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Prospects for a PJD – USFP alliance in Morocco

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For most of Morocco's post-independence history, oppositional challenges have been successfully managed by the monarchy, employing co-optation and divide and rule tactics. Without serious alliance building by opposition groups, the Moroccan democratization process – inexistent so far but cited tirelessly by regime and international actors – is unlikely to come about. Recently, a possible alliance of the Left with the Islamists has garnered attention. However, co-optation by the regime seems once again to be the stumbling block.

Among the highly fragmented Moroccan party system, the leftist USFP and the Islamist PJD are the only large parties whose agenda includes an increase in power of elected institutions vis-à-vis the authoritarian

monarchy. Independently, they have been too weak to push through political reform. The USFP faces a drastic electoral decline since it has been part of weak and unsuccessful governments since 1998. The PJD has been the rising political actor during the last decade but has ultimately failed to gain sufficient power to lead a strong government.

The Left and the Islamists have invested much energy in fighting each other because of their opposed visions of society. Yet after the 2009 municipal elections, the first alliances at the local level emerged. Following these elections, the PJD and USFP mutually supported each other's mayoral candidates in numerous cities, including tourist destinations such as Agadir. The regime's strong resentment against these coalitions – proof of their potential – became evident by its clumsy and sometimes violent attempts to prevent them. In Larache for instance, a first vote to bring to power a new coalition between the PJD, USFP, and Istiqlal was circumvented by troublemakers who stormed the city hall, destroying the ballot box while the police stood idly by.

If such an alliance is the way forward, what is needed to push it further? The PJD leadership has attempted to forge cooperation with the USFP at various levels since 2003. While recognizing the profound ideological

differences between the two parties, PJD leaders believe that an alliance with the USFP is necessary and that consensus about democratic reform is a sufficient basis for it. The PJD rank-and-file has been the most troubled by the ideological divide. The attempt by the regime to take much tighter control of elected institutions via the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM) has, however, changed the position of many. Founded in 2007 by "friend of the king" Fouad Ali El Himma, the PAM has since absorbed large chunks of other parties' MPs and won most seats in the 2009 elections. Angered by what they view as a regime attack against the PJD's rise, the party's local leaders endorsed and voted last December for a continuation of the alliance with the USFP.

Ultimately, it is the USFP that is hesitant. USFP leaders will have to make a choice between the – private – spoils of office and the reform potential and possible recovery of its programmatic appeal that would result from an alliance with the Islamists. Programmatic appeal and credibility have indeed suffered much in the twelve years during which the USFP has participated in national government, not the least because of the rather undignified way the party hangs on to its place in spite of electoral losses and lack of political progress. Once the dominant choice



among educated and urban voters, the USFP has by now become a party that is only successful in the countryside and in districts where illiteracy levels are higher than average, both typical signs of clientelistic links with the electorate. The urban and educated electorate, to the extent that they vote at all, now cast their ballot for the PJD.

Most aware of and angry about these developments is the USFP's rank-and-file. Experiencing the losses, but not the gains of co-optation, it was them who pushed through local coalitions with the PJD against the will of the leadership. The latter had already agreed with its partners in national government to set up the same alliances at the local level. For northern towns, this deal was supposed to yield Tetouan for the RNI, Chefchauen for the Istiqlal, and Larache for the USFP. In spite of an intervention by the executive bureau, the USFP's rank-and-file refused and went for coalitions with the PJD instead. Bound by a 2008 National Council decision on the decentralization of local coalition building, the leadership could now hardly forbid these coalitions. In the event of a democratization of the USFP's party structures, further alliance building could thus follow from pressure by the rank-and-file, wanting to uphold the programmatic identity of the USFP.

The USFP's national leadership usually insists that an alliance with the PJD is impossible for ideological reasons: the USFP stands for modernity, secularism, and progress, while the PJD represents the Stone Age, the abuse of religion and has questionable democratic credentials. In recent years, however, USFP leaders have made headlines not for debates about platforms and policies, but for arguments surrounding political office. Deals with the PAM to gain office are not a hindrance. USFP leader Abdelwahed Radi was elected parliamentary speaker with the support of the PAM;

Driss Lachgar, once a proponent of PJD-USFP alliances, has been thinking aloud about the benefits of an alliance with the PAM since his recent appointment as Minister for Parliamentary Relations.

The show must go on: Questions of legitimacy give way to more pressing issues in Mauritania

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When former general Mohammed Ould Abdel Aziz was sworn in as President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania on August 5th 2009, he had finally swapped his military uniform with a suit for good and only very few international observers continued to question his democratic legitimacy. Patience had eventually paid off for the new President as one year later, in June 2010, international donors offered a total aid package of €2.5 billion over the next three years. This support is in sharp contrast with the widely expressed sentiments – even taking the form of boycotts – international actors (e.g. African Union, European Union or the United States) have displayed after the country's 2007 democratically elected President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi

was ousted from office and a military council led by the same Abdel Aziz seized power in the summer of 2008. Indeed the skepticism was – and still is – well founded: The newest wave of democratization in Mauritania has been a process orchestrated for international observers, which did not touch the substance of the traditional social and political order. However, today one aspect in particular trumps the question of legitimacy in Mauritania: al-Qaeda is on the rise in the Western Sahara region.

After single-party dominion until 1978 and consecutive military rule, the first official step towards democratization in Mauritania was already taken in 1991. Led by then strong man Colonel Ould Taya, Mauritania had been previously cut off from international financial support due to dodgy diplomacy and human rights abuses. While on paper the political system was turned into a multiparty democracy, elections were rigged, the opposition persecuted, and human rights violations continued. This first wave of Mauritanian democratization has therefore rather helped Ould Taya to renew his authoritarian grip over the country. In August 2005 a bloodless coup from within the military initiated – at first glance – a more sophisticated phase of democratization: A military council seized control, gave the presidency a definite term limit, organized elections with exclusively civilian candidates and handed over power to the successful presidential candidate in April 2007. Despite these achievements, strings by the traditional elite were still well attached: President-elect Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, a political nobody, owed his victory solely to the support by the military and was henceforth tightly monitored and constrained by a growing number of influential 'independent' members of parliament. Attempts to strengthen his own stance and to loosen the military's grip on power eventually led to another coup in August 2008,



when a military council once again felt it had to 'safeguard' Mauritania's path towards democracy. The transition phase that followed was a poor imitation of the period from 2005 to 2007. From the start it was obvious that General Abdel Aziz, pulling the strings behind both coups, intended to assume the presidency. After his election in July 2009, heavily disputed by the opposition, Abdel Aziz continues to govern in a *Big Man Rule* fashion. Just like he recently stated in *Jeune Afrique*: "Je dois tout contrôler moi-même".

Why have Western actors like the European Union and the United States turned a blind eye to this democratization 'theatre'? One of the main reasons is the renewed rise of Jihadi terrorist groups operating in the Western Sahara region. Recently, terrorists affiliated with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have focused on attacking Mauritanian army posts and abducting foreign nationals. A first suicide attack was carried out in Nouakchott in August 2008. The United States already started to offer training to parts of the Mauritanian army in 2005. Since 2008, both France and Spain have also provided training, arms and intelligence and a first franco-mauritanian raid on AQIM in the border region between Mauritania and Mali was made public in June 2010. While the taking of European hostages may have played a key role, there are two more aspects motivating external actors to support the current regime: First, the fact that a recently killed terrorist with Mauritanian nationality was the son of a prominent figure of the country's Moorish business elite challenges the widespread assumption that AQIM is of negligible attractiveness for the country's elite. Second, a number of events relating to the rise in drug trafficking suggest that there may be no clear line between Islamist terrorists and organized criminal networks.

In combination with fears of

uncontrolled immigration to southern Europe as well as the rising demand for Mauritania's vast natural resources, alerts on increasing activities of Jihadist groups have formed the understanding that Mauritania must not turn into an ungovernable, failed state. Unfortunately this type of political stabilization comes with the cost of a lasting political disenfranchisement of the majority of the Mauritanian people.

Italy and the Maghreb: So far and yet so close

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Just a few nautical miles separate Italy from Africa, and in particular from the Maghreb area. Despite this, to the average Italian, the Maghreb is a "mysterious object", an indefinite land where men wear turbans, where women are veiled, and where everyone speaks Arabic and eats couscous or dates. In fact, migrants coming into Italy from outside the European Union are disrespectfully nicknamed "marocchini" (Moroccans). The great majority of Italians ignore not only the differences between each Maghreb country, but are also unaware of the Berber element. The reason for such ignorance is that Italy has only had a short colonial history with Libya and never developed any real and meaningful cultural links with the countries of the Greater Arab Maghreb. In contrast, it is interesting to note that Italian

diplomacy has worked a lot since the times of decolonisation in the 1960s in order to get in touch with the newly independent countries of the Maghreb, with the exception of Mauritania, where even nowadays Italy does not have an embassy and entrusts diplomatic and consular relations to its embassy in Dakar, Senegal. Nowadays, the four Maghreb countries play a key role in Italy's foreign policy and its external economic agenda, although the Maghreb region as such is of course not far from being a homogenous political and economic entity.

Undoubtedly, in the last twenty years the whole region has grown in importance. After the end of the Cold War, North Africa, and consequently the Maghreb, received the attention of the West simply because of a possible "double clash": the economic clash between the northern and southern parts of the world on the one hand, and the emerging cultural and religious conflict between Islam and the Western world on the other hand. Almost from the beginning, Italy was concerned about the fact that an unresolved security problem in the region could deeply affect Italian security as well, even if in the 1990s the terrorist threat emanating from radical-Islamist terrorist networks was not foreseen at all. Against this backdrop, Italian diplomacy considered it increasingly a priority to stabilize the region through bilateral and multilateral agreements with a view to contribute to the latter's economic and political integration, assuming that greater integration could lead to the development of a "security area" of sorts beyond the Italy's borders.

In recent years, growing migration pressures have led Italy to increase its development aid to Maghreb countries, with the effect that by 2009 Italy was the second largest contributor as regards financial donations: Tunisia received €19 million, Morocco €17 million, Algeria €3 million, and Libya €1 million. It is



no coincidence that the two countries that received the lions' share of financial assistance, i.e. Morocco and Tunisia, are also those that generate the largest migration flows towards Italian coasts. As Italy has always had somewhat of a pro-Arab policy, which differed from Spain's or France's approaches, it was relatively easy for Rome to intensify relations with Maghreb countries, even if this type of intensification was not completely appreciated by Washington.

Italy, more than many other countries, is exposed to uncontrolled migration flows coming mainly from sub-Saharan countries, is highly sensitive to potential infiltrations by radical-Islamist terror networks, and aware of potentially emerging hard security threats – even if nowadays this is hardly considered to be likely –, such as the one that occurred in 1986 when two Libyan Scud SS-1 missiles almost hit the island of Lampedusa in the wake of "Operation El Dorado Canyon". But even if the probability of a military attack is rather low, the risk that terrorist networks, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which gathered all the Islamic terrorist groups in the area and the Sahel region, and which managed to spread its influence in Mali, Niger and Chad, infiltrate Italy and use it as a platform is being taken seriously.

Apart from the immigration and security topics, Italy tends to regard the Maghreb as being of vital and essential importance for its economy. According to the Italian Foreign Ministry, the Maghreb nowadays absorbs 11% of Italian exports and in 2008 the total economic exchange with the region amounted already to €39 billion. As a matter of fact, the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) is a paralyzed regional organization and has failed to create a common market for the Maghreb, thus reinforcing the absence of any meaningful and effective regional cooperation scheme. Moreover, Italy regards the entire area as being exposed to a number of security concerns caused

mainly by AQIM, an organization that survives thanks to multiple illegal activities such as banditry, kidnapping, drug trafficking and arms smuggling. This is why subsequent Italian governments have decided to cooperate separately with each state rather than with the AMU, the latter does not have any competencies in the security field anyway. Imports-exports, direct investments, energy supplies, telecommunications and the transferral of remittances from migrant communities to their local communities can be singled out as one of the most important interactions between the Maghreb and Italy. In 2009 the total volume of this growing Italian-Maghrebian interdependence amounted to nearly €40 billion in 2009, thus putting Italy in second place after France as the most important commercial partner for the Maghreb as a whole.

Currently, Italy is trying to become the main, or perhaps the first hub through which North African energy supplies flow to Europe, not least with a view to decrease its dependence on Russian gas supplies that pass through the Ukraine. But it is not just gas or crude. Due to its comparatively cheap labor force, the Maghreb is increasingly seen also by small and medium-sized Italian companies as an attractive area to outsource (parts of) their production: for example, the Italian clothing multinational Benetton invested €20 million into the construction of a brand new production facility in Tunisia. This, and other recent investments, were facilitated by the existence of rather favorable commercial agreements that are nowadays blossoming thanks to Italian diplomacy and the efforts of SIMEST (*Società Italiana per le Imprese all'Estero*), a company that was established in 1990 and is owned partially (76%) by the Italian government.

As regards the relevance of Italy for each Maghreb country, Rome is nowadays Libya's most important business partner. Hydrocarbons

represent 99% of Italian imports from Libya, whereas Italy, on the other hand, exports refined oil products and machinery.

Algeria is the first supplier of natural gas, and a pipeline connecting the Algerian territory with Italy (the Transmed) can provide up to 35% of Italy's domestic energy needs. The Transmed pipeline, also called the "Enrico Mattei pipeline", links Algeria with Sicily through Tunisia and delivers 34 billion cubic meters of gas each year. A new connection of up to 840 km of length, the so-called GALSI (*Gasdotto Algeria Sardegna Italia*) pipeline, is currently under construction and will link Algeria directly with Sardinia by 2014. ENI, ENEL and EDISON are certainly the biggest Italian companies operating in Algeria. Yet, in recent years almost 150 small and medium-sized companies have been able to sign public contracts with the Algerian government.

The Italian-Moroccan relationship is very close, and Rabat is considered a strategic economic partner by Italy, even if Morocco is outside the "inner-circle" of energy suppliers. Although Italy ranks only in eleventh place of all countries that are investing in Morocco, the absence of major macro-economic risks and the openness displayed by the Moroccan government have recently helped almost 300 Italian companies to outsource their production and invest in Morocco. The country's growing relevance as a market for Italian exports is a direct consequence of the establishment of the *Tangier Free Zone* and the expansion of the Tangier harbor. The importance assigned to the Kingdom goes hand in hand with the granting of an advanced status in late 2008 by Brussels to Morocco and is underpinned by the large number of Moroccan migrant communities that reside legally in Italy. In fact, this community consists of more than 300.000 Moroccans and represents the biggest non-European community in Italy. This

does also affect the cultural aspect of the bilateral relationship, as Italian has become compulsory as a second foreign language in 20 Moroccan high schools.

In contrast, Tunisia, for obvious geographical reasons, has always had a close relationship with Italy and is a natural partner since its independence in 1956. Like Morocco, Tunisia also boasts of a migrant community in Italy, though the number of Tunisian migrants residing legally in Italy only amounts to 70.000. In 2009, Italy was rated Tunisia's second most important economic partner while Tunisia is the second most important market for Italian products in the entire southern Mediterranean. Today, approximately 680 small and medium-sized Italian companies operate in Tunisia employing more than 55.000 Tunisian workers and investing close to €216 billion. From the perspective of Italian businesses, this activism can be explained by the simple fact that Tunisia is predominantly considered an ideal country to invest in and praised for its alleged social and political stability, its geographical vicinity and the comparatively low costs of production.

The growing economic interdependence can however not hide the fact that Italy has always conducted a multifaceted, yet often contradictory policy toward the Maghreb countries. In order to increase its balance of trade, Italian diplomacy deliberately closed its eyes with respect to the lack of real democratic process in the region. Pursuing a rather disturbing *realpolitik* at times, Italian governments tend to forget that they are promoting trade and economic cooperation, in the best cases, with unfinished democracies or what are often coined hybrid regimes. In other words, states combining democratic elements with authoritarian governance such as Bouteflika's Algeria and Ben Ali's Tunisia, or the Moroccan "theocratic democracy" led by Mohammed VI are being considered

as reliable and trustworthy partners. A somewhat different case is Libya, which is not comparable to any Arab regime, and with which Italy has a rather complicated relationship since the Libyan revolution in 1969, when Colonel Gaddafi came to power. It was only when the bilateral treaty on "friendship, partnership and cooperation" was signed on August 30th 2008 that the Italian government decided to admit the crimes that took place during the colonization of Libya. Nonetheless, and in spite of an explicit mention of the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the treaty, Italy has never intervened when Libyan authorities detained migrants coming from sub-Saharan Africa, as was the case just recently when Libyan authorities decided to detain Eritrean refugees and put them in the al-Abraq detention camp. It remains subject to speculation whether this non-intervention is due to a strict interpretation of the treaty, the latter containing a non-interference clause in the domestic affairs of the relevant other, or because of a silent approval of such practices by Italian authorities, who, in fact, repel migrants off the Italian coast themselves.

What is obvious however is the fact that Libyan cooperation does play an increasingly important role in preventing illegal migration to Italy, and it is not least due to Libya's support that the rate of illegal migrants entering Italy was curbed by 90% in recent years. This is the reason why the Italian government signed a protocol of cooperation in 2007 and provided the Libyan navy with six modern patrol boats (three "Bigliani class" and three "5000 class"). Unfortunately, one of these patrol boats (paradoxically with Italian instructors and advisors on board) was used some weeks ago to chase and machine-gun an Italian fishing boat working in the Gulf of Sidra, which is considered by Libya to be a "historic bay" since 1973, despite being classified by

international maritime law as part of international waters. In a way, this episode encapsulates the ambiguity of Italian foreign policy vis-à-vis Libya and, unsurprisingly, generated a fresh wave of criticism.

In a way, the same ambiguous policy is applied to Morocco and the Western Sahara. Italy is host to hundreds of NGO's and civil society organizations that work towards the promotion of greater solidarity with the Saharawi people, but no government has ever taken a firm stand on the Western Sahara issue as such, or went beyond mere rhetorical statements in which they expressed their support for a "peaceful solution". All in all, this behavior reflects the weakness of Italy and its current and past foreign policy and, most of all, Rome's continuous aversion to upsetting other international heavyweights and, above all, the United States of America.

Spain and Morocco: Good partners and badly matched neighbors

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Sparks are flying in the Strait of Gibraltar and not because of friction over tectonic plates. While business cooperation is thriving between Morocco and Spain political relations are not at their best. The authorities of both countries persistently say that their relationship is excellent and that the recurring spats are small disagreements that are simple to resolve. However, misunderstandings continue to occur, and everything indicates that it is not simply a matter of a love-hate relationship based on anthropological Mediterranean roots, but rather a more serious and structural problem.

In the last year, various events have occurred that illustrate the complex relations that exist between the two countries. The cases that have attracted the most attention include the irregular expulsion of Saharawi activist Aminatu Haidar by Moroccan authorities in late 2009 while *en route* to the Canary Islands, which put the Spanish government in a highly embarrassing situation until Morocco reluctantly allowed her to return, or Rabat's decision just a few months later, and bordering on provocation, to appoint a recent Saharawi deserter as new ambassador to Madrid. Moreover, in June the antenna of the Spanish Intelligence Service

(CNI) was dismantled in the north of Morocco at the same moment that the Moroccan nationalist discourse focused on alleged residual Francoism in the Spanish army; in August incidents took place at the border with Melilla, with the passage of merchandise being blocked, supposedly by civil society out of protest against the ill-treatment

of Moroccan citizens and Sub-Saharan migrants by the Spanish police; around the same time, Morocco protested because Spanish military helicopters flew over the monarch's yacht while bringing provisions to the garrisons that were located on small rocks and islands along the North African coast; also in August, some Spanish pro-Saharawi activists in El Aaiún were first beaten up by Moroccan security forces dressed as civilians, then detained and expelled; in September, a visit to Melilla by Mariano Rajoy, the leader of the Spanish opposition party, was perceived as a highly provocative act, and citizens of Melilla and Ceuta were hindered by Moroccan authorities

from undertaking sightseeing activities along the northern coast of Morocco. Taken together, these events have led to a disconcerting image of the supposedly "excellent relationship" between the two neighboring countries.

Despite the profound development gap that exists between Europe and the Maghreb, Spain desires to be as much of a solid economic anchor with its southern neighbors as it is with its immediate European neighbors. Trade with Morocco has intensified and is greater than that with Spain's historic Latin-American partners, or than that with the more dynamic Asian powers.

Are these misunderstandings unimportant, spontaneous and inevitable? There is no doubt that there could have been a lack of tact on both sides, and that non-governmental actors have intervened with their own agendas. As far as Morocco is concerned, the undemocratic political system means that some civil servants and politicians exceed in their nationalist and patriotic zeal and in their clumsiness generate conflicts that have consequences on the bilateral relationship as such. The Spanish government has decided not to create any controversy and instead to try to resolve these tensions discretely, with the least possible coverage in the media. The reasons that explain this approach include the fact that Morocco is a strategic partner and a solid ally, that the geographic proximity of the two countries implies a need for friendly relations, and that in sum Morocco is vital for Spanish interests. In fact, both governments insist, and based on the same formula, that they have shared economic, migration-related and security interests.

It is obvious that Spain, despite the profound development gap that exists between Europe and the Maghreb, desires to be as much of a solid economic anchor with its southern neighbors as it is with its immediate European neighbors.

In the last fifteen years, trade with Morocco has intensified and is currently greater than that with Spain's historic Latin American partners, or than that with the more dynamic Asian powers. Trade with Morocco accounts for a modest 1.5% of Spain's total foreign exchange, but apart from the hydrocarbon-exporting countries Morocco is Spain's leading Arab trade partner, with a trade balance in favor of Spain. Spanish investment in the country has grown, although it is still on a rather low level (0.6% of the FDI total in 2005-2009), which limits the transaction to a type of subcontracting, rather than a more productive integration. For Morocco as well, the north is key; Spain is its second most important commercial partner and its second biggest foreign investor. Spain actively participates in numerous modernization projects in Morocco, it has important interests in the fishing sector, and the two countries are linked through a unique electrical interconnection.

Madrid also wants to maintain and deepen cooperation in migration and security matters, such as anti-terrorist cooperation, and the fight against drug-trafficking – fields in which there have been substantial advances in recent years – and thus develop and intensify good relations with the country of origin of its largest group of non-European

immigrants (in June 2010 around 760.000 Moroccans legally resided in Spain). And all that without negatively affecting its relations with Algeria, a key partner in the area of energy supply.

Also, Morocco is the first Arab recipient of Spanish development aid, and one of the few Arab countries that periodically maintain regular high-level ministerial meetings, the next of which will be held in Rabat at the beginning of 2011.

In addition to these elements, there is another factor related to domestic Spanish politics that underpins Spain's relationship with Morocco. Madrid is determined to play an active role as the legitimizer of the Moroccan regime through symbolic goodwill gestures and by representing the Spanish-Moroccan relationship as a solid alliance. Two examples: since the days of the Spanish transition to democracy, it is an established tradition that the first foreign visit of the President of the Spanish government is to Rabat. More recently, Spain has become a permanent guarantor of Morocco in the European Union (EU) and in the context of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Undoubtedly, one of the highlights of this patronage was the granting of EU Advanced Status to Morocco (2008) and

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the holding of the first EU-Moroccan summit during the Spanish EU Presidency (Granada, March 7th, 2010). There is good reason to ask not only to what extent these gestures are justified – and are reciprocated by Rabat – but also what the political costs for Spain are in dealing with a partner that exhibits serious shortfalls in its democratic structure, and with whom there are both contentious issues and serious disputes.

Repeated incidents of more or less significance and transcendence point to the existence of more serious problems that are silenced by both sides, for the sake of business and security for Madrid, and in the name of stability and legitimization for Rabat. Without disregarding the existence of mutual ignorance, suspicion and distrust – or what some consider arrogance and lack of respect on the Spanish side (according to Hispanist and ex-ambassador Larbi Messari: “the relationship has to be decolonized”) – there are profound differences which neither side wants to make apparent, but that necessarily condition their relations. The four main issues are: the question of the Western Sahara (on which the Spanish people and the Spanish government diverge); the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla; competition with France and the interferences of Algeria; and the

profound distrust of Spanish actors towards the regime and the Moroccan political class.

The main aspect of the bilateral discord is definitely the Western Sahara question. The international community and the Spanish public opinion disagree with the ambiguous and contradictory Spanish government policy; officially Spain abides by international law, supports the right of self-determination of the ex-colony and backs up the United Nations' efforts. However, at the same time it refrains from taking a leading role in the solution of the conflict, insists on supporting "a mutually-accepted solution" (which means that Spain agrees with the Moroccan veto to a self-determination referendum) and considers the Moroccan proposal of autonomy positive. By doing this, Madrid has alienated itself from the Saharawis, but, in fact, this so-called "constructive neutrality" does not make sense any more. The growing distance from the American position on this issue that became increasingly apparent during the last few months, leaves Madrid uncomfortably alone with Paris in defending Rabat.

The enclaves of Ceuta, Melilla and several small rocks are territorial residues of a time when they had a profoundly different geo-strategic value. Although the United Nations do not consider them to be non-self governing territories (colonies), they have become a permanent issue of Moroccan agitation, to the point that no Spanish head of government has visited these places for three decades (except for José Luiz Rodríguez Zapatero in 2006). The future of the two cities is uncertain and the current economic system that makes them the center of informal commerce and of smuggling in Northern Morocco is increasingly unsustainable. A new approach is therefore needed, taking into consideration the will of the inhabitants and the development of the whole region. This implies trans-border cooperation, yet, this is a prospect that clashes with the nationalist Moroccan rhetoric.

Moreover, there is a conflict of economic and geo-strategic interests in which other parties, mainly France and Algeria, are involved, transforming these bilateral

relations into a more complex affair of three and four participants. Rabat, which has bad relations with its Algerian neighbor, does not hesitate to use French support and protection. Owing to the French role, Spain cannot rely on the European Union in any serious dispute with Morocco, as became evident during the Perejil/Parsley Island crisis (2002) when France prevented Brussels from taking a clear stand against Rabat, thus leaving it to Washington to intervene diplomatically. On the other hand, for economic and political reasons, Madrid has similar interests in maintaining a fluid understanding with Algeria.

Finally, it is noteworthy to point to the ballast of Moroccan politics that contaminates all economic, political and even civil society relations. There is widespread distrust among

the Spanish political class and civil society about the Moroccan political system: political reforms that have been applied for almost two decades are seen as very limited and reformists have proven to be impotent vis-à-vis the forces in power; the political transition is endless and the system has been disjointed, as the Royal Palace continues to interfere regularly; authoritarianism prevails, the human rights situation is not promising, and freedom of the press is violated. Eventually, these factors hinder the establishment of normal bilateral relations based on dialogue and trust. Ironically, crises are

usually resolved through the Kings' intervention, who, in an effort to reach out to the Moroccan public, tends to resort to drama-like demonstrations of goodwill, thereby emphasizing the close relations with Spain. This practice, however, confuses Spanish society to a great extent.

The illusion of Spanish-Moroccan relations, i.e. the determination of both sides to portray them as a "splendid relationship", has prevented a public and transparent debate about the most serious questions and resulted in a foreign policy that is largely incoherent with the discourse that is usually maintained in other settings. It contributes to the perpetuation of tensions, deepens problems and gives protagonism to other non-governmental actors. The crisis is contained, but it is neither resolved nor clarified. As a result confusion

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and distrust are reinforced, generating accumulated resentment.

On the Spanish side, with the exception of the business class, there is widespread public disagreement as regards the management of the bilateral relationship: the center-right asks for a firmer diplomacy in a rather nationalistic fashion, while civil society demands the upholding of democratic conditionality and mutual benefits. In addition, a large part of the population sympathizes with the demands for self-determination of the Saharawis. Curiously however, the major political forces simply ignore their neighbor in the South; proof of this is that the largest political parties barely maintain relationships with their Moroccan counterparts.

On the Moroccan side exists a panoply of positions. While society as such has gradually developed a new and more positive perception of its northern neighbor, any public initiative stems from the political parties and certain media outlets that continue to emphasize the old nationalist discourse and that indulge in the logic of inconclusive decolonization. The dissatisfaction of Moroccan nationalist forces with Spain dates back to the days of independence. In contrast to France, Spain withdrew gradually from the African territory over a period of twenty years, maintaining only Ceuta, Melilla and some tiny islands and rocks where the presence of military garrisons are still seen by Rabat as pending issues. The latter is used by Morocco to reproach Spain for making national unity difficult, and by extension for contributing to the backwardness and under-development of the country – these being issues which are not compensated for by the privileged treatment and the close collaboration that has emerged in other areas.

Despite that, the determination of the Spanish Socialist government has always been to limit conflicts and to defuse tensions by means of a diplomacy that can be described as “firm, but intelligent and sensible”. Rabat is perfectly aware that Madrid wishes to consolidate its relations, as it has very important economic interests and needs effective cooperation on matters of security in the south of the Mediterranean. As Spain, for the reasons mentioned above, cannot rely on the EU in resolving bilateral disputes with Morocco, the latter, in exchange for cooperation on security and economic matters,

demands Spanish backing of the regime, understood as a maintenance and acceptance of the *status quo*. In turn, this means explicit support of the Moroccan position on the question of the Western Sahara, support of the proposal for autonomy and thus a de facto abolition of Spain’s “constructive neutrality” approach towards its “ex-colony”. In view of this order of priorities, Ceuta and Melilla do lose some of their importance as contentious issues and barely serve as a pretext for nationalists on both sides to react instantly to potential offences to their respective nations.

In some ways the bilateral relationship is based on the logic of a veiled threat on the Moroccan side and of explicit interests on the Spanish side. Morocco does not hide the fact that an eventual destabilization would endanger the position of Spanish businesses in the Moroccan market, and would create security problems for Europe and, more

importantly, for Spain itself. By accepting the political *status quo* in Morocco and by having decided to engage itself in the country’s modernization process, Madrid has fully accepted this discourse and simply focuses on security and economic cooperation; although this position implies that it has to put up with continuous incidents and embarrassing situations, act in contradiction to international law as far as the Western Sahara is concerned, provide a non-democratic regime with favorable deals, and turn a blind eye to the perpetuation of authoritarian practices.

The nature of the Moroccan regime also contributes to the

fact that numerous issues are not being debated openly and that a meaningful involvement of the political and social organizations of the two countries is systematically prevented. The result is a serious lack of transparency that adds to confusion and to the deterioration of mutual perceptions. It is hence unsurprising that otherwise meaningless episodes of misunderstanding become suddenly important and place the two partners in extremely uncomfortable situations, which all too often have domestic political implications as far as Spain is concerned and which repeatedly highlights the obsolescence of this particular relationship model.

In various African countries like Morocco, Tunisia and Equatorial Guinea, the political coherence of Spanish foreign policy is seriously in doubt. Spain has characterized itself to be at the heart of the EU

Spanish-Moroccan relations exemplify impressively that in an inter-dependent world, good neighborly relations cannot be based on tricks and ruses, demands for unconditional support, mere economic interest or the desire to externalize security tasks.



– to the surprise of many – as being one of the least demanding governments with respect to attempts to condition cooperation and privileged deals and link them to advances in democratization. Madrid has given preeminence to security and to the interest of economic groups in its foreign policy, and in so doing it has seriously put in doubt other clearly progressive and daring initiatives in matters of multilateralism, the Alliance of Civilizations and of human development on a global level.

Spanish-Moroccan relations exemplify impressively that in an inter-dependent world, good neighborly relations cannot be based on tricks and ruses, demands for unconditional support, mere economic interest or the desire to externalize security tasks. Today, more than ever, dialogue is a necessary step towards the expression of mutual demands, the respect for the right to development for all, and upholding international law.

Timeline of Events

Algeria

2 August 2010 (Algiers):

The Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to discuss bilateral relations and ways of enhancing them. Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci and Deputy Minister of National Defense Abdul-Malik Guenaizia also attended the talks.

16 August 2010 (Algiers):

According to the company's annual report, Sonatrach is the most profitable oil company in Africa with a turnover of €42.3 billion.

16 August 2010 (Algiers):

President Abdelaziz Bouteflika said that Algeria needs to step up investment and exploration in its energy sector. Bouteflika called for a "re-evaluation of petrochemical industry projects" with the purpose of creating "a downstream industry".

17-19 August 2010 (Hanoi):

Deputy Foreign Minister Abdelkader Messahel led the Algerian delegation to the 2nd Africa-Vietnam Forum, held under the theme "Cooperation for a sustainable development". The Deputy Minister in charge of Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel urged for a new economic dimension in the African-Vietnam cooperation. Messahel met with President of Vietnam Nguyen Minh Triet.

18 August 2010 (Algiers):

Algeria decided to donate US\$1 million to Pakistan in order to assist the country after the recent floods.

26 August 2010 (Algiers):

The President of the National Consultative Council for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Farouk Ksentini announced that Algeria had invited the United Nations to assess the state of human rights in the country. Organizations operating in the field of human rights dismissed the initiative and considered it an attempt to promote Algeria's image overseas.

2 September 2010 (Tripoli):

Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia attended the 5+5 dialogue group meeting. Ouyahia was accompanied by Deputy Minister of Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel.

6 September 2010 (Algiers):

Algeria requires any foreign company seeking a share of its US\$286 billion infrastructure budget to form a joint venture with an Algerian firm to qualify for state contracts.

8 September 2010 (Paris):

Former French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin was appointed by President Nicolas Sarkozy on a mission of economic cooperation between France and Algeria aiming to develop investments in both countries.

8 September 2010 (Algiers):

Hassan Hattab, founder of Algeria's Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), urged clerics and religious scholars to contribute to the end of violence and to support the peace effort in Algeria. Hattab promoted a new initiative entitled "Appeal for Truce, Peace and Reconciliation", signed by a number of emirs and founders of armed groups in Algeria.

15 September 2010 (Algiers):

Intelligence services from Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger met to launch a Sahel-Saharan "intelligence cell". The new unit, which supports the Tamanrasset joint military command established last April, aims to contain the activities of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) by drying up the terror organization's funding from illegal smuggling networks and ransom payments.

16 September 2010 (Algiers):

The Deputy Minister of Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel met Spanish Foreign Affairs Secretary of State Juan Pablo de la Iglesia to discuss ways of deepening bilateral ties.

16 September 2010 (Cairo):

Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci attended the 13th session of the Council of the Arab League.

16 September 2010 (Algiers):

President Abdelaziz Bouteflika met with Brazilian Minister for Development, Industry and International Commerce Miguel Jorge. The meeting focused on addressing potential business areas in which Brazil could play a role.

18 September 2010 (Algiers):

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad held two hours of talks with his Algerian counterpart Abdelaziz Bouteflika during a stopover in Algiers on route to New York for the UN General Assembly.

19 September 2010 (Algiers):

French Secretary of State for Foreign Trade Anne-Marie Idrac met with Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia for talks on strengthening Franco-Algerian economic cooperation. Idrac also met with Minister of Finance Karim Djoudi and Minister of Commerce Mustapha Benbada.

20 September 2010 (New York):

Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

21 September 2010 (Algiers):

The Minister-Delegate for Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel called on Western countries not to pay ransoms for the release of their abducted nationals in the sub-Saharan region, saying that ransoms stand for 95% of the funds obtained by terrorists in the region.

23 September 2010 (Algiers):

Algeria launched its third oil and gas licensing round hoping that it will obliterate the scandal in the energy industry after a purge of top officials in what was seen as a political power struggle.

23 September 2010 (New York):

Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci met with the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to the



Western Sahara Christopher Ross. Medelci also took part in the Africa-China meeting that comprised several African Foreign Ministers and their Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi.

27 September 2010 (New York):

Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci addressed the UN General Assembly, where he read a speech from President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Medelci called for reform of the world economic system, including debt relief for developing countries, a reinforced role for the United Nations in protecting biodiversity, and full international engagement in combating climate change. On the sidelines of the UN's General Assembly, Medelci met with his Cuban counterpart Bruno Eduardo Rodriguez Parrilla and with Mauritanian Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf.

29 September 2010 (Algiers):

Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger intelligence services met to open a joint Sahel-Saharan intelligence centre. The facility will gather information on AQIM activities in the Sahel region.

29 September 2010 (Algiers):

Algeria and Saudi Arabia signed an accord for mutual assistance in criminal investigations. The agreement concluded at the Justice Ministry in Algiers intends to promote cooperation in the fight against crime.

Libya

3 August 2010 (Tripoli):

Maltese opposition leader Joseph Muscat met with Muammar Gaddafi. Both parties noted the good relations between Malta and Libya. According to some Maltese media, Muscat expressed his concern about the plans for drilling oil in the Mediterranean Sea.

4 August 2010 (Tripoli):

Libyan and Chinese businessmen signed an agreement to establish a joint Libyan-Chinese Business Council. The agreement is between the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade and the Libyan Businessmen Council.

4 August 2010 (Tripoli):

President of Sudan Omar al-Bashir met Muammar Gaddafi to discuss the conflict in Darfur. At his arrival, Prime Minister Baghdadi Mahmudi and Foreign Minister Mussa Kussa received al-Bashir. The following day in Khartoum, Sudan's Foreign Minister Kamal Hassan Ali said Tripoli agreed to restrict the activities of Khalil Ibrahim, the Sudanese rebel leader living in Libya since last May.

8 August 2010 (Tripoli):

Libya agreed to donate €60 million to Mauritania for investments including a university named after Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

9 August 2010 (Tripoli):

A Israeli-Tunisian man imprisoned in Libya since last March after photographing Jewish sites returned to Israel after being freed in a deal brokered by Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman. Libyan authorities suspected Rafael Hadad was a spy. According to the international media, this deal involved Israeli authorization for 20 prefabricated houses transported by a Libyan-sponsored ship which tried to reach Gaza in July to be delivered after the ship was diverted to Egypt.

9 August 2010 (Amman):

The Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation, headed by Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) signed a US\$50 million agreement to rebuild 1250 refugee homes in the Gaza Strip.

12 August 2010 (Tripoli):

British oil company BP announced a delay in its oil exploration in deep waters off the coast of Libya to ensure precautionary measures are in place for the drilling process to occur.

12 August 2010 (Tripoli):

The Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation and the UNRWA signed three additional agreements to the one reached on August 9th. These agreements involve a mobile health clinic for the West Bank; a support program for a school in Gaza; and a microfinance project meant to support 800 families.

13 August 2010 (Tripoli):

Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs Odein Ajumogobia met with Prime Minister Baghdadi Mahmudi in order to mend bilateral ties between the two countries.

16 August 2010 (Tripoli):

Shokri Ghanem, Chairman of Libya's National Oil Corporation, stated that BP is expected to start its deep water drilling operations in Libya by October at the latest.

20 August 2010 (London):

The United Kingdom warned Libya against celebrations marking the one-year release of convicted Lockerbie bomber Abdelbaset al-Megrahi. After reinforcing that al-Megrahi's release was a mistake, the UK's Foreign Office added that "any celebration of Megrahi's release will be tasteless, offensive and deeply insensitive to the victims' families".

20 August 2010 (Tripoli):

Libya refrained from publicly celebrating the one-year anniversary of the arrival of Abdelbaset al-Megrahi, contrary to what happened on August 20th 2009.

20 August 2010 (Rome):

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi denied "any kind of business" ties to Libya or its ruler Muammar Gaddafi, even though some documents show that stakes in a Paris-based film company link the two leaders.

28-30 August 2010 (Rome):

Muammar Gaddafi visited Italy to commemorate the second anniversary of the signing of an accord worth €5 billion under which Rome agreed to pay reparations for its colonial rule. The agreement also contemplates an Italian commitment to build a highway along the Libyan coast, and cooperation between Libyan and Italian navies to stop African immigrants reaching Italian soil by boat from the North African coast. Muammar Gaddafi asked the European Union to pay Libya "at least €5 billion a year" for Tripoli to stop the waves of clandestine African migrants who sail from Libya's Mediterranean shores toward Western Europe.

1 September 2010 (Tripoli):

Libya released 37 men imprisoned for Islamist terrorist offenses, mostly members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). Among



the released was an ex-Guantanamo detainee, the alleged former driver of Osama bin Laden.

1 September 2010 (Tripoli):

Libya celebrated the 41st anniversary of the Great Revolution. The Prime Ministers of Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Portugal attended the ceremonies, respectively Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf, Abbas El-Fassi, Ahmed Ouyahya, Mohamed Ghannouchi and José Socrates.

2 September 2010 (Tripoli):

The political consultation meeting of the 5+5 dialogue group that focuses on promoting cooperation between Western Mediterranean states was held. The second 5+5 summit to be held next year in Malta was also discussed.

3 September 2010 (Beirut):

The Leader of Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah says that the Shia cleric Imam Moussa al-Sadr and his two companions are "alive and in custody in Libya". Nasrallah called on Libya to release them. Imam Moussa al-Sadr was kidnapped during an official visit to Tripoli to meet with officials from the government of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in August 1978. In 2008, the government in Beirut issued an arrest warrant for Gaddafi over Sadr's disappearance. Libya has denied involvement, ignoring calls for more information on the case.

3 September 2010 (New York):

Libya initiated an action in the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a resolution requesting an international investigation into the occupation of Iraq by US troops and the execution of Saddam Hussein.

4 September 2010 (Tripoli):

The President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas met with senior Libyan officials.

6 September 2010 (Damascus):

Foreign Minister Moussa Kossa met Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to discuss ways for Arab states to use Libya's position in North Africa and economically expand into the continent.

7 September 2010 (Tripoli):

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, son of leader Muammar Gaddafi, said Libya will fight any claims for compensation by the families of people killed

by IRA bombs. Libya supplied explosives to the Irish terrorist organization, and for that reason the families of the victims have been fighting for compensation from Tripoli.

7 September 2010 (London):

It became public that British Prime Minister David Cameron wrote to Muammar Gaddafi over the stalled probe into the death of Yvonne Fletcher, who was killed in 1984 by a gunman believed to be inside Libya's embassy in London. It was part of a series of "intense representations" which resulted in a UK delegation visiting Tripoli in August.

7 September 2010 (Tripoli):

Libya's government denied having any investments in foreign oil companies, in an apparent rebuff to the country's top energy official who said buying shares in BP would be a good deal.

8 September 2010 (Tripoli):

The chairman of Libya's National Oil Corporation Shokri Ghanem said OPEC needs a higher oil price of US\$100 a barrel because the rising costs of imports such as food have eroded OPEC members' income.

8 September 2010 (Tripoli):

Muammar Gaddafi met Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré. The talks focused on the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) and its institutions.

9 September 2010 (Karlsruhe):

The Federal Prosecutor's Office in Karlsruhe, Germany, said that two Libyan men were charged with spying on members of the Libyan opposition in Germany.

12 September 2010 (Tripoli):

A Libyan motor boat – one of the six Italy donated to Tripoli – fired with machine guns on a Sicilian fishing boat with 10 men on board about 30 miles off the Libyan coast. Italy classified it as a "serious incident", despite its efforts to downplay it as a mistake.

14 September 2010 (Rome):

Italy's Interior Minister Roberto Maroni said Libya had apologized for opening fire on an Italian fishing boat off its coast using a vessel supplied by Rome and promised an investigation.

16 September 2010 (Rome):

The Italian government asked Libya to clarify the nature of the stakes held by its sovereign wealth fund and central bank in Italy's biggest bank, UniCredit.

17 September 2010 (Tripoli):

Libya bought a further 0.5% of Italy's biggest bank UniCredit to take its overall stake to 2.59%.

19 September 2010 (Geneva):

It became public that a Swiss soldier entered Libya on a covert mission in 2009 to make plans to whisk across the border two Swiss citizens that were being held by Libyan authorities.

20 September 2010 (Tripoli):

Libya fired the navy commander who opened fire on an Italian trawler in the Gulf of Sirte.

20 September 2010 (New York):

In his first UN appearance, Muammar Gaddafi attacked the Security Council for being ineffective.

Mauritania

4 August 2010 (Nouakchott):

President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz said Mauritania is not fighting al-Qaeda, but a local form of terrorism based in the Sahel, adding that the country's Treasury has allocated US\$50 million for equipment and the modernization of the Armed Forces.

23 August 2010 (Nouakchott):

Albert Vilalta and Roque Pascual, taken hostage by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb while on a relief mission through Mauritania in November last year, were released in Mali.

25 August 2010 (Nouakchott):

Mauritania and Mali signed a four-year partnership agreement for the supply of refined hydrocarbon products. Mauritanian Energy Minister Ibrahim Lamine Wane supervised the signing ceremony in Nouakchott.

31 August 2010 (Nouakchott):

Said Jinnit, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to West Africa, visited Mauritania to restart an inclusive and open dialogue between the country's ruling party and the opposition.

**9 September 2010 (Nouakchott):**

President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz pardoned and freed from prison 15 convicted Islamist terrorists to mark the end of Ramadan. Twenty Islamist prisoners awaiting trial were also pardoned as a gesture to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, the feast after the holy month of fasting.

12 September 2010 (Nouakchott):

The main opposition party, the Rally for Democratic Forces, recognized the election of President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz after disputing the result for more than a year.

15 September 2010 (Nouakchott):

President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz met with Malian Foreign Minister Badra Aliou Makalou, who relayed a message from President Amadou Toumani Touré focused on strengthening counterterrorism cooperation.

19 September 2010 (Nouakchott):

According to a Mauritanian military official, Mauritania's Air Force bombarded positions held by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in northern Mali. AQIM accused Nouakchott of killing civilians and being a French agent in the region.

21 September 2010 (Bamako):

President Mohammed Ould Abdel Aziz visited Mali to discuss his country's recent cross-border military incursion. Defence Minister Hamady Ould Hamady was also in the Mauritanian delegation.

22 September 2010 (New York):

On the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf met with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

25 September 2010 (New York):

While addressing the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf warned against associating Islam with terrorism.

Morocco

2 August 2010 (Rabat):

Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri met with Spanish ambassador Luis Planas Puchades to protest against what Rabat perceives as

physical abuse inflicted on Moroccan citizens once again by Spanish police at the crossing point between Morocco and the Spanish city of Melilla.

8 August 2010 (Bogotá):

Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri represented King Mohammed VI at the inaugural ceremony for Colombia's newly elected President Juan Manuel Santos.

11 August 2010 (Rabat):

Spanish King Juan Carlos spoke on the telephone with King Mohammed VI to attempt to smooth over a diplomatic row between the two countries concerning the alleged physical abuse perpetrated by Spanish police on Moroccan citizens in Melilla.

11 August 2010 (Rabat):

King Mohammed VI sent US\$1 million and humanitarian aid worth the same amount to Pakistan, in order to provide relief to the victims of the floods.

18 August 2010 (Melilla):

After a commercial blockade of Melilla by Moroccan protesters due to alleged practices of violence and racism on the part of the Spanish police, former Spanish Prime Minister José Maria Aznar visited the Spanish enclave of Melilla, an event that led the current Spanish government to accuse Aznar of disloyalty toward Madrid's current foreign policy.

18 August 2010 (Melilla):

Moroccan protesters who challenged Spain's authority over Melilla said they would suspend their actions to leave the way clear for a diplomatic solution.

18-19 August 2010 (Hanoi):

During the 2nd Africa-Vietnam Forum, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Mohamed Ouzzine restated Morocco's commitment to regional development and the importance of South-South solidarity.

20 August 2010 (Rabat):

King Mohamed VI reaffirmed his autonomy plan for Western Sahara. Mohammed VI stated that his government's proposals for the autonomy of Western Sahara have "more international support" than "the despairing maneuvers" of its adversaries.

23 August 2010 (Rabat):

Following a phone conversation between Spanish King Juan Carlos and King Mohammed VI, Interior Minister Taib Cherkaoui met with his Spanish counterpart, Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba with the purpose of resolving the dispute over Melilla. The two Interior Ministers signed an agreement aimed at strengthening police cooperation between Spain and Morocco.

27 August 2010 (Rabat):

Grenada's Foreign Minister Peter David demonstrated his support for Morocco's West Sahara autonomy plan in a meeting with Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri.

7 September 2010 (Rabat):

Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri met the Spanish Foreign Affairs Secretary of State Juan Pablo de la Iglesia to discuss ways of deepening bilateral ties.

14 September 2010 (Casablanca):

As part of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue Program, five NATO vessels took part in a three day joint training operation with the Moroccan navy. The exercise aimed at strengthening cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

14 September 2010 (Rabat):

Foreign Affairs Secretary of State Latifa Akharbach met a delegation of French Senators from the Senate's France-Morocco Friendship Group. The Senators visited the country between the 13th and the 18th September.

20 September 2010 (New York):

King Mohammed VI addressed the UN General Assembly where he called upon other partners to seize the historic opportunity of the autonomy initiative proposed by Rabat on Western Sahara. Morocco was awarded the 2010 UN Habitat Award.

20 September 2010 (New York):

At UN headquarters, King Mohammed VI met with Prime Minister of Spain José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. Zapatero reiterated Madrid's support to the multidimensional partnership between Morocco and the European Union, within the framework of the "advanced status".

20 September 2010 (New York):

At the Moroccan embassy in New York, King Mohammed VI met with French President



Nicolas Sarkozy. The meeting focused on Morocco's "advanced status" with the European Union, the Middle East and the Maghreb. Sarkozy reiterated France's support for Morocco's autonomy initiative to reach a final solution to the regional dispute over the Western Sahara under the aegis of the UN.

23 September 2010 (Rabat):

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Mohamed Ouzzine met with Guinea-Bissau's Minister of Interior Hadja Satu Camara with the purpose of discussing and deepening bilateral ties.

27 September 2010 (Rabat):

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Latifa Akharbach met with the Bulgarian Minister of Economy, Energy and Tourism Traytcho Traykov on the occasion of the 9th session of the intergovernmental Bulgaria-Morocco economic commission.

Tunisia

1-2 August 2010 (Tunis):

During the 22nd ordinary session of the Arab Atomic Energy Agency, the general congress examined the issues submitted to it by the executive council and related to the activity of the Agency during 2009-2010.

2-4 August 2010 (São Paulo):

A Tunisian delegation of businessmen paid a visit to Brazil as part of a mission organized by the Tunisian Industry, Commerce and Handicrafts Union. The meetings focused on cooperation in the agricultural food sector, textiles and clothing industries, automotive components, information and communication technology and tourism.

5-7 August 2010 (Tunis):

Foreign Minister Kamel Morjane opened the annual conference of Heads of Diplomatic and Consular Missions. Morjane restated that the 9th item on the presidential program for 2009-2014 is dedicated to Tunisians abroad. President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali closed the event.

12 August 2010 (New York):

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon received Minister of Youth, Sports and Physical Education Samir Laabidi. Ban Ki-moon showed appreciation for President Ben Ali's initiative to proclaim 2010 International Year of Youth.

14-15 August 2010 (Brazzaville):

At the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Democratic Republic of Congo's independence, Secretary of State for Maghreb, Arab and African Affairs Abdelhafidh Harguem conferred with the Congolese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Basile Ikouébé.

16 August 2010 (Ras Jedir):

Tunisian protesters clashed with the police over new restrictions and border crossing fees between Tunisia and Libya. The Ras Jedir border crossing was blocked.

17 August 2010 (Tunis):

Tunisia supported a proposed high-speed rail link with Libya, Morocco and Algeria. Secretary of State for Foreign Trade Chokri Mamoghli said that the Maghreb transport sector serves as a bridge between Europe and Africa. The proposed "Trans-Maghreb" TGV will extend from Casablanca to Tripoli via Algiers and Tunisia.

18 August 2010 (Abidjan):

The Secretary of State for Maghreb, Arab and African Affairs Abdelhafidh Herguem conferred with Ivory Coast's Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration Jean Marie Kacou Gervais. Both parties agreed to strengthen bilateral ties.

25 August 2010 (Tunis):

Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos met with his Tunisian counterpart, Kamel Morjane. The ministers discussed the "5+5" dialogue, the Union for the Mediterranean and other issues of common interest.

1 September 2010 (Tripoli):

On the sidelines of Libya's celebration of the 41st anniversary of the Great Revolution, Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi met with the French Secretary of State in charge of European affairs Pierre Lellouche to review ways to boost the Euro-Mediterranean process and reinforce cooperation between the peoples of the region.

3 September 2010 (Tunis):

Tunisia backed Muammar Gaddafi's proposal for €5 billion from the EU to tackle illegal immigration. The Tunisian Foreign Affairs Ministry described the proposal as "serious" in view of "strengthening the capacities of our country to identify appropriate solutions to tackle illegal and non-organized immigration".

5 September 2010 (Tunis):

President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas met with senior Tunisian officials.

8 September 2010 (Tunis):

Foreign Affairs Minister Kamel Morjane conferred with Libyan Secretary for Arab affairs in charge of external communication and international cooperation Omrane Boukraa. Both examined the implementation of decisions made at the 22nd session of the higher joint committee held in Tripoli in December 2009, and reviewed the 23rd session of the high executive committee, as well as the 8th session of the consular affairs commission due to be held in Tripoli at the end of next October.

16 September 2010 (Cairo):

Foreign Affairs Minister Kamel Morjane led the Tunisian delegation to the 134th session of the Arab League Council, held at the ministerial level. On the sidelines of the session, Morjane had talks with the Secretary-General of the Arab League, as well as with his Algerian, Egyptian, Djiboutian and Comoran counterparts and Kuwait's State Minister for Foreign Affairs.

20-22 September 2010 (New York):

A delegation led by Foreign Minister Kamel Morjane took part in the 65th UN General Assembly, part of the high-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Morjane had bilateral talks with several heads of delegations from countries such as the foreign ministers of Algeria, Morocco, Portugal and Australia.

29 September 2010 (Tunis):

Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi met with the Canadian Prime Minister's Special Representative for Francophony, Jacques Bilodeau. The meeting focused on the Summit of Francophony currently chaired by Canada pending the 13th Summit scheduled to be held from the 22nd to 24th of October, 2010 in Montreux, Switzerland.



Reading List

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Michael Frendo, "Building the Mosaic of Mediterranean Integration" (*Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 21 No. 3, Summer 2010): 1-7.

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Isabelle Werenfels, "Who is in Charge? Algerian Power Structures and Their Resilience to Change" (February 2010)
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