



# IPRIS Maghreb Review

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## Editors' note

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Welcome to the first issue of the IPRIS Maghreb Review. In view of the growing importance of North Africa for both Portugal and the European Union (EU), and inspired by the absence of a regular policy brief on the Maghreb, it is our pleasure to introduce to you this latest publication of the Portuguese Institute of International Relations and Security (IPRIS). From now on, the IPRIS Maghreb Review will be published at the beginning of each month, featuring exclusively the five countries of the Greater Arab Maghreb, i.e. Mauritania, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya. It reaches out to policy-makers, think tanks, the academic community, the media, the private sector, and all those that are interested in North African affairs. The IPRIS Maghreb Review provides its readers with first-class, up-to-date analysis on issues pertaining to political, economic, social, and cul-

tural dynamics in the Maghreb, regional developments in the Greater Maghreb area, and the role of the five countries in the international system. Each publication will contain three to four short analytical articles, one more in-depth lead article, a "further reading" list, as well as a monthly chronology of events.

This month's IPRIS Maghreb Review opens with an article by Tobias Schumacher on the recently held Arab League summit in Sirte, Libya. This is followed by an analysis of Diogo Noivo on Libya within the new international context, and one article by Hakim Darbouche on EU-Algeria energy relations and the prospects of an EU-Algeria strategic energy partnership. The lead article, written by Mahjoob Zweiri, analyses the growing influence of Iran in the Maghreb, with a particular emphasis on Iran-Algeria and Iran-Morocco relations and the issue of Shi'ism. This is complemented by a chronology of Maghreb-related events in April and some book recommendations.

We truly hope you will enjoy this first edition and find the IPRIS Maghreb Review useful. If you have any comments or questions, or if are interested in writing for the IPRIS Maghreb Review, please contact the editors or consult the IPRIS website at [www.ipris.org](http://www.ipris.org).

## The Arab League and the politics of irrelevance

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On the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2010, the 22<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Arab League was held in the Libyan coastal city of Sirte. Colonel Gaddafi, official host of the meeting and currently chairman of the organisation, had welcomed the heads of states of all 22 member states, and consequently the political leaders of all Maghreb countries were invited as well. While Algeria, Tunisia and Mauritania were represented at the highest political level, Moroccan King Mohammed VI joined the ranks of seven others – including the then hospitalized Egyptian president and the Saudi king – and gave a cold shoulder to an event usually marked by mutual insults, accusations, and a blatant display of Arab disunity. While the summit was a welcome opportunity for Mauritania's new



President, Mohamed Abdel Aziz, to generate a sense of normality and, following the ousting of Mauritania's first democratically elected President in August 2008, to present himself as his country's legitimate leader, Tunisia's Ben Ali seized the opportunity to lobby for the re-activation of the Arab Peace and Security Council and for two Arab League conferences to be held later this year in Tunis. Algerian President Bouteflika also indulged in some rhetoric on the need to reform the League's structures. Yet, and more importantly, he used the summit as a platform to discuss with fellow Arab leaders the latest round of negotiations over the future status of the Western Sahara. Conversely, it was precisely this issue and the prospect of having to meet with Bouteflika that led Mohammed VI to ignore the gathering and to dispatch only his younger brother, Prince Moulay Rachid.

The summit itself can be summarised rather briefly, as it turned out to be just another insubstantial meeting of a highly divided circle of elderly dictators, who – strictly speaking – differ from one another only by the extent to which their rhetoric and action are more or less radical and nationalistic. In what has become somewhat of a fashion in recent years, Colonel Gaddafi began by mocking his counterparts and offending first Iraqi foreign minister Hoshiyar Zebari by pledging support to Iraqi ex-Baathists, then moved on to Qatar's Emir Sheikh Al Thani by suggesting he was overweight. While these gaffes provide an indication of the underlying atmosphere, the summit did not produce any concrete results, neither with respect to the League's future relations with Iran, nor its transformation into a more integrated union.

Concerning the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the gathering proved to be rather meaningless. Preceded by Mauritania's rather surprising decision to cut all diplomatic relations with Israel just

a few days before the conference, the summit itself was dominated by very strong anti-Israel rhetoric, embodied, for instance, in Algerian President Bouteflika's plea for "firm positions to confront Israel's arrogance and colonization". At the beginning of March, the Arab League had called for indirect talks between Israel and the Palestinians mediated by the U.S., provided the Israeli government would put an end to current settlement activities. At the summit however – and following the Israeli government's announcement that it would pursue settlement construction in the West Bank and Ramat Shlomo – Libya opposed the resumption of peace talks and managed to bring both more radical-minded and moderate regimes in line with its position. As a consequence, the summit conclusions omit any reference to the issue, and instead foresee the preparation of a joint Arab action plan on key issues, to be discussed at an extraordinary summit in October.

In light of the fact that this document is destined to be drafted by a small group of six Arab leaders, most of whom are not necessarily known for their conciliatory views, the tone and substance of such a document are likely to disappoint those hoping for an Arab League that would – precisely at a moment when it would be most needed – still reach out to Israel's right-wing government and encourage it to engage at least indirectly in peace talks. Against the backdrop of the organisation's poor political record and its renewed failure to present itself as a united, viable and forward-looking mechanism, this will be interpreted by many in the U.S., in Europe and the Middle East, but also in Israel, as yet more proof that the Arab Peace Plan adopted by the Arab League in 2002, was an exceptional and probably unique achievement of an organisation that must today justify why it is still considered by some to be an important political player.

## Libya's enfant terrible: New international context - same old attitude

DIOGO NOIVO

Researcher, IPRIS, Lisbon

In January, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi urged jihad against Switzerland. According to Gaddafi, this decision was grounded on the result of a referendum in which the Swiss voted against the construction of minarets in the country's mosques. In Gaddafi's own words, "let us wage jihad against Switzerland, Zionism and foreign aggression" adding that "any Muslim in any part of the world who works with Switzerland is an apostate, is against Muhammad, God and the Koran". This rift spilled over into the sphere of the European Union, with Libya no longer issuing visas for citizens from the Schengen area, a practice that was deplored by the European Commission and that only ended in March.

However, a look into past events seems to indicate that Libya's quarrel with Switzerland has more profound and even personal reasons. This call to arms came after Switzerland allegedly blacklisted close to 200 high-ranking Libyans, denying them entry permits – a list that was said to include Gaddafi himself, and his family. Moreover, Hannibal Gaddafi and Aline Skaf, respectively the Libyan leader's son and wife, were arrested in Geneva in July 2008, both accused of assaulting two employees of a Swiss hotel, although charges were dropped shortly after. These past episodes were quick to elicit retaliation: Libya suspended the supply of oil, moved billions of



dollars from Swiss banks, recalled its diplomats and, in the same month in which Gaddafi's wife and son were detained in Geneva, Tripoli issued arrest warrants against two Swiss businessmen, Rachid Hamdani and Max Goeldi. Hamdani was allowed to leave Libya in January 2010 and Max Goeldi is serving a four-month sentence in prison for violating immigration rules, after a tense stand-off outside the Swiss embassy in Libya where Goeldi was given sanctuary. All of these events took place in spite of Swiss President Hans-Rudolf Merz's visit to Tripoli in August 2009 with the purpose of apologizing for the arrest of Gaddafi's son and wife. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi did the same at the recent Arab League Summit, as did Miguel Ángel Moratinos, Spain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, on a different occasion.

The rift with Switzerland appears to demonstrate that Colonel Gaddafi's personal interests and resentment are in fact Libya's national causes. There seems to be a complete overlap between the state and the man that has been ruling it for the last 40 years. Given Muammar Gaddafi's usual political behavior, there would not be anything surprising were it not for the new international context.

During the past few years, there has been an effort to reintegrate Libya in the international community. The most obvious attempt to erase Libya's pariah status and turn a new page in diplomatic relations was the release of Abdelbaset Al-Megrahi, the only man convicted for the Lockerbie terrorist attack of 1988' in which 270 people died after a Pan Am flight traveling from London to New York exploded over Scotland. Al-Megrahi, who was serving life imprisonment in Scotland, was freed on 20 August 2009, with the tacit complacency of the government in London and of the U.S. Administration. The release was founded on humane grounds, due to the fact that Al-Megrahi has cancer and was given three months left to live, and

it happened before Ramadan as well as before Gaddafi's first speech at the United Nations in years. Furthermore, Al-Megrahi's release prevented any further investigation into undisclosed details regarding the terrorist attack in Scotland. The United Kingdom and the U.S. were the target of harsh criticism, both domestic and foreign. In spite of requests made to Libyan authorities by the U.S. and others to not give a hero's welcome to Al-Megrahi – requests that were agreed upon by Libya – he was greeted as a national symbol at his arrival in Tripoli. Nine months later, Al-Megrahi's health has "greatly improved". This episode constitutes an indisputable victory of Gaddafi's regime.

But there are other examples of a new western attitude towards Libya. State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley, who said Gaddafi's comments about the Swiss referendum were "lots of words, not necessarily a lot of sense", had to publicly retract himself last March, an apology followed by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey D. Feltman's visit to Tripoli in order to reiterate the aforementioned sentiment of contriteness.

In spite of western tolerance, apologies, explicit desires of closer ties and help, Gaddafi does not seem to have changed his usual behavior or his ideas – for example, Colonel Gaddafi remarked last January that the concept of civil society has no place in Libya.

Reintegrating Libya is of the utmost importance, not only from a strictly economic and even energy security perspective, but also with regard to regional stability and international security. However, we must ask ourselves about the price we are willing to pay to give Gaddafi a stage in international politics. Hence, it should be debated whether this is the right approach - so far the 'new West' has not generated a 'new Gaddafi'. Carrots do not seem to work without sticks.

## EU-Algerian relations need "energizing"

HAKIM DARBOUCHE

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Algeria's relationship with the European Community (EC) and its successor the European Union (EU) has traditionally been of a tumultuous nature. Decision-makers in Algiers and Brussels have struggled to find an optimal policy and institutional configuration that would both reflect and harness the dyad's interests and potential. For almost all the wrong reasons, EU-Algerian relations have been dubbed *sui generis*.

Besides penalizing bilateral ties between the EU and Algeria, these repeated hiccups have also passively militated against the broader projects of (sub-)regional integration in the Maghreb and Mediterranean writ large. However, amid these failures, energy has conspicuously been the only area where EU-Algerian relations have known continued stability and interdependence. Although driven almost exclusively by market forces, the net complementarity characterizing EU-Algerian relations in the energy sector has encouraged the development of a relevant bilateral cooperation of sorts. Yet, relative to its importance, energy remains one of the most under-institutionalized policy areas in EU-Algeria relations. Upon its inauguration in 1995, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership met with unprecedented enthusiasm in Algeria. Negotiations for the conclusion of an association agreement were concluded in 2002, and since then EU-Algerian relations have markedly improved at the political level, mainly as a result of closer security coopera-



tion. But the economic record outside the hydrocarbon sector remains subdued.

By 2003, Algeria's enthusiasm for EU-Mediterranean policies had subtly given way to a more reserved posture. This attitudinal shift was confirmed by the lukewarm reception reserved by Algerian foreign policy-makers to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) – a Eurocentric framework of cooperation seen as adding little value to Algeria's strategic conception of its relationship with the EU.

The EU's latest policy initiative in the Mediterranean, launched in 2008, has fared no better than the ENP as far as Algeria's reaction is concerned. If anything, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) has impressed Algerians much less than its predecessor because it scores poorly on the strategic dimensions they have been looking for since the ENP. The fact that the UfM is a progeny of French diplomacy also meant that it stood little chance of winning Algerian support, let alone significantly changing the course of EU-Algerian ties, especially considering that relations between the French and Algerian establishments have been at a low since 2005.

Geographical proximity to Europe has naturally led to the development of an interdependent energy relationship between Algeria and European consumers. Today, Algeria is the EU's third largest supplier of natural gas after Russia and Norway, with annual exports of over 50 billion cubic meters (Bcm). The dependence of some member states such as Italy, Spain, Portugal and France on Algerian gas supplies is even more important. With the coming on stream by 2015 of new LNG and pipeline export capacity, Sonatrach will have the possibility to become Europe's second largest supplier with over 80 Bcm of gas sales per year.

Conversely, over 80% of Algeria's gas exports are today absorbed by

the European market. What's more, in volume terms, natural gas is Algeria's single most important export commodity, representing over 40% of hydrocarbon exports which in turn account for 97% of Algeria's total export revenues, 60% of government fiscal receipts and 40% of its GDP.

Though solid enough, energy interdependence between the EU and Algeria has not been immune to shifting market dynamics and changing perceptions of vulnerability on both sides. The weak institutionalization of this interdependent energy relationship has meant that, in the face of emerging challenges, concerns about security of supply on the one hand and about security of demand on the other are increasingly testing the sustainability of the status quo.

The first attempt at the formalization of EU-Algeria energy relations took place in 2006 when Algerian policymakers proposed to their European counterparts the conclusion of a "strategic energy partnership" (SEP). However, the ensuing negotiations have been agonisingly protracted, reportedly as a result of the EU's instinctive emphasis on market regulatory norms being accorded a central role in a future SEP. Algeria perceives the EU approach as prosaically narrow and obsessed with rules and regulations, whereas its expectation is of a cooperation model that is explicitly more strategic.

Algeria's relevant policy pronouncements indicate that it wants its SEP with the EU to take account not just of existing trends and patterns in their energy relationship, but also its anticipated evolution. Beyond oil and gas, Algeria is interested in developing new, "green" technologies to harness its non-hydrocarbon energy potential and be an active part in the incipient climate change policy agenda.

Failure to develop a partnership between the EU and Algeria that reflects the interests of both parties will see Algeria's evolving relations with emerging poles in Asia, Latin

America, the Middle East and Africa reinforced at the expense of the EU. A specific framework that capitalizes on the healthy energy relationship would offer the most positive outlook for EU-Algerian relations.

# Iran and North Africa: Between honeymoon and confrontation

MAHJOOB ZWEIRI

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Iran's relations with the three countries of the inner Maghreb, i.e. Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, go back only to the previous century, as it was not until the reign of the Pahlavis that Iran started to gradually develop its relations with them. In spite of these first efforts however, Iran, even during the Pahlavi era, was more focused on deepening and consolidating bilateral relations with the United States, as well as with its neighboring countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, all of which in the early 1980's formed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

It was only after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, with the new regime's markedly different foreign policy approach, that bilateral relations with each of the three Maghreb countries intensified considerably. The new approach adopted by the clergy relied, and still relies, on three facts: first, geography was no longer seen as a defining factor underpinning the establishment of relations with other countries and regions; in part, this explains the importance the regime is attributing to Africa and Latin America. Second, after the downfall of the Shah, the clergy began to no longer regard the West as a priority for the Islamic Republic due to Western countries' long history of colonizing and/or dominating Africa, Asia and Latin America. Third, the new Iranian regime after 1979 undertook great efforts to advertise the Iranian revolution as being based on principles such as freedom and independence and, thus, as a role

model of sorts, which could be exported to other allegedly suppressed nations. It is these elements that have been shaping Iran's foreign policy in general and hence vis-à-vis North Africa until today. How did these factors affect and shape the development of bilateral relations on the ground?

With the mediation of then-Algerian President Houari Boumedienne, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and Saddam Hussein, then Vice-President of Iraq, in 1975 signed the famous Algiers Agreement, which ended the

border dispute between Tehran and Baghdad. Algeria, at the time one of the self-proclaimed leaders of the movement of non-aligned countries, continued to play a diplomatic role with regard to Iran after the Islamic Revolution by mediating between the United States and Iran in the context of the hostage crisis of the early 1980's and succeeded in convincing Iran to release all American hostages shortly after Ronald Reagan took office. After diplomatic relations between Tehran and Washington were cut, it was precisely Algeria that henceforth represented Iranian interests in

Washington. The reason why the mullahs chose Algiers was not only due to the country's positive reputation in the Third World, but also because Iran's relations with most countries in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf in the 1980's were in dire straits due to their support of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War from 1980-1988.

Relations between Iran and Algeria fell apart, though, in the early 1990's due to Iran's support of the Islamic

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Salvation Front (FIS), which even led to a temporary cutting of diplomatic ties. It was only in September 2000 that both countries decided to restore full diplomatic relations. Undoubtedly, this decision was a direct consequence of the coming-into-power of Mohammed Khatami in 1997 and of Abdelaziz Bouteflika just two years later and their efforts to change the international images of Iran and Algeria, respectively. These efforts, though not coordinated, were successful to the extent that both leaders managed to improve relations not only with one another, but also with numerous European countries. Whereas in the case of Algeria these improvements proved to be sustainable, in the case of Iran they lasted only until 2005.

Today, more than thirty years after the Iranian revolution and fourteen years after the full restoration of diplomatic ties between Tehran and Algiers, energy is one of the key issues in Iran's relations with Algeria. The Iranian regime is trying to increase its cooperation with Algeria – one of the world's most important gas and oil producers – to coordinate price policies and make hydrocarbon products of the two countries more compatible with one another. In this vein, Iran has also repeatedly worked against OPEC by trying to prevent an upstream increase in production, and, thus, a fall of global oil prices, as the latter would have negative repercussions for Iran's annual budget. Although Iran was temporarily able to count on Algerian support in this matter, it did not succeed in convincing other oil-producers, most of all Saudi Arabia, and simply had to stand by and watch as prices for (Iranian) oil plunged repeatedly. For Algeria, these temporary losses are less problematic, as natural gas, representing 40% of its hydrocarbon exports, is its most important export commodity. In Iran's case, however, oil price fluctua-

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tions are having a much stronger effect, as oil revenues amount to approximately 80% of its annual budget.

With regard to nuclear energy, it is noteworthy that the governments of all three inner Maghreb countries are less concerned with the Iranian nuclear energy programme than other Arab regimes and seem to support Iran's right to a nuclear programme, provided it is civilian and non-military. This view is substantiated, for example, by a statement of Algerian President Bouteflika, who, in April 2010, announced that Algeria supports

Iran's right to "peaceful nuclear technology", preceded by a similar statement by Tunisian President Ben Ali in 2007. In turn, Iran has offered to provide Algeria with nuclear expertise, but was unsuccessful in this regard, as Algiers opted for bilateral civilian nuclear agreements with Russia and the U.S. instead. Notwithstanding this rejection, Algeria, as well as the governments of Morocco and Tunisia, has at least officially uttered skepticism with regard to potential sanctions and rather seems to favour a diplomatic solution to the current nuclear crisis.

The election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005 as President of the Islamic Republic turned out to be somewhat of a turning point in particular with respect to Iran's relations with Morocco. While Iran-Algeria relations are blossoming, culminating in a meeting of the Algerian-Iranian committee in 2008

in Tehran and in the joint elaboration of a draft action plan for cooperation in 19 areas of the economic sector, including housing, urbanization, water resources, industry, and transportation, and while Iran-Tunisia relations in the realm of economic, agricultural, scientific and cultural cooperation have expanded consistently in the last ten years, Morocco severed its diplomatic ties with Iran in March 2009. In the wake of the 2005 presidential election in Iran, the Moroccan regime gradually joined the ranks of those who regard the development

of Iranian foreign policy increasingly critically and who consider the performance of Ahmadinejad as a reminder of the radical Iranian discourse of the 1980's – a discourse that was then perceived by many in the Middle East and North Africa as confrontational and threatening. This approach follows a history of tense relations marked by Iranian-Moroccan wrangling over Morocco's provision of asylum to the Shah and Rabat's support of Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war.

Iran's questionable role in Iraq and its sectarian policies, designed to support Shia communities both in Iraq and beyond, have been considered by Rabat and many other capitals in the Middle East as a deliberate attempt to spread Shiism and, thus, as an attempt to interfere in the domestic affairs of other Muslim countries. The Moroccan regime has been increasingly suspicious of Iranian efforts to support and spread Shiism beyond Iran's borders and hence its efforts to challenge Morocco's rather moderate religious identity and alter its religious fundamentals. Eventually, the Moroccan government harnessed the statement of a member of the Iranian Expediency Council, according to which Bahrain was said to have been Iran's 14<sup>th</sup> province, as a pretext for escalation. Ali Akbar Nateq Nuri's statement provided Moroccan authorities with an opportunity to point to a concrete example of Iran's alleged imposition of Shi'ite Muslim ideology in the Arab world and in so doing Rabat was successful at least to the extent that its concerns were taken up by Bahrain, the Arab League, and other Arab governments of Sunni-dominated countries. In contrast to them, however, Morocco did not let go of the issue, and only a few days after the Moroccan Foreign Ministry had called in the Iranian ambassador, it recalled its chargé d'affaires from Iran and eventually cut relations.

In general, Morocco has always been perceived by the Iranian leadership against the backdrop of the legacies

of the Idrisids dynasty (788-971) and, thus, as a monarchy where the monarch has historical links to the prophet Mohammed. It is through this prism that Morocco is being regarded by the Iranian clergy as a country where Shia political thought is existent and needs to be fostered. This theological aspect needs to be kept in mind by those that argue that Iran is simply trying to export its revolution. In fact, the debate over the Shia dimension in Iran-Morocco relations is not new and Morocco for a very long time has not done anything to counter or

oppose it. Whether the Moroccan decision to cut diplomatic ties with Iran on the grounds of Iranian meddling in domestic affairs is justified is, however, questionable, as the feared Shia political movement in Morocco is, in fact, difficult to detect.

Moroccan worries about Iran seem to follow the logic of what some consider the emergence of a New Middle East Cold War, in which Iran is gradually positioning itself as an emerging and rather assertive pole. In view of this, it is important to note the rising concerns in recent years among the majority of moderate Arab regimes over the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah. The public sympathy the July war of 2006 between Hezbollah and Israel generated for Hezbollah all across the Middle East undoubtedly is an additional factor that is being taken into account by Moroccan authorities. This also explains the recent decision taken by the Moroccan government to close the Iran-funded Al-Alam TV station in Morocco and to ban a Lebanese correspondent

working for Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV channel in Morocco on the grounds of allegedly unbalanced coverage. That these events were not isolated incidents becomes obvious when it is taken into account that Morocco opposes Iran also in the context of the row the latter has with the United Arab Emirates over the Tunbs and Abu Musa islands, which Morocco considers as being under Iranian occupation.

Overall, the deterioration of Iran-Morocco relations, and to some extent this applies to the expansion of

Iran has offered to provide Algeria with nuclear expertise, but was unsuccessful in this regard, as Algiers opted for bilateral civilian nuclear agreements with Russia and the U.S. instead. Notwithstanding this rejection, Algeria, as well as the governments of Morocco and Tunisia, has at least officially uttered skepticism with regard to potential sanctions and rather seems to favor a diplomatic solution to the current nuclear crisis.

Iran-Algeria and Iran-Tunisia relations, shows the considerable extent to which perceptions matter and how Iran's domestic politics generate (un)desired spillovers into Iran's foreign relations, be it in North Africa and the Middle East or in Europe and the U.S. This tendency has considerably increased in the last five years since Ahmadinejad has come to power, and it is against this background that the issue of Iran's alleged intentions of exporting its Islamic revolution has become a fashionable construct that is repeatedly being refreshed and kept alive by a variety of actors. Interestingly, recourse to such a construct occurs when relations between Iran and Arab and North African states are perceived to be in a state of crisis.

In view of the fact that Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia nowadays enjoy rather close relations with both France and the U.S. – two of the most important actors leading current international efforts to impose sanctions on Iran – the question remains how they regard the latest dynamics in Iran-North Africa relations. Obviously, given the various statements coming out of the various power centers in Washington and Paris, the governments of both countries seem to be increasingly puzzled by Iran's appeasement efforts vis-à-vis Algiers and Tunis and

favor the Moroccan approach, as it is hoped that the latter will contribute to a growing isolation of Tehran. Washington is already worried of Iran's proactive role in parts of Latin America, and by exerting gentle pressure on North African governments – all of which it needs in the context of the fight against international terrorism – to distance themselves from Iran, it continues to work towards maintaining the negative image of Iran in the world.

Against this backdrop, and in the light of ongoing debates over Iran's nuclear program and potentially another round of sanctions to be imposed on Iran, what seems most likely at this moment in time is that the recent dynamics in the relations between the countries of the inner Maghreb and Iran are unlikely to change. Algeria and Tunisia will carefully weigh each step they take towards even closer cooperation with Iran. At the same time, Morocco will certainly not endanger its broader foreign policy interests in the Western Sahara and with regard to closer cooperation with the EU by resuming diplomatic relations with an increasingly isolated regime whose true foreign policy objectives are seen by many in Rabat, as well as in other parts of the world, as rather dubious.



## Timeline of Events

### Algeria

#### 1 April 2010 (Algiers):

Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki met President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Mottaki also met with the Minister for African and Maghreb Affairs Abdul Kader Msahel. Algerian diplomatic sources have said that the relation between Tehran and Algiers has reached a level of unprecedented understanding.

#### 5 April 2010 (Algiers):

The leader of the Algerian National Reform Movement, Sheikh Abdullah Jaballah, stated that the attempts for the reunification of that same party have reached a dead end. As a result some members will create a new political party.

#### 7 April 2010 (Algiers):

The Sahel-Sahara intelligence chiefs met for an Algiers summit plan to offer several security recommendations to their military peers. Proposals include a joint Air Force Command for the seven Sahel-Sahara states that would use reconnaissance and combat aircraft to mount military operations against terrorists along the Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger borders. Intelligence officials reportedly concluded that a joint program was necessary, since Niger, Mali and Mauritania lack adequate military equipment to conduct this type of counter-terrorism action.

#### 11-12 April 2010 (Algiers):

Syrian Prime Minister Mohammed Naji Otri visited Algeria upon an invitation from Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia in order to participate in the Syrian-Algerian Higher Committee.

#### 13-15 April 2010 (Algiers):

Vietnam's President Nguyen Minh Triet visited Algeria.

#### 16 April 2010 (Algiers):

A draft agreement was signed by the Culture Ministry and the Embassy of China for the building and funding of an opera house in Algiers.

#### 21 April 2010 (Oran):

A group of international energy officials gathered for the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference and Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG 16) and agreed to index the price of gas to that of petrol. The LNG 16 decision follows an agreement reached at the separate Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF). GECF member nations approved a long-term plan to achieve petrol and gas price parity, Energy Minister Chakib Khelil said.

#### 11 April 2010 (Houn):

Muammar Gaddafi received a delegation from the Afro-Latin American Foundation Supporters of Gaddafi. In a statement read during the visit, the members of the delegation decided to name Gaddafi as honorary chairman for the Foundation and expressed their commitment to set up the South Atlantic Front in parallel to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

#### 11 April 2010 (Tripoli):

Seychelles President James Michel met with Muammar Gaddafi to further enhance bilateral relations between the two countries. In February, the Libyan government cancelled 50% of the Seychelles' debt and rescheduled the remainder on favorable terms.

#### 12 April 2010 (Moscow):

Russian Gazprom announced it agreed terms with Italy's ENI on joining the Elephant oilfield in Libya in an asset-swap deal.

#### 13 April 2010 (Tripoli):

Brazilian Embraer delivered two new Embraer 170 jets to the new Libyan aviation service provider Petro Air under a deal that also includes purchase rights for two Embraer 190 aircrafts. With a value of US\$66.8 million at list price, based on 2010 economic conditions, it could come to US\$146.8 million, if all purchase rights are confirmed.

#### 15 April 2010 (Tripoli):

The Libyan general people's committee for Foreign Relations and International Cooperation has criticised the Nuclear Security Summit organised by U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington. It said it would have been better if it had been held within the framework of the United Nations and had resulted in a global declaration stressing the commitment of the international community to voluntarily abandon nuclear armaments.

#### 15 April 2010 (Tripoli):

Portuguese bank Banco Espirito Santo

### Libya

#### 1 April 2010 (Abuja):

Liberia's president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf brokered talks between Nigeria and Libya to try to ease tension between the two countries after Libya's leader suggested Nigeria be broken up along ethnic lines.

#### 7 April 2010 (Tripoli):

About 160 Libyan-Turkish investment projects worth about US\$2.5 billion are currently being executed in Libya, according to the Libyan General Office for the transfer of ownership of companies (privatization) and investment. This announcement was made during the Council of the Libyan-Turkish businessmen who, among other aspects, decided that nationals of the two countries will no longer need visas.

#### 9 April 2010 (Sirte):

Muammar Gaddafi received a special envoy from the chairman of Niger's Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSR), Djibou Salou. The envoy conveyed to Gaddafi a message from the CSR chairman.



bought a 40% stake in Libya's Aman Bank for €39.8 million. BES will have management control.

#### **17 April 2010 (Tripoli):**

The Libyan committee for Human Rights has strongly condemned the eviction of Palestinian inhabitants from the West Bank.

#### **19 April 2010 (Taiwan):**

Officials from the Libyan Economic Development Board (EDB) visited Taiwan and briefed dozens of local businessmen on potential trade and investment opportunities in Libya, which has maintained warm relations with Taiwan in recent years.

#### **25 April 2010 (Tripoli):**

For the first time, a delegation of close to 40 Israeli Arab lawmakers visited Libya and met with Muammar Gaddafi. The role played by Israeli Arabs as part of the Arab world was the central topic of discussion.

#### **25 April 2010 (Sirte):**

Muammar Gaddafi received Guinea-Bissau's interim army chief, António Indjai. During the meeting, Indjai delivered a message from President Malam Bacai Sanhá. Indjai told Gaddafi that the political situation in Guinea-Bissau was now under control after the coup on 1 April.

#### **26 April 2010 (Tripoli):**

Muammar Gaddafi complained that the Obama administration had not invited him to a nuclear security summit earlier this month in Washington and said the snub would hurt efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

service, communications, environment and African affairs departments.

#### **5 April 2010 (Nouakchott):**

Mauritania and Turkey signed a cooperation agreement. Mauritanian Interior Minister Ould Mohamed Boilil and his Turkish counterpart Besir Atalay agreed to boost reciprocal visits and work together to fight the threat of organized crime and terrorism.

#### **9 April 2010 (Nouakchott):**

Mauritania and Azerbaijan initiated a Memorandum of Understanding on cultural cooperation. The document was signed by Azeri Minister of Culture and Tourism Abulfaz Garayev and Mauritanian Foreign Minister Naha Mint Hamdi Ould Mouknass.

#### **13 April 2010 (Teheran):**

President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, Foreign Minister Naha Mint Mouknass and Finance Minister Sid'Ahmed Ould Raiss visited Iran.

#### **20 April 2010 (Nouakchott):**

A message from Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was handed by Deputy Foreign Minister Fayssal al-Mikdad to his counterpart, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. The President of Mauritania reiterated his country's aspiration to deepen relations with Syria.

#### **23 April 2010 (Nouakchott):**

After a meeting of the joint Mauritania-Syria cooperation commission, seven agreements were signed by Foreign Minister Naha Mint Mouknass and Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Fay-al El Moqdad, covering the areas of culture, information, trade, technical and scientific exchanges, housing, urbanization and regional development.

El Fassi attended Senegal's 50<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary and delivered a message from King Mohamed VI to Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade.

#### **6 April 2010 (Rabat):**

UAE Ambassador to Morocco Saeed Hamid al-Jari al-Ketbi met Moulay Tayeb Cherkaoui, the Interior Minister. They discussed bilateral cooperation between UAE and Morocco.

#### **10 April 2010 (Conakry):**

The Secretary of State at the Foreign Ministry, Mohamed Ouzzine, headed a delegation to Guinea, where he met the country's Prime Minister Jean Marie Doré. The head of the Guinean government reaffirmed Conakry's historical position on the Sahara, commending Morocco's wisdom in looking for a political solution to this issue through the autonomy initiative. The Moroccan delegation participates in the 12<sup>th</sup> International Contact Group on Guinea.

#### **10 April 2010 (New York):**

The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, recommended to the Security Council that the mandate for the UN mission in the Sahara (MINURSO) be extended for a further period of one year until 30 April 2011.

#### **12 April 2010 (Washington):**

Indian Prime Minister Manomohan Singh held a bilateral meeting with the Moroccan Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit. They agreed to increase economic cooperation, and Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi pledged support for India's candidature to the UN Security Council.

#### **13 April 2010 (Washington):**

Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi said that King Mohammed VI highly appreciates the strong and distinguished initiatives of President Barack Obama to promote peace and stability at the regional and international levels.

#### **14-16 April 2010 (Madrid):**

The Morocco-Spain joint military committee addressed pressing issues such as illegal immigration and organized crime. Spain supported Morocco's role in NATO's Active Endeavor mission.

## Mauritania

#### **1 April 2010 (Nouakchott):**

President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz conducted his first cabinet reshuffle since his election last July. New ministers were named to lead the justice, finance, energy, employment, public

## Morocco

#### **5 April 2010 (Dakar):**

A delegation headed by Prime Minister Abbas

**17 April 2010 (Algiers):**

Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi met a delegation from the Chinese Communist Party. Chen Jianguo, head of the Chinese delegation and member of the Central Committee of the CPC said that cooperation not only benefits the two peoples but also helps to promote the development of Chinese-African and Chinese-Arab relations.

**17 April 2010 (Gammarth):**

At the end of the 5+5 meeting held in Tunisia, Moroccan Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri said that the Arab Maghreb Union could not, in its current state, play an important and effective role within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Fihri said that Algeria has not changed its position with regard to opening borders with Morocco and normalizing bilateral relations, making this objective conditional upon the settlement of the Moroccan Sahara issue.

**20 April 2010 (UAE):**

Morocco's ambassador to the UAE, Abdelkader Zaoui, said that trade between Morocco and the UAE increased from US\$152 million in 2006 to over US\$237 million in 2009. This increase is ascribed to the implementation of the 2001 Morocco-UAE Free Trade Agreement, which resulted in a 45.6% rise in Moroccan exports to the UAE, Zaoui noted.

**30 April 2010 (Casablanca):**

At the closing ceremony of the first African Development International Forum, Foreign minister Taib Fassi Fihri stressed that King Mohammed VI gave a strong impetus to South-South relations, calling on African countries to further strengthen cooperation bonds.

Arabia's Deputy-Interior Minister. Following the meeting, Prince Al-Saoud stressed the strong ties binding the two countries and commended the progress, security and stability prevailing in Tunisia.

**7 April 2010 (Tunis):**

Foreign Minister Kamel Morjane met with Didier Reynders, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Institutional Reforms. During the meeting, both men discussed ways to boost a sustainable and mutually beneficial Tunisian-Belgian partnership. The talks also reviewed the current negotiations to strengthen Tunisia-EU relations and highlighted that the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was an important vector for building a strong and balanced partnership between countries of the two Mediterranean coasts through concrete projects.

**12-13 April 2010 (Tunis):**

Vietnam's President Nguyen Minh Triet stressed the importance of developing cooperation in the trade and investment sectors, as well as in oil prospecting, agriculture, tourism and phosphate production. Tunisian Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi said that the talks had provided the opportunity to review the different aspects of Tunisian-Vietnamese cooperation; adding that the signing of several bilateral agreements, especially on the avoidance of double taxation, will contribute to boosting cooperation between the two countries.

**13 April 2010 (Tunis):**

Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi received Jean Lemierre, the Advisor to the Chairman of the BNP Paribas Group.

**14 April 2010 (Tunis):**

South African Deputy President, Kgalema Motlanthe met Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi. A meeting of the Tunisia-South Africa Joint Committee was also held.

**16-17 April 2010 (Gammarth):**

The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 5+5 Foreign Ministers' Dialogue closed in Gammarth. Tunisian Foreign Affairs Minister Kamel Morjane and his Spanish counterpart Miguel Angel Moratinos co-chaired this session, with attendance from the foreign ministers of the Western Mediterranean countries. The meeting was also attended by the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)

secretary-general and the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy in their capacity as observers.

**17 April 2010 (Tunis):**

The Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi received a delegation of African ministers who took part in the meeting of the Tunisian-African partnership in the sector of services.

**21 April 2010 (Tunis):**

The President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali reaffirmed the importance Tunisia attaches to the diversification and the strengthening of cooperation with Mediterranean countries, especially those of the Western Mediterranean region.

**26-28 April 2010 (Washington):**

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kamel Morjane, met with General James Jones, the U.S. National Security Advisor. The meeting focused on ways to strengthen relations between Tunisia and the U.S. particularly in the sectors of military, scientific and technological cooperation. Kamel Morjane also conferred with Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, and with the U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.

## Tunisia

**5 April 2010 (Tunis):**

President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali met with Prince Ahmed Ibn Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Saudi



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