Insecurity in North Africa and the Mediterranean

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*The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.[2]*

Against the massive changes underway in the strategic geopolitics of the Middle East, the situation in North Africa almost seems to be a sideshow. Despite the crisis in Libya, violent extremism in the Sahel and the uncertain future faced by Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco have survived 2016 substantially unchanged, as have the relations between them. In addition, the dominant external relationship for all the states in the Maghreb, both in terms of diplomacy and economic relations, continues to be the European Union and the wider tensions of the global scene do not appear to affect them directly. Russia has shown little interest in the region, China is predominantly engaged in economic relationships with them and the United States still continues to be their major security guarantor, alongside the European Union.

Furthermore, for the United States, maritime security in the Mediterranean is the dominant theme, despite its concerns over violent extremism in Libya and the Sahel. Thus, in 2003, for example, up to 25 per cent of all maritime trade in oil passed through the Mediterranean and, even more significantly, 30 per cent of global sea-borne trade passed through, originated from or was destined for the Mediterranean region. Indeed, in that year, 20,000 ships passed through the Mediterranean, 61,000 ships passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, 14,500 ships passed through the Suez Canal and

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[2] W. B. Yeats (1919): "The Second Coming" in Yeats W.B. (1920), *Michael Robartes and the dancer*, The Chuala Press, Churchtown, Dundrum.

42,000 ships passed between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea via the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus.[3] Freedom of the maritime commons – the American navy's strategic task worldwide – is thus of acute concern in the Mediterranean and the security of North African states is an intrinsic part of that concern, given the chokepoints that exist there.

The security of the Maghreb, therefore, particularly for Europe, is not a marginal concern when compared with the Middle East. In reality, the southern Mediterranean littoral is effectively the European border and there have long been growing anxieties that violence there, as in the Middle East, will spill over into the European domain.[4] The recent terrorist attacks in Germany, France and Belgium have highlighted the dangers and the peculiarly intertwined nature of the security of the two regions north and south of the Mediterranean. Minority communities in Europe, particularly in France, highlight these linkages and, furthermore, underline the extremist connections between North Africa and the Middle East. It is no accident that the recent terrorist attacks in France and Belgium were carried out by individuals of North African origin, radicalised in Europe and recruited into Da'ish in Syria which trained and equipped them.[5] It is a relationship which underlines the globalised nature of the threat to European security. There is, however, another dimension to European concerns as well; the crisis of migrant flows, not just as a result of the civil war in Syria but also from sub-Saharan Africa. It is a crisis which has emerged in the past three years and which has fed on the security crisis in Libya since 2011.

Chaos in Libya

The situation in Libya, too, is a direct consequence of the events of the Arab Spring and of the refusal of the Gaddafi regime to accommodate the demands of protesters, particularly in Cyrenaica. However, as in Syria, there is an important back-story of local factors that help to explain the ways in which events there developed. Cyrenaica had long been hostile to the regime, initially because the coup which had brought the Gaddafi regime to power in September 1969 had reversed the traditional pattern of power relations in the country. From 1951 to 1969, Libya had been ruled by a monarchy based on the Sanusi religious order which itself derived its power and authority in part from its ascendency over the major tribes of Cyrenaica in the precolonial period. The Great September Revolution brought to the fore the central and south-western Libyan tribes which had previously been subordinate to their Cyrenaican counterparts but this development, in turn, continued to marginalise the sophisticated urban populations of the Tripolitanian coast, particularly those of Tripoli and Misurata, Libya's third largest city, thus ensuring the enmity of the dominant population centres in the west and the east of the country towards the new regime. This was significant because Libya essentially consists of two major urban conurbations around Benghazi and Tripoli which contain half of the country's population between them.

The Gaddafi regime itself had begun as an Arab nationalist regime which, during its first decade, gradually transmuted into an idiosyncratic 'state of the masses' (*jamahiriyah*) purporting to be a perfect democracy which, because of its perfection, did not tolerate dissent thus becoming an absolute autocracy instead. In addition, although Mu'ammar Gaddafi himself ostensibly held no formal role within the state beyond being the 'Supreme Leader' – formally a purely honorific position – in reality Libya was ruled in an intensely personal fashion such that the institutions of the Libyan state really only existed to service the regime itself. Only the central bank and the national oil company had any pretensions

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[3] UN Environment Program, *Mediterranean Action Plan [Barcelona Convention]*, (UNEP) (2007), http://www.unepmap.org/index.php?module=content2&-catid=001003002

[4]   G. Joffé, "The European Union, democracy and counter-terrorism in the Maghreb," Journal of Common Market Studies, 46, 1, January 2008, pp. 147-171.

[5] G. Joffé, "Global Jihad and foreign fighters," Small wars and insurgencies, 27 (4), August 2016.

to being genuine state institutions. The result was that, once the regime collapsed, the Libyan state effectively did too, not least because the Libyan army, long distrusted by the regime, spit between supporting it and joining the rebels so that only the two financial and energy institutions survived the civil war in 2011 intact.[6]

The civil war itself also had its roots in a series of specific events involving Cyrenaica. In the 1990s it had been the location of an extremist Islamist rebellion against the Gaddafi regime which was finally repressed in 1998. Many members of the group involved, the *Libyan Islamic Fighting Group* (LIFG), were captured and imprisoned in Abu Salim prison in Tripoli. In 1996, as a result of complaints and riots over prison conditions, up to 1,200 prisoners were massacred. The news of the massacre – many of those affected were imprisoned members of the LIFG from Cyrenaica – eventually leaked out, causing considerable anger in the region. Then, towards the end of the 1990s, 413 children were infected with HIV/AIDS in a Benghazi hospital. Although the cause had been poor hygiene standards, the regime cynically blamed a Palestinian doctor and five Bulgarian nurses for the affair. They were arrested, tortured and threatened with execution before eventually being deported from Libya. That event only increased popular discontent inside Benghazi, particularly when the Bulgarian president pardoned and liberated the deportees. Finally, in 2006, television images, see in Benghazi, of an Italian member-of-parliament wearing a T-shirt bearing cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad caused riots in which the police killed several of the demonstrators.[7]

These crises coincided with a change in the nature of the Gaddafi regime in that Colonel Gaddafi's second son, Saif al-Islam, began tentative moves to modernise the regime and to overcome its international isolation. Although his father was never ultimately prepared to

fully accept the implications of his suggestions, the regime did moderate its unwillingness to make any adjustment to popular sentiment. This led, in turn, in Cyrenaica to the creation of an organised protest movement seeking redress for the three incidents described above and it was because the regime anticipated hostile demonstrations which it tried to prevent by arresting those involved in the movement on February 15, 2011, that demonstrations in protest over the arrests did in fact occur and eventually led to the civil war. It was also at this point that the Libyan crisis became internationalised as fears grew that the Gaddafi regime, in trying to restore order, would victimise the civilian population, a sentiment that led to the United Nations intervention in March 2011 first banning arms sales to Libya and then authorising an intervention by NATO to protect the civilian population.

There was, however, a further decision by some of the states involved – Britain, France, Qatar, the UAE and Turkey, together with, at one remove, the United States – to replace the regime.[8] This decision was a consequence of the obloquy that the Gaddafi regime had earned as a result of its support for and engagement in activities which the states opposed to it considered had threatened international stability and security during the previous forty years. Even though Libya had provided compensation and had handed over two of its own nationals for trial in connection with the destruction of flight PanAm 103 over the Scottish town of Lockerbie in December 1988, the distrust of its ruling regime had evidently not dissipated during the intervening years. Yet this was a decision that Russia and China had not endorsed at the United Nations Security Council when they agreed to an intervention in Libya and one with which they disagreed in principle – both states reject the idea of intervention in the internal affairs of other states. They have, as a result, viewed Western initiatives elsewhere (in Syria and in Ukraine) with

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[6]   G. Joffé, "The impact of the war on Libya," in Henricksen D. and Larssen A.K., *Political rationale and international consequences of the war in Libya*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2016, pp. 296-297

[7]   G. Joffé, "Civil resistance in Libya during the Arab Spring," in Roberts A. Willis M.J., McCarthy R. and Garton Ash T., *Civil resistance in the Arab Spring: triumphs and disasters*, OUP, Oxford, 2016, pp. 116-129.

[8]   H. Roberts, "Who said Gaddafi had to go?" London Review of Books, 33 (22), 17 November 2011, pp. 8-18.

an increasingly jaundiced eye.

The current situation in Libya flows from three factors that emerged during the civil war: the intensely personalised nature of the Gaddafi regime, the fragmentation of the Libyan army during the civil war and the growth of spontaneously-formed militias to confront it, and the virtual collapse of the institutions of the Libyan state with the disappearance of the regime. It has been abetted, too, by the unwillingness of those states that engineered regime change to subsequently take responsibility for the consequences of their actions. They have either simply neglected the evolution of the situation there or otherwise supported their own clients, thereby increasing the fragmentation of the post-Gaddafi Libyan political scene. It has proved impossible to weld the major militias that emerged during the war into a single force to act as nucleus of a new Libyan national army supporting the civil power. Instead two major mutually antagonistic military coalitions, one opposed to all Islamist forces in the country and the other supporting moderate Islamist groups – *Libyan Dawn* and *Libyan Dignity* – have emerged, each increasingly incarnating the growing pressure for a restructuring of the country as a federation rather than as a unitary state. Indeed, that civil power has also split into three, with similar regional implications, with a government in Tobruk vying with its predecessor in Tripoli for recognition as the legitimate government of the whole country and now vainly challenged by a third, United Nations-appointed government trying to replace its two predecessors. Only the central bank, the national power company and the national oil company have managed to rise above these divisions to ensure that Libya retains the sinews of a unitary state. In addition, over the last four years, new and sinister forces have emerged in the form of religious extremism to further fragment the security chaos that exists there.

The extremist threat

Shortly after the revolution began in 2011, a correlate of al-Qa'ida– *Ansar al-Shari'a* – emerged in eastern Libya. It had first appeared in southern Yemen in 2010 where it based its appeal on the promise of 'good governance' in those areas it controlled, rather than the traditional al-Qa'ida objective of confronting the 'far enemy;' those states outside the Muslim world that supported corrupt regimes inside it, particularly the United States. It made similar promises in Libya, as it spread westwards, but also engaged in the armed struggle, with one of its militias being responsible for the mysterious assassination of the rebel leader and former Libyan interior minister, Abd al-Fattih al-Obaid, and two of his junior officers in July 2011. In September 2012, it was responsible for the death of the American ambassador to Libya during his visit to Benghazi, together with four other American officials. Eventually in 2014 and 2015, as the Libyan Dignity militia coalition under General Khalifa Haftar forced it out of Benghazi, it set up a training camp at Sabratha, close to the Tunisian border, where it provided training for Tunisian adherents to the movement who were responsible for attacks on the Bardo Museum in Tunis in March 2015 and on tourist hotels in Sousse the following July.

Somewhat earlier, in October 2014, *Da'ish*-affiliated groups emerged in Libya, concentrating on the coastal city of Derna, to the east of Benghazi, which was long-known as a centre of religious extremism. Although the movement was expelled from the city by a combination of Libyan Dignity and local extremists, it reappeared – now strengthened with militants from Syria and Iraq – in mid-2015 in Sirte where it cemented its position by allying itself with the disaffected remnants of the Qadhadhfa tribe; exactly the same tactic that it had used in Iraq in 2010-2011 and subsequently in Iraq and Syria in 2014. It eventually occupied a 500 km stretch of coastline and spread southwards towards the arc of oil fields on which Libya' s economy depends whilst at the same time seeking to undermine the economy by attacking oil terminals along the coast of the Gulf of Sirte. Although blocked by the militias in Misurata, it was clear that Da'ish had designs on the Libyan capital and the country's second city in the east, Benghazi. It eventually took the *Bunyan Marsous*, a powerful militia coalition from Misurata, six months to eliminate the movement from Sirte, at a

cost of 712 dead and 3,210 injured militiamen, aided by 492 airstrikes from the American airforce.[9] Yet, although it has lost its base, the movement has not been destroyed; its leadership has moved south into the desert and its forces have already launched two attacks on the Great Manmade River, Libya's fossil water project that supplies the country's coastal cities from aquifers deep in the desert around Kufra oasis.

The movement's initial success alarmed Europe, not least because of its threats to spill over the Mediterranean and across the European frontier. It was also involved in attempts to undermine the precarious democratic government in neighbouring Tunisia, where – from the training camp close to the Tunisian border with Libya at Sabratha – it helped other extremist groups to launch a raid on the neighbouring Tunisian town of Ben Gardane in March 2016.[10] Nor was Europe excluded; from late 2015 onwards a series of terrorist incidents in Paris, Brussels, Nice and Berlin were claimed by Da'ish. It was notable, though, that those responsible came primarily from former French colonies in Africa, particularly from Tunisia where up to 7,000 Tunisians are said to have joined the movement.[11] That threat, coupled with increasing concerns over migrant outflows from sub-Saharan Africa via Libya into Italy facilitated by criminalised militia networks in Tripolitania, has persuaded the international community that it must resolve the Libyan political crisis as a matter of urgency. During 2016, up to the end of November, Italy alone received 171,000 illegal migrants from North Africa, 70 per cent of whom had been trafficked, and a further 5,000 had died in the Mediterranean.[12] Once again and as in the Middle East, a local crisis has had regional and global implications.

Throughout 2015 the United Nations tried to construct an alternative government and constituent assembly for Libya out of the two existing and competing governments and parliaments already on the ground, one in Tobruk and its predecessor in Tripoli. Both were invited to negotiate a solution under the United Nations aegis and, despite attempts by vested interests to prevent any outcome that undermined their interests, it eventually succeeded in finding a solution acceptable to the majority. This was to involve a parliamentary assembly drawn from both its predecessors, together with a new government that they would also have to have approved. In the event, a majority of both assemblies supported the government proposed by the United Nations and, after it arrived in Tripoli, despite continued opposition from elements whose power would be significantly reduced by its appointment, in late March 2016, it gradually began to take over the remaining institutions of the state and gained increasingly wide acceptance from the established centres of power.

It also, significantly, received the unanimous recognition of the international community which saw its primary purpose to be to legitimise an external intervention to deal with the migrant crisis and with extremism by enabling the creation of an effective army to support the new government and to project its authority over a country that had threatened to become an ungoverned space. Unfortunately, as with all previous initiatives, the latest attempt failed to adjust to realities. In this case, the reality which seems likely to fatally undermine the United Nations initiative is the inability of the new government to create a unitary military force through which to impose its will. Although it had the support of the all-important Misuratan militias which control much of Tripolitania, it cannot persuade them to accept integration with the Libyan Dignity coalition from Cyrenaica, which now controls the vital oil crescent in Cyrenaica and Sirtica, under Khalifa Haftar as overall army commander. Yet, without

9   Anon, "After 4,000 dead and wounded, Bunyan Marsous finally beats IS in Sirte," Libya Herald, 15 December 2016.

10   S. M. Torelli, "The Ben Guerdane attack and Tunisia's tackling of terrorism," Terrorism Monitor, 16 (6), Jamestown Foundation, 16 March 2016, https://jamestown.org/program/the-ben-guerdane-attack-and-tunisias-tackling-of-terrorism/

11   C. Caryl, "Why does Tunisia produce so many terrorists?" Foreign Policy (July 15, 2016), http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/15/why-does-tunisia-produce-so-many-terrorists-nice-france-truck-terrorist-attack/

12   BBC News, "Migrant crisis: Italy sees record arrivals from North Africa," (November 28, 2016), http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-38139706

him obtaining this post, his forces will not accept the United Nations-sponsored plan either.

There is a significant wider regional dimension to this crisis as well, for General Haftar, who is strongly opposed to political Islam in any form, enjoys the active support of the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, two states which share his dislike of political Islam and therefore are prepared to provide his forces with military aid. In Tripolitania, however, the major militias in Misurata and Tripoli sympathise with moderate Islamic political movements and enjoy political and military support from Qatar. They also support Libya's grand mufti, Sadiq al-Ghariyani, who has Salafist sympathies as well. The result is that any reconciliation between Libya's two major militia coalitions in order to create from them a single national army is well-neigh impossible. Libya therefore continues with its triple governments, each contesting the other for legitimate power yet lacking the unitary armed force through which to exercise it.

Marocco, Tunisia and Algeria

Of the other Maghreb countries, only Morocco has survived the transitions of the past six years relatively unscathed. In large measure this was due to the adroit official response to demonstrations sparked off by events in Tunisia in December 2010 and January 2011 which culminated in the overthrow of the Ben Ali regime. In addition to easing economic burdens on the population, the Royal Palace rapidly inaugurated a constitutional reform programme, liberalising the governance system but ensuring that it remained in ultimate control. It then authorised elections which brought an Islamist party, the Parti de Justice et du Développement (PJD) to power as the head of a coalition whilst tightening up discreetly on the freedom of the press and the media and on its control of public space.[13] The result, against the background of a prospering economy, has been continued social peace since 2012. There is a minor problem over

religiously-inspired political extremism and 1,500 Moroccans are said to have joined Da'ish whilst there have been minor incidents inside the country as well and the tone of public debate has become increasingly conservative. Morocco's problems have lain, rather, with its eastern neighbour, Algeria, as is discussed below.

Algeria itself has also avoided the turmoil experienced elsewhere inside the region, both because of a rapid official response to rioting in January 2011 and judicious repression at further attempts to demonstrate popular opposition. One of the main reasons for relative public calm, however, is that Algerians have an acute memory of the violence of the civil war in the 1990s and there is a widespread consensus that they do not wish to return to the chaos and violence of those years. The result has been a political stasis particularly after the president won a fourth presidential term in April 2014 with an 81.5 per cent majority of the vote. His success was particularly striking as he had been partially disabled by a stroke a year before. This atmosphere of political stasis has created a political void in the country, for the president is not expected to survive for long and political change will come only after he leaves the scene. At the same time, the collapse in oil prices in 2015 has created a very worrying economic environment for Algeria which is severely oil-dependent and there are growing fears that the consequent austerity may provoke further popular unrest.[14]

The presidency was, however, able to reorganise the security services in 2013 and 2015 in order, ostensibly, to reduce their autonomous power after a terrorist attack on a gas facility in Eastern Algeria led to the deaths of 39 foreign hostages. Domestic 'residual terrorism' in the official parlance continues to be a minor problem in Algeria; in the year up to December 2016, the Algerian army and security forces killed 125 terrorists and arrested a further 225 persons, according to the army's monthly magazine,

[13] D. Maghraoui, "Constitutional reforms in Morocco: between consensus and subaltern politics," Journal of North African Studies, 16 (4), December 2011, pp. 679-700.

[14] G. Joffé, "The outlook for Algeria," *IAI Working Paper 15/38*, October 2015, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome.

El Djeich,[15] yet less than 100 Algerians have joined Da'ish, according to the minister for religious endowments, Mohammed Aissa.[16] Algerian security concerns, therefore, are focussed on the situation of insecurity along its borders, in Libya and Mali, together with the situation in Tunisia.

Tunisia's security situation has been a source of concern for several years, not least because the Tunisian security forces were ill-equipped to handle the challenge that developed after Tunisia began its democratic transition. Despite the downturn in its economy after the revolution which means that the imbalances between coast and interior, north and south, have not been corrected, the country has managed to preserve its new-found political system and its new constitution. The political parties, including its moderate Islamists – who now identify themselves, rather, as nationalist conservatives – have learned to cooperate and the temptation for revenge against the previous political order has been stifled to such an extent that the party that won the largest number of seats in the most recent legislative elections in October 2014, *Nida Tounis*, openly acknowledged the fact that many of its members had also been members of the former regime's own political party, the *Rassemblement Constitutionelle Démocratique*.

The major problem that Tunisia has faced, apart from the stagnant economy, has been the security situation it faces after the assassinations of two left wing politicians in 2013, a terrorist attack on the Bardo museum in Tunis in 2015 and an attack on a hotel close to Sousse in the same year. In addition Tunisia's border with Algeria, particularly around Jabal Chaamba and Jendouba, has been infested with terrorist groups emanating from Algeria and Libya and its Western border with Libya has also become insecure, with an attack on the border town of Ben Gardane in March 2016. Kairouan and Sousse have become centres for Salafist Islam, a development that has seriously alarmed moderate Islamists throughout the country, as well as the government and security services. Yet, despite these developments, Tunisia's democratic transition continues, albeit with very little practical help from outside powers, particularly in Europe and ongoing concerns about the security situation in Libya.

The wider regional security crisis

The crisis in Libya, however, has fed into a much wider security crisis throughout the Sahel and the Sahara. This originated in the Algerian civil war in the 1990s which, between 1992 and 1999, caused the deaths of up to 200,000 people and involved a bitter struggle between the Algerian army and two major Islamist coalitions.[17] One, which had sought to force the army-backed regime to restore the electoral process, the suspension of which at the start of 1992 had actually led to the civil war, had accepted a truce in 1997. The other, far more extreme and linked to *al-Qa'ida*, had sought to overthrow the regime and had been crushed. One extremist movement had survived, however, in Kabylia and, in 2003, had joined hands with a small extremist movement in the Sahara which was embedded in the smuggling networks there. The new group specialised in financing itself through ransoms from kidnappings and settled in northern Mali, around the ancient salt mines of Taoudenni, where it benefitted from the protection of the local Touareg notability. In 2006, it declared for al-Qa'ida and became *al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb* (AQIM). Over the next five years it split into three separate movements; AQIM which was Algerian-dominated, MUJAO (*Mouvement d'unité et du jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest*) which was

[15] *El-Watan*, 18 December 2016.

[16] *El Watan*, 17 December 2016.

[17] The Algerian justice minister, Tayeb Louh, recently admitted that his ministry had listed 54,457 persons for terrorist offences since 1992. This figure contrasts with one given by the Algerian army in an international seminar in October 2002 when it claimed that up to 27,000 persons had joined the terrorist movements during the civil war between 1992 and 2002 and that 15,000 of them had been killed during the decade-long struggle between 1992 and 2002, together with 30,200 civilians – giving a figure for total losses of 45,200. President Bouteflika, some years later in 2005, admitted that 200,000 persons had died during the conflict which had caused damage costed at $40 billion. http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2005/02/200849155453867369.html

made up of Mauritanians and individuals from the Sahel states, and *Ansar ad-Din*, a Touareg Islamist movement.

With the end of the Libyan civil war, Touareg mercenaries of the Gaddafi regime returned home to Mali and Niger. They were determined to create an autonomous Touareg region in Mali – *Azawad* – by force, if need be, and, in the chaos caused by a simultaneous army mutiny in the Malian capital, Bamako, the three AQIM-related movements decided to create their own Islamic state in northern Mali by taking over the three major towns in the north of the country; Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. Two years later, in January 2013, in a move that coincided with a quite separate attack on a major gas facility in eastern Algeria at Tiguentourine (In Amenas) by a dissident group, *al-Murabitun* under Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the three movements also tried to capture control of southern Mali and the capital, Bamako, a move that provoked a French intervention with reluctant Algerian support. For Algeria, the idea of having to collaborate with France is abhorrent because France was the former colonial power that Algeria had only expelled after eight years of brutal warfare in 1962 and because Algeria firmly eschews the concept of intervention in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state. However, French and American anxiety over stability in the Sahel overcame the reluctance in Algiers.

One reason for the French intervention had to do with the security of its nationals in neighbouring Niger, where there are also uranium mines which feed the French electrical power industry, another has been the growing instability in the Sahel where weak governments struggle to control what is effectively ungoverned space and are themselves threatened, in turn, by dissident movements – that led to a French intervention in Chad in 1983 which is still ongoing. Then there are the fears that groups in Mali are linking to other extremists further south, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria and Cameroon. America's AFRICOM has long been anxious about security

in the Sahel and the Sahara and has, therefore, supported the French move, which is now backed up by an African Union force, and has persuaded Algeria that the French initiative was essential, even if it has lasted far longer than had been anticipated. Indeed, despite the action taken, the threat remains, as attacks in Bamako (Mali) in November 2015, Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) in January 2016, and Grand Bassam (Côte d'Ivoire) in March 2016 have made clear.[18]

Tensions between Morocco and Algeria

It could be argued that unrest and violence ensconced in the Sahel is much more a problem for sub-Saharan Africa than for North Africa and there have been anxieties – so-far unjustified – that the groups in Mali would eventually link up with *Boko Haram* in Northern Nigeria and Cameroon or even with *Al-Shabab* in Somalia. However, the actual arenas of interest of the groups concerned continue to directed primarily northwards, particularly towards Algeria from which many of their members had originated. There has also been terrorist interest in Mauritania and the Western Sahara, although penetration there has been far less intense. Nonetheless, it is still North Africa which occupies the terrorist horizon, despite the groups' access into sub-Saharan Africa.

The result has been not only to attract French and American interest towards the insecurity in the region but also to highlight longstanding tensions inside North Africa as well. Algeria's response has been to both seek to mediate a solution, primarily between the government in Bamako and the Touaregs, and to construct a regional security initiative, bringing together North African and Sahelian states and directed against both. One state, however, has been forced to remain outside this regional consensus – Morocco. Morocco and Algeria have long been at loggerheads, ever since they fought a short border war in 1963, just after the resolution of Algeria's war for independence and the end of the French colonial

18 For the background to the crisis in the Sahel and West Africa, see R. Marchal (ed), *Le Sahel dans la crise malienne*, SciencesPo-CERI, Paris, July 2013.

presence there. Their disagreements centre around the common border between them which was drawn up by colonial officials and which Morocco considers unjustly annexes territory which historically formed part of its jurisdiction.

Beyond this, however, Rabat has another covert concern, namely that Morocco, rather than Algeria, should be the regional hegemon, given the country's thousand-year-long history as a state, whereas Algeria, in its modern form at least, only dates from the colonial era. Algeria, on the other hand, considers that its economic strength, territorial extent and location, and moral and revolutionary status in view of its war for independence entitles it to regional hegemony. Since 1975, furthermore, the two countries have been on the opposite sides in the region's most intractable dispute; Morocco's claims upon and occupation of the Western Sahara. Morocco claims it on the basis of historical precedent; Algeria insists on a referendum for self-determination amongst the territory's Sahrawi population, in line with United Nations' and African Union demands.[19]

In 1994, in the wake of a series of terrorist incidents in Casablanca and Marrakesh, Morocco closed its border with Algeria, thereby bringing a period of détente in relations between the two countries that had lasted since February 1989 to an end. Since then, Algeria has refused to agree to re-open the border, using the dispute over the future of the Western Sahara as its excuse. This has also meant that Morocco has been excluded from Algerian initiatives over regional terrorism. In response, Morocco has developed its own regional policy to counter Algerian hostility. This has involved strengthening links with Sahelian and West African states, encouraging Moroccan private investment in West Africa, propagating Morocco's Maliki version of Islam there and opening a school for imam training in Rabat. Hard security measures have involved strengthening Morocco's long-term policy of training security services and strengthening intelligence cooperation in Africa, especially in West

Africa whilst, in the international arena, trying to ensure international support for its own claims to the Western Sahara.

The result is that there is no concerted regional security or counter-terrorism policy in place throughout North Africa, despite the challenges it faces. In essence, therefore indigenous initiatives to reduce the threat of extremist violence inside North Africa have been significantly weakened by the Morocco-Algerian split as much as they have by the chaos in Libya whilst outside powers, particularly in Europe, have been drawn into the combustible mixture of regional and local crises. France, in particular, has found itself enmeshed in Mali since 2013 – as it has been in Chad ever since the 1980s! Yet quite apart from the issues of security, terrorist spillovers and migration, Europe is ineluctably engaged in the Maghreb which has long been the major focus of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), an initiative designed to create a zone of 'shared peace, stability and prosperity' in the Mediterranean according to the communiqué issued after the Barcelona Conference at which it was introduced in November 1995.[20]

The wider dimension

European engagement with South Mediterranean states, particularly those in North Africa, has a very long pedigree. This has been both because of the French, Spanish and Italian colonial engagement with the region and because of the acute economic ties between the two regions that have persisted since then. In addition, Europe and the United States are closely engaged in the Maghreb through NATO.

The European Union and the CFSP

Trade statistics alone reveal the degree of economic dependence of the Maghrib on Europe. Thus, in

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[19] For the background to the Western Sahara dispute, see G. Joffé, "Sovereignty and the Western Sahara," *Journal of North African Studies*, 15, (3), September 2010, pp. 375-384.

[20] "Preamble," *Barcelona Declaration*, 28 November 1995, https://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/policy/barcelona_declaration.pdf

2012, 56 per cent of Tunisia's total trade was with the European Union, with the comparable figures for Algeria and Morocco being 50 per cent and 44 per cent respectively. Other Mediterranean littoral states showed a similar, albeit slightly smaller dependence (Turkey, for example, experienced 32 per cent of its total foreign trade with the Union, Israel 31 per cent, Egypt 23 per cent and Lebanon 27 per cent). Only Jordan (10 per cent) and Syria (4 per cent) were exceptions to this pattern of engagement. The result has been a long-term European engagement in fostering such economic links through bilateral trade agreements which allowed restricted free access of primary products and industrial goods into the European market. In the wake of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, which created Europe's 'Single Market' and other shared institutional instruments within the Union, Brussels was able to forge a common policy towards the South Mediterranean littoral and the CFSP was the result.[21]

Even though European policy towards the South Mediterranean had always been predominantly economic in nature, its purpose had really been to improve regional security. By improving economic conditions there, it was argued, the imperatives that drove regional migration into Europe would be countered and European social order improved. There were, as time went by, increasing initiatives to address cooperation over terrorism, smuggling and crime but the economic path to security was always the major concern. The CFSP-inspired 'Euro-Mediterranean Partnership' (EMP) differed from earlier policies in that it not only allowed South Mediterranean states access to the European market, as a way of stimulating economic development amongst them, it also actively sought to accelerate the process by stimulating direct competition between their industrial sectors and the European industrial sector, in the hope of increasing efficiency through competivity and economies-of-scale. Agriculture would be subsequently included in the mix and

there were plans for competition in service provision to be introduced as well. The short-term pain caused by such open competition would, the Commission believed, be replaced by long-term gains in economic efficiency and prosperity, thus reducing incentives for migration. In any case European aid was to be provided to ease the transition process and to stimulate infrastructural development as part of it.[22]

Within ten years of its inception, it was clear that the objectives of the EMP were not being met and that the Southern partner states were becoming disillusioned by a process that appeared to be entirely under the thumb of the European Commission in which they had no agency. The policy was, therefore, revamped along the lines of the policy that had been used to prepare the newly liberated states of Eastern Europe for accession to the Union in 2004. The new policy, the 'European Neighbourhood Policy,' however, proved to be as unsatisfactory as its predecessor had been, not least because the Southern partner states still felt disempowered by it and had no sense of ownership over it for it was simply an additional layer of complexity grafted onto the EMP. It, in turn, was modified three years later by being melded with a French-inspired 'Union for the Mediterranean,' a largely private sector initiative designed to address common regional problems.

The real test of the CFSP, however, was to come in 2011, with the Arab Awakening. The crises of early 2011 were initially essentially economic in nature but then morphed into demands for political change too – the two key issues supposedly addressed by the three-tier CFSP construct in which the states of the South Mediterranean were perforce engaged.[23] Indeed the Arab Awakening itself was an implicit admission that the CFSP-inspired policies had failed and it might have been expected that the European Union and the international community would have engaged with the South Mediterranean states undergoing democratic transition, particularly

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[21] G. Joffé, "Barcelona twenty years on," Zoubir Y.H. And White G. (eds), *North African politics: change and continuity*, Routledge, London, 2016, p. 328.

[22] See G. Joffé, "The Maghrib in the twenty-first century," Hussey A. and Rose M. (eds), 2014, *The challenge of North Africa*, SENAR/British Council, London, pp. 9-24.

[23] G. Joffé, "The Arab Spring: origins and prospects," pp. 517-520.

Egypt, Libya and Tunisia with major economic aid and political support. In the event, the Union, trapped in the sequelae of its own financial crisis was only able to offer cosmetic political support and limited amounts of aid which proved to be largely irrelevant to the profound changes that confronted the Southern states concerned.

In 2013, the International Monetary Fund calculated that, over the four years up to 2015, the Arab economies affected by the transition would need$225.7 billion in external financing support as a result of the economic contractions caused by the combined effects of the Awakening and the global financial crisis. In the same year HSBC in the United Arab Emirates calculated that the direct costs of the Awakening would be $800 billion.[24] In fact, the European Union, together with the United States and the states in the G8's Deauville Programme contributed the grand total of $11 billion in additional finances. The IMF provided $6.58 billion in standby finance, compared with $16 billion from the Arab Gulf states to support Egypt alone in 2013 and 2014.[25] Beyond this, little support beyond rhetoric and cosmetic policy redesign was provided to support the political transition processes, even though such transitions had long been recognised as essential if the core problems of the Arab world were to be resolved.[26] It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Union's policy towards the Arab Awakening has done little to improve Mediterranean security or to guarantee its own security interests there; in short it has been largely irrelevant to the security concerns and the economic crisis that South Mediterranean countries face. On the other hand, Europe has come increasingly to rely on security cooperation with these countries to ensure its own internal security, often to their increasing resentment.

The NATO dimension

NATO has had a longstanding engagement in Mediterranean security, of course, which dates back to the era of the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War, however, NATO sought a closer engagement with South Mediterranean states over security issues, thus joining a group of security dialogues in the region, ranging from the now defunct Western European Union's forum and the OSCE Mediterranean Dialogue to the Five-plus-Five dialogue and Egypt's Mediterranean Forum. NATO's engagement, enshrined in the 'Mediterranean Dialogue' initiated in 1994 – just one year before the CFSP and in the full flood of confidence over 'hegemonic stability' – proved to be the forerunner for the 'Istanbul Cooperation Initiative' created ten years later and directed at the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf.

The Mediterranean Dialogue involved NATO in an ongoing security discussion with four of the five states of the Maghrib – Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia – together with Egypt, Israel and Jordan. Over time the bilateral contacts between NATO and individual partners as part of the political dialogue has also evolved into contacts over practical cooperation as well. The political dialogue handles not only overt security issues but also specifically political matters, such as civil-military relations and civil emergency planning. Practical cooperation, on the other hand, deals with issues such as interoperability, cooperative planning to counter terrorism and defence reform. Over time, cooperation tools have been developed to encourage joint action between NATO and its Mediterranean Dialogue partners.[27]

Even though the objectives and modus operandi of the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue were recently reviewed at NATO's Warsaw summit meeting in early

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[24] IMF (2013), *Arab countries in transition: economic outlook and Key challenges,* International Monetary Fund, Washington DC, October 2013, and Reuters (Dubai), "Arab Spring to cost Middle East $800 billion, HSBC estimates," 9 October 2013.

[25] Greenfield D., Hawthorne A. and Balfour R. (2013), *The US's and the EU's lack of strategic visions: frustrated efforts towards the Arab transitions*, Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, Atlantic Council, Washington DC, September 2013.

[26] G. Joffé, "Barcelona twenty years on," pp. 320-324.

[27] NATO, "NATO Mediterranean Dialogue," 13 February 2015, www.nato.int/med-dial/home.htm

July 2016, there remain problems between NATO itself and its Dialogue partners. These largely arise for basic differences in perception over NATO's role and intentions as far as the partners are concerned. Some states, jealous of national sovereignty, suspect threats to their sovereign integrity. Others fear NATO as a projection of Western intentions towards the region which they consider hostile, particularly after NATO's role in the Libyan civil war. Nonetheless, they share common interests over issues such as counter-terrorism and value support over emergency planning, interoperability and defence reform. And some see the Dialogue as a more viable alternative partner to the EMP in achieving its objectives of peace, security, stability and prosperity.[28]

Conclusion

Over the five years since the Arab Spring overturned the established political order inside the Middle East and North Africa, there have been profound changes in the balances-of-power there. States that seemed innately stable have been overthrown, thus demonstrating the danger of assuming that autocracy guaranteed stability; states that sought regional hegemony have seen their assumptions about external support overturned and challenged by geopolitical realities masquerading as sectarianism, and outside powers that had been assumed to possess an immutable dominance over regional affairs have had to begin to accommodate challenges from former adversaries now revived by the ending of 'hegemonic stability.' The result has been a bewildering complexity in regional affairs that makes any prediction over the future there extremely challenging. Algeria and Morocco, for example, must rethink their external relationships as global patterns of power change. Yet they continue to be trapped by their economic realities into dependence on Europe, just as Europe itself seeks their help over migration from sub-Saharan Africa and over the regulation of the situation in Libya.

What is clear, however, is that facile assumptions about the superiority of democratic outcomes have yet to be demonstrated as autocracy has begun to reassert itself, often with the explicit or tacit support of external powers. Similarly, equally facile Western assumptions about the effectiveness of declaratory policy have been shown to be simply empty rhetoric whilst the reality on the ground has reflected the importance of the material application of power, whether military or economic. Thus, the crisis in Libya required the active engagement of the United Nations to enforce a solution on reluctant factions responsible for the chaos there, but its solution cannot be simply imposed but must be negotiated with the dominant domestic players in the country.

Finally, it is no longer open to the United States and its Western allies to determine, alone, the policy options available to regional states. Now they must take into account the preferences of other global powers, Russia and China chief amongst them. It is not that American military might can yet be significantly challenged by Russia or China; that is clearly not the case and will not be for many years to come. However, it is the case that America no longer aspires to 'hegemonic stability,' not least because of the costs involved, and that means that other states acquire, in consequence, significant degrees of freedom-of-action. Multi-polarity, in short, is gradually beginning to assert itself and the Middle East and North Africa are the arenas where this is being most explicitly demonstrated. For NATO, North Africa presents an interesting challenge for engagement over common concerns despite the lingering anxieties of its Southern partners.

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[28] R. El-Houdaigui, "NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: what are new possible approaches?" *Policy Brief PB 16/16*, June 2016, OCP Policy Center, Rabat.