), *The Arab Democratic Wave, How the EU Can Seize the Moment*, Report No. 9, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, March 2011, p. 23.

<sup>49</sup> Longhi, Vittorio, *Is the EU Serious About Supporting Human Rights Across North Africa?* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/feb/25/libya-eu-human-rights-response>



### 4.2.4. Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management

The EU's interest in promoting conflict prevention in the Maghreb is an explicit incentive of the Euro-Mediterranean partnerships. In the European perspective, prevention is addressed both in terms of “the long and short-term causes of conflict through action on poverty, development, social injustice, aid, trade, arms control and governance”, although it is also associated with the preventive engagement strategies set out in the European Security Strategy (ESS)<sup>50</sup>. Thus, effective conflict prevention should primarily combine traditional preventive security measures such as intelligence and foreign policy, and be involved in democratization, development and security-from-below processes.

But in the current security map of the Maghreb, there is an additional imperative, that of demilitarization and conflict resolution in the region. Furthermore, the settings and problems have changed considerably since early 2011. A recent report of an expert group on EuroMed 2030 deplores that “the EU's Foreign and Security Policy is still underdeveloped and does not yet allow the EU to have much influence on resolving major inter-state conflicts and more minor intra-state conflicts”.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, it would be unreal to expect an effective conflict prevention led by the EU at this stage. In the lack of political and strategic will to build a European foreign policy that is autonomous with the transatlantic alliance, the EU could uphold multilateralism and cooperation with the other group of actors in the area and its vicinity.<sup>52</sup>

The present Libyan civil war reveals the deficient crisis management available to the EU. The "Crisis Platform" on the situation in Libya which is meant to be “one of the new organisational changes introduced by the EEAS to help enhance the EU response to crisis”,<sup>53</sup> did not play any significant role in the crisis. Bypassed by the NATO military and strategic capacities and prevented by the German hesitation and the French rush, the EU did not take the opportunity to show its ability to manage crisis in its closest southern neighbourhoods. Even so, the EU might have to carry on responsibilities in the area if the Libyan crisis becomes a protracted conflict. Similarly, if the democratic wave reaches Algeria or Morocco, the EU would have great interest in being part of any security plan. Higher perils of massive immigration, terrorism in the Sahel area and unrest within Muslim immigrants in Europe could be some of the collateral damage that runs the risk of being affected by the collapse in the region.

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<sup>50</sup> Kaldor, Mary, Martin, Mary, and Selchow, Sabine, "Human Security: A New Strategic Narrative for Europe", *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 2, 2007, p. 277.

<sup>51</sup> Long Term Challenges for the Mediterranean Area, Executive Summary Report of an Expert Group EuroMed-2030, Brussels, 16 December 2010, p. 7,

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/executive-summary-euromed-2030\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/executive-summary-euromed-2030_en.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Meeting of the "Crisis Platform" on the situation in Libya: roundtable and statements,

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/services/showShotlist.do?out=PDF&lg=En&filmRef=75958>





### 4.2.5. Institutional Security Framework: Towards Power Sharing

In the Barcelona Process to the Union for the Mediterranean, Europeans tended to set the partnership agenda with the Maghreb states. As a result, the decision-making of cooperation initiatives, their shape and their goals are defined, primarily, in accordance with European capacities and interests. Although the Association agreements benefit the economies of Morocco and Tunisia, they also made these underdeveloped countries new markets for EU exports and vulnerable to liberalization effects.<sup>54</sup> The “economic enlargement” towards the Maghreb states increased the EU’s power in the region, particularly in trade, but did not motivate its southern partners to be proactive. The reason for this Maghrebian passivity lies in the fact that Euro-Maghreb forums were not negotiated and decided equally by European and Maghrebian states. Additionally, once the cooperative institutions are set up, Europeans take over command without power sharing measures.

As the latest events in Libya have again shown, the Union for the Mediterranean and the 5+5 forum specializing on security, were completely absent from the security outline. Let alone the lifeless Maghreb Arab Union, which could have been crucial in any security plan for the Libyan crisis. Conversely, some countries such as France and Italy have their own strategies for dealing with Maghreb states. Often, these strategies depend on national security road maps. To optimize the efficiency of the European strategy in the Maghreb, these national security road maps should be harmonized along with encouraging a process of integration between Maghreb states. By the same token, it is indispensable that states re-define their strategic economic and military links outside the Mediterranean<sup>55</sup> in the hope of setting up solid ground for a Euro-Maghreb security order.

Given these points, the approach of the EU in the Maghreb should combine the strategies of empowering Maghrebian societies and institutional links with the Maghreb states on the one hand and on the other, it should make the protection of human security the top of its priorities. In the long run, power inequalities, whether in the Maghrebian societies or between the latter and European neighbours, could be a major security risk to the Western Mediterranean region.

### 4.3 Lessons the Maghreb Region Could Learn from Central and East European Countries: An “Experience Sharing Process”

Here, our point of departure is the assumption that there is a great difference between Central and Eastern European countries and the Maghreb countries with regard to nation building, security settings and human development. Nonetheless, with reference to political transition and economic development, they share more than a few similarities. Therefore, we suggest

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<sup>54</sup> Saleh, Nivien, "Europe in the Middle East and Northern Africa: The Subtle Quest for Power", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2007, pp. 80-83.

<sup>55</sup> Calleya, Stephen C., "Subregional Dynamics in the Western Mediterranean", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2003, p. 153.



considering here a number of lessons the Maghreb countries can learn from Central and Eastern Europe countries.

First, change and transformation of the political system, social services and economic development are complex processes and need time. In addition, Central and Eastern European countries have been undergoing modernization processes from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite two world wars and a communist era, these countries were not disconnected from Western European trade networks. On the other hand, the Maghreb states are relatively young (except Morocco) and have difficulty in sustaining their economies. In particular, Central and Eastern European states succeeded in a safe transition from the era of one-party totalitarianism to democracy and pluralism. Thus, Maghreb peoples can learn from this that democratization involves “transparent institutions and free media that protect a truly functioning democracy, that can ensure the rule of law, guarantee the protection of human and minority rights and denounce corruption, nepotism and abuse of any kind”.<sup>56</sup> In this regard, alternance and rejuvenation of elites are vital for democratization. They open new horizons for young generations and contribute to strengthening political systems and pluralistic values.

Second, conflict resolution and minority protection are essential for the most rewarding integration. Thus, Central and Eastern European countries managed to successfully and peacefully avoid balkanization. In the Maghrebian context, the objective of creating a stable and foreign-investor-friendly environment cannot be achieved without solving the Western Sahara conflict. As long as Morocco and Algeria do not resolve their tensions and territorial disputes, the Arab Maghreb Union will remain inert. The Western Sahara conflict involves elements of decolonization, geostrategic interest and historical legitimacy. Therefore, only a long-term process of negotiation can bring a solution. Negotiation could be productive if relations between Rabat and Algiers are cooperative, even more so if Rabat has gained diplomatic credibility with its autonomy initiative. In this case, the Central and Eastern European countries should attempt to launch initiatives to Morocco and Algeria with proposals of an “experience sharing process”.

Third, in compliance with human security requirements, the Maghrebian states have to take responsibility for developing various social and ethnic groups and building security from below. Therefore, they should establish a “social minimum” that ensures social equity between the different groups, society empowering and resource sharing. Handling ethnic and nationalist claims in the Maghreb should be in line, not only with human rights, but also with “the provisions of adequate social services that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood, and dignity”.<sup>57</sup> Central and Eastern European countries also provide an example of active civil societies that are sustaining the foundations of social transformation. Since the gates were opened in 1989, these countries undertook a common effort to accomplish social development that included, but was not limited to, empowering a system of freedom and rights and improving the quality of their education systems.

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<sup>56</sup> Ounaïes, Abderraouf A., "Le Maghreb et l'élargissement", *Confluences Méditerranée*, No. 46, 2003, p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> Fouinat, François, "A Comprehensive Framework for Human Security", *Conflict, Security and Development*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2004, p. 293.



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Fourth, a solid infrastructure and regional integration are the key elements of competitive industrialization and trade. Central and Eastern European countries were industrialized, before, during and after communism. Therefore, their integration into the Western European market was almost accomplished thanks to their strong infrastructures comparable to those of modern European countries. It is a fact that the regional integration of Central and Eastern European countries has been the first step toward EU integration. The Visegrád Group of four Central European states – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – has successfully achieved economic integration plans since its foundation in 1991. The consolidation of links between the four members of this group upgraded their market economies. Such a regional integration of Maghreb states would be needed for an effective partnership and collaboration with the EU, based on coordination between various economic programs to achieve coherence between these Maghreb countries and mutual benefits.

To sum up, Maghreb countries lack the necessary freedom, knowledge and society empowering to build its economies and political systems. If the current changes bring freedom to the Maghreb, Central and Eastern Europe countries would be urged to launch an “experience sharing process” with Maghrebian countries. Overall, Maghrebian economists and political scientists perceive the democratic wave of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe as the closest event to the 2011 uprisings in the Maghreb. They see opportunities for learning from the European experience on the democratic transition level as well as measures for economic upgrading. From our standpoint, Central and Eastern Europe should grasp the opportunity of being a model for Arab revolutions to promote its position in the Maghreb. This could also be beneficial for its economies and its diplomatic influence.