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Editors' Note

TOBIAS SCHUMACHER
Senior Researcher, CIES, ISCTE-IUL, Lisbon, Portugal
PAULO GORJÃO
Director, IPRIS, Lisbon, Portugal

In the last months we have received a considerable number of emails and letters from readers of our Review who were wondering why the IPRIS Maghreb Review has not been published since April, in particular at a time when political and socio-economic developments in the five countries of the Greater Arab Maghreb are very much in flux and thus demand regular and close academic scrutiny. The current issue was, in fact, already supposed to be published in May/June this year, with its customary objectives.

However, shortly before the review was to be sent off to the printers, we found ourselves confronted with the claims of a solicitor representing a London-based journal dedicated to the study of North Africa and Islamic culture and religion. He asserted that the use of the name "IPRIS Maghreb Review" was "likely to cause confusion in the minds of the public", generating the notion that our "business" was associated with that of the entity in London. Moreover, we, as editors of the IPRIS Maghreb Review, were confronted with the claim that the continued presence of our "business" operating under the name "IPRIS Maghreb Review" was likely to cause substantial damage to the reputation and goodwill of the editor based in London. We were furthermore informed that unless we change the name of past and future issues, legal proceedings would commence.

Unsurprisingly, we regret these claims and threats and strongly reject the notion that we had deliberately used the trading name of the journal mentioned above. Obviously, the name "IPRIS Maghreb Review" bears resemblance to the London-based journal, but so do others. Moreover, the social sciences offer hundreds of relevant journals that are similar to one another in their aims and scope and, more importantly in this context, in name.

We think that the use of legal threats towards fellow academics is disproportionate and unjustified. It sets a bad example as a manner of overcoming different opinions and does harm to the still rather small and pluralistic scientific community working on Maghreb affairs. Also, we argue that each and every publication aiming to provide platforms for academic and policy debates on matters pertaining to past, present and future developments in Europe's southern neighbourhood should be welcomed, rather than be regarded as competitors, as they help to raise awareness and deepen knowledge about this important region.

Given the non-commercial character of the IPRIS Maghreb Review and thus the absence of any financial means to engage in possible legal action, we are left with no other choice than to change our name. Henceforth, the IPRIS Maghreb Review will be published as the IPRIS Maghreb Bulletin. We would also like to take this opportunity to announce that it will henceforth be published four times a year. Naturally, we will ensure that the name change and the altered publication frequency will not in any way affect the quality of the Bulletin itself and we hope that these changes meet with the approval of our almost 11.000 subscribers.

Promoting the "good Islam": the regime and Sufi-Brotherhoods in Algeria

ISABELLE WERENFELS
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, Germany

In the run up to the presidential elections in 2004 and 2009, Algerian newspapers repeatedly ran headlines such as the "the President courts the Sufi-Brotherhoods". A few decades ago, this would have been inconceivable. Up to the late 1980s, the post-colonial elites sought to economically marginalize, politically repress and socially stigmatize the brotherhoods. In stark contrast, regime elites from 1990 onwards engaged in their top-down promotion. Both approaches, repression and revival of the brotherhoods, have been a function of power-ensuring strategies of the authoritarian regime.
The reasons for marginalization of the brotherhoods up to the late 1980s and early 1990s were manifold. They were seen as a threat to the state's claim to speak for Islam, and as a potentially strong organizing social force outside the framework of the *parti unique* and its satellites. Indeed, in colonial and pre-colonial times the brotherhoods had not only been spiritual and cultural movements, but political, social, economic and, at times, military key players on the local and regional levels.
The modernizers within the post-colonial elite viewed the brotherhoods as backward and out-dated, while the conservative elite and the scholars of the '*ulama*' considered them as "charlatans" and "heretics". The fact that a number of sheikhs of zaouïas (religious lodges, some of which belonged to large transnational brotherhoods while some others worshipped "independent" local saints) had collaborated with the French colonial power served to discredit the brotherhoods *in toto* and to justify the state's repressive policies toward them. These policies ranged from nationalization of territories, the closing of religious and worldly schools run by the zaouïas, prevention of pilgrimages to intimidation of members and the imprisonment of sheikhs.

From repression to instrumentalization

The turnaround in regime policies toward the brotherhoods has been gradual, but radical. It began with a certain easing of pressure in the 1980s under President Chadli Bendjedid, whose wife belonged to a zaouïa. The brotherhoods' full rehabilitation began a decade later when the government in 1991 organized a national seminar on the zaouïas (used as a synonym for brotherhoods in colloquial Algerian) which was attended by several hundred sheikhs. This seminar took place against the backdrop of the FIS' (*Front Islamique du Salut*) growing popularity and reach for power. It aimed at rehabilitating and promoting the brotherhoods with the goal of creating a social and spiritual counter-force to the "imported" political Islam of the FIS. Now the brotherhoods were no longer portrayed as backward, but framed as the embodiment of the "tolerant, peaceful, apolitical, traditional real Algerian Islam".
However, the real boost for the brotherhoods came with the arrival to the presidency in 1999 of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who is said to have a personal affinity with them. Ever since, the state has accelerated renovation and restitution of their properties, and granted several zaouïas licenses for the (re-)opening of educational institutions. Figures providing an overview of direct state subsidies are difficult to obtain – sheikhs of large zaouïas do claim however that these are minimal. But the state has been sponsoring numerous conferences and events involving Sufi brotherhoods (among them a huge international gathering of the Tidjaniya in 2007 as well as numerous scholarly colloquies on the brotherhoods). Also, state television, radio and the print media, both private and governmental, have increasingly featured zaouïas. The official portrayal is remarkably simplistic and essentialist: the zaouïas are portrayed as "sanctuaries of peace", allegedly "unchanged for centuries", "remote from worldly affairs" and "profoundly apolitical". However, both the state's instrumentalization of the zaouïas as well as the zaouïas' proper interests and activities stand in stark contrast to such ascriptions.

Simplistic framing, complex realities

In the era of Bouteflika, zaouïas have not only been objects of political maneuvering and targets for co-optation, but have actively engaged in the *do-ut-des* rituals of election campaigns. With the overall number of their adherents estimated to be roughly at 1.5 million, they constitute an important pool for voter mobilization. In 2004 and 2009 most presidential candidates, including Islamists, visited important zaouïas and courted their sheikhs. These in turn – and in contradiction to claims of their being apolitical – endorsed the president or (in rare cases) voiced opposition to him. In some cases, public endorsements appeared to be directly linked to material benefits, again testifying to the zaouïas' pursuit of "worldly" (economic) interests. The existence of two competing umbrella organizations of zaouïas may be a result of both the uneven distribution of funds to some but not all zaouïas and the power struggles within Algeria's ruling elite.
The extent to which the brotherhoods are actually fulfilling regime expectations and becoming a spiritual and social alternative to political

Islam is difficult to assess in the absence of broad sociological data on their followers. Rare articles – academic and journalistic – on the social embeddedness of zaouïas in the 2000s indicate that they are not just receiving support from above but also experiencing a revival from below. Yet, the causal link between the two is by no means evident: The growing social demand for "traditional" spirituality may just as well be a reaction to the violence and insecurity of the 1990s.

However, there is evidence that the constructed dichotomy between mystical spiritual movements on the one hand and political Islam on the other hand is not mirrored on the ground. For instance, the Alawiya brotherhood prides itself of having followers belonging to Islamist parties, and some members of Islamist parties are known to have close ties to a zaouïa.

Whether the brotherhoods are actually appealing to those in danger of being radicalized and attracted to Jihadi milieus, namely young men with a lack of perspectives, remains an open question – there are indications that the zaouïas, at least in urban contexts, are particularly attractive to middle class females.

Yet, even if the zaouïas are not fulfilling (all) the functions ascribed to them top-down they serve the regime. Being a polymorphous and internally fragmented phenomenon that is partly co-opted and featuring a broad spectrum of agendas, the zaouïas present a fertile ground for the social and political fragmentation strategies that have contributed to the long-lividness of Algeria's liberalized autocracy.

Unauthorized migration: another agreement between Italy and Tunisia?

JEAN-PIERRE CASSARINO

Part-time professor, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence, Italy

On April 5th 2011, a bilateral agreement was concluded between the Tunisian Minister of the Interior, Habib Essid, and his Italian counterpart, Roberto Maroni. The text of the agreement remains beyond public purview. The signatory parties declared that it is aimed at reinforcing the control of migration flows and at facilitating the removal or readmission of unauthorized Tunisian nationals, particularly those who arrived since the beginning of the year on Italian soil.

The day before the conclusion of the above-mentioned agreement, on April 4th 2011, a meeting between the Prime Minister of the Tunisian interim government, Béji Caid Essebsi, and his Italian counterpart, Silvio Berlusconi, was held in Tunis. By all accounts, chances to reach a bilateral agreement seemed highly compromised. Actually, whereas Berlusconi was intent on exerting pressure on the Tunisian authorities to stem the flows of unauthorized migrants crossing the Mediterranean, his Tunisian counterpart pragmatically emphasized the formidable social economic and political challenges facing the stability of Tunisia since January 14th 2011, as well as the unprecedented accountability of the Tunisian authorities to respond to the aspirations for democracy and liberty of the Tunisian people. More than the conclusion of the agreement *per se*, the key challenges stressed by Béji Caid Essebsi deserve further attention. First, because they clearly show that the short-term priorities of the Tunisian interim government differ from those of the Italian government. The former is faced with the need to consolidate social stability in the run-up to the elections of the constituent assembly on October 23rd 2011, whereas the latter relies on a security paradigm in an attempt to reinforce a fragile political coalition domestically. Second, because the main sources of legitimacy of Tunisia's interim government are to be found *in* Tunisia, i.e. among domestic actors (i.e. political parties, trade unions, civil society organizations) who are organizing themselves while becoming more vigilant with regard to the respect for human rights, public accountabilities, social justice and individual liberties. Third, because the conclusion of a bilateral agreement aimed at facilitating the removal or readmission of unauthorized migrants is, by definition, based on asymmetric costs and benefits that might even be incompatible with social and economic development concerns. This aspect is essential to understand why compensatory measures or incentives are usually negotiated together with the conclusion of this kind of agreement.

However, it has to be said that, even when incentives (e.g. development aid, preferential trade concessions, entry quotas for migrants) may be viewed as being significant enough to cooperate on readmission, the (unintended) costs of cooperation incurred by a country of origin might eventually induce it to renege. To be sure, numerous bilateral experiences of cooperation on readmission have demonstrated that incentives do not always ensure effective cooperation. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's Tunisia and its bilateral cooperation with Italy was no exception in this regard.

Past experience

Before April 2011, three bilateral agreements linked to readmission were already concluded between Italy and Tunisia.

The first one dates back to August 6th 1998. It was based on a *note verbale* or memorandum between the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Tunisian embassy in Rome. It set out to develop a mechanism aimed at controlling migratory flows originating in or transiting through Tunisia. In return for cooperation, entry quotas for Tunisian labor migrants were granted by Italy. The note also earmarked funds for the construction of detention centers on Tunisian territory. Moreover, it explicitly banned mass expulsions to Tunisia.

A few years later, a bilateral police cooperation agreement was concluded on December 13th 2003 between Italy and Tunisia. This agreement was primarily aimed at delivering technical assistance and training to Tunisian law-enforcement agents and customs officers with a view to reinforcing maritime border controls. Likewise, entry quotas for Tunisian labor migrants were granted to reward Tunisia's cooperation.

On January 28th 2009, a third agreement was concluded between the then Tunisian Minister of the Interior, Rafik Haj Qacem, and his Italian counterpart, Robert Maroni. This agreement was again based on a memorandum of understanding aimed at facilitating and speeding up the delivery of *laissez-passers* – or travel documents – by the Tunisian consular authorities to remove undocumented migrants identified as being Tunisian nationals from the Italian territory. The 2009 agreement also foresaw the use of the European Return Fund to promote "assisted voluntary return" (AVR) programmes in order to sustain, according to EU officials, the reintegration of readmitted Tunisian nationals.

Importantly, Tunisia's cooperation on the delivery of travel documents at the request of the Italian authorities has been erratic over the last ten years or so. For example, before the above-mentioned 2009 bilateral arrangement was concluded, around three travel documents (or *laissez-passers*) were delivered by the Tunisian consular authorities out of ten travel documents requested by the Italian authorities. As of 2009, three factors contributed to reinvigorating bilateral cooperation on readmission between Italy and Tunisia. First, the former government of President Ben Ali was seeking enhanced international regime legitimacy (and strategic alliances with Italy and France) in order to obtain its long-sought Advanced Status with the EU. Second, the Tunisian authorities looked positively at the link between re-documentation and the possibility of benefiting from AVR programmes. Third, among the migrants and (rejected) asylum-seekers subject to a removal order from Italy were former political opponents and protesters who had taken part in the repressed upheavals in early 2008 in the Gafsa phosphate mining area, a highly depressed area characterized by youth unemployment and poverty. A mix of opportunism, strategic alliances with European countries and oppression of political dissent abroad were the main characteristics of the cooperation patterns of the past regime.

At the outset, it is important to stress that Tunisia has been cooperating on border controls and the fight against unauthorized migration on the basis of flexible arrangements (e.g. memoranda of understanding, exchanges of letters, and police cooperation agreements including a clause on readmission). Such flexible arrangements are based on a three-fold approach covering: 1) the fight against unauthorized migration, including the issue of readmission; 2) the reinforced control of borders, including *ad hoc* technical assistance, and 3) the joint management of labor migration with third countries of origin, including enhanced development aid, trade concessions and entry quotas.

These arrangements have become prominent in the relations between Italy and North African countries as a result of the latter's proactive involvement in the reinforced control of the EU's external borders. They stem from a *quid pro quo*. Over the last ten years, the regime in Tunisia, just like in Morocco, Algeria, and Libya, has become gradually aware that bilateral cooperation on border controls would not only allow it to boast its credentials as an efficient actor in the field of migration and border management, raising its international credibility and contributing to greater regime legitimacy. It has also realized that it could acquire a strategic position in migration talks which it could capitalize upon to further other ends. There is no question that this calculus has had serious implications on the ways in which cooperation on readmission has been effectively implemented and, above all, it generated implications as regards the respect of fundamental rights and the safety of readmitted persons.

New drivers to be factored-in

A key question remains to be answered. Given the above-mentioned bilateral experiences in the field of readmission, why have the Italian authorities been so pro-active with respect to the conclusion of a fourth agreement? Many would argue that the radical transformation in Tunisia called for renewed reciprocal commitments pertaining to the fight against unauthorized migration including readmission. However, this does not reflect the entire story. Firstly, the cooperation on readmission cannot be isolated from a broader framework of bilateral interactions that shapes the intensity of the *quid pro quo.* All the countries north and south of the Mediterranean know that such a cooperative framework results from a form of consolidated bilateral *rapprochement*. Secondly, the conclusion of bilateral agreements aimed at removing unauthorized persons allows the centrality of the state and its law-enforcement agencies to be buttressed in the management of international migration. Thirdly, the visible conclusion of such agreements

shows to European constituencies that their governments have a *credible ability* to respond to, and even anticipate, shocks (e.g. mass arrivals of unauthorized migrants), because of the existence of specific mechanisms. When skillfully propagated by the mainstream media in Italy and Europe, this cause-and-effect relationship may subtly reinvigorate the legitimacy of a government faced with domestic political crisis and social discontent, above all in the run-up to elections. In other words, the intense media coverage and high politicization of the cooperation on readmission may allow the weakened relationship between citizens and their state to be reconfigured, if not reactivated.

There is no question that Tunisia's interim government has understood the actual motivations and claims of the Italian government, whether these were explicitly expressed or not. Just like both contracting parties are perfectly aware that the agreement concluded on April 5th 2011 will neither solve nor conceal the resilient causes of the human disasters that continue to occur in the Mediterranean Sea.

Moreover, the visible implementation of the agreement might be at odds with the immediate social economic and political priorities of the Tunisian interim government in its search for domestic stability and legitimacy. In today's Tunisia, these constitute key drivers reflecting expressions of state accountability to its citizens all of which were unconceivable under the regime of former President Ben Ali's, in which coercion and consensus were the rule.

To be sure, such domestic drivers will have to be factored in the "dialogue on migration mobility and security" that the EU and its member states are currently seeking to promote in Tunisia. Never before has the policy relevance of such domestic drivers been so important.

The clay 'tiger': Tunisia and the end of the 'bread' economic model

LARBI SADIKI

Senior Lecturer in Middle East Politics, University of Exeter, United Kingdom

When in early January 2011 thousands of Tunisians buried Mohamed Bou'azizi, the man who doused himself in protest, sparking Sidi Bouzid's 'bread riots', they metaphorically marched in the funeral of Ben Ali's decaying republic and its idiosyncratic political and socio-economic order noted for its *dirigisme*. On the January 14th 2011, less than a week after Bou'azizi's burial, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was ousted from power.

The 'bread' compact and the 'moral economy'

The 'bread compact' of the 1960s, from Algeria to Jordan, defined the providential role of the impoverished Arab states. In return for political deference the state committed to subsidizing strategic commodities and goods. This worked until the intervention of two dynamics.

Firstly, austerity programmes by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) counseled the limitation or elimination of all subsidies on strategic commodities (flour, kerosene, tea, sugar, bread, etc.). This did not sit well with the tenets of free market economics. Most governments, dependent on outside handouts, more or less accepted this piece of conventional wisdom. However, and secondly, in the 1970s and the 1980s the Algerians, Jordanians, and to a lesser extent the Egyptians, Moroccans, Sudanese, and Tunisians took a stand against IMF austerity. Through bread protests, rioters reminded their rulers of their pledges in favor of a 'moral economy'. Many died, forcing their regimes to rethink the programmes. Others had to re-write the 'bread compact'.

Tunisia was one of those countries whose own bread riots of 1984, which led to the most serious challenge to Bourguiba's rule in 27 years, never resolved the problem. It was torn between maintaining a modicum of a 'moral economy' and being a good IMF client. When hundreds died in the 1984 bread riots, Bourguiba rescinded the hikes in the prices of strategic commodities and allowed for a degree of political pluralization. Earlier, in the mid to late 1960s, Tunisian super-minister Ahmed bin Saleh's collectivization programme triggered riots by farmers and small landholders. In response, Bourguiba reversed the policies of his super-minister (who was in charge of four ministries) and dismissed him, blaming him for the turmoil.

It would be another twenty years before the poor strike back at the state's misdistribution, especially as neither the quick gimmicks of the mid-1960s nor the economic fixes of the mid-1980s had alleviated concerns over equal distribution in favor of individuals as well as regions. The central and southern regions of Tunisia benefited very little from post-independence state-led development. This is one reason why all bread uprisings and anti-systemic protests, including in December 2010, were often sparked by these regions (the governorates of Gafsa, Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid).

The 'clay tiger': what went wrong?

Economic figures and statistics can be easily misleading as state statistics create an image far from reality. In the case of Tunisia, the manipulation of government figures has meant that the socio-economic model taken for granted by many scholars and policy-makers shows that the country was no more than a paper or 'clay' tiger.

On paper, Tunisia the aspiring 'Asian Tiger' of the Maghreb, and with some verifiable statistical indices, looked economically healthy. During the past ten years, annual growth averaged 4% to 4.5%. For a non-hydrocarbon economy, this was taken to be proof of a solid performance.

The National Solidarity Fund (NSF), like other schemes created during Ben Ali's time in power, calls for a re-assessment. First, though the statistics and data came from the regime and were partly massaged, some progress was certainly made through these schemes in poverty alleviation.

Indeed, poverty was alleviated with intervention in less than 2000 so-called shadow zones. Over ten years, an estimated 100.000 micro–credits were given, helping people with all kinds of small projects and businesses. Credit for this initiative goes to the Tunisian people. One-fifth of all Tunisians – that is the adult working population – have in some way or another contributed to these voluntary funds.

Yet, poverty alleviation and helping improve life for the have-nots is not the same as job-creation. The funds improved the quality of poverty but did not go towards eradicating it. In addition, the funds were instrumental to keeping the have-nots in check through fairly successful distributive mechanisms. One may venture the idea that the National Solidarity Fund delayed the inevitable: 'bread riots'. Note that these are always triggered by protests over issues of bread and butter. However, they always lead to demands for political freedoms. This is true of Tunisia as well as of other impoverished and populous Arab states.

Three observations must be made in relation to the NSF: a) all statistics produced in the past may be over-stated by the state since it was the only source of information on the fund's performance; b) the NSF allowed the state a measure of control to alleviate poverty whilst inhibiting the rise of society-managed charities; and c) according to new information released after the ousting of Ben Ali, the NSF was not free of the widespread corruption and embezzlement practiced by the former First Lady, Leila Ben Ali. This is a space to be watched for more precise revelations of the severity of corruption involved.

The 'hidden' Tunisia

One Wikileaks document shows a gloomy picture drawn in 2007 by the US Embassy in Tunis. It questioned the official figures, for instance, on foreign direct investment (FDI). The Americans were concerned about the sales of public assets, fearing that "...in the short term as the [Tunisian government] continues to privatize state-owned enterprises, [it] will lose this source of income". On paper, Tunisia ranked first in Africa in terms of economic performance. There have been serious concerns on the part of the US about higher unemployment rates than those published by the government. But it is also clear that unconditional Tunisian support for the US war on terror led the US to turn a blind eye on the spin Ben Ali's machine had used to market his 'clay tiger'.

This is the crux of what went wrong in Tunisia. Aside from some undeniable successes, the regime produced its own lies on what kind of economy it engineered, and believed them. So did the outside world, enticed by figures and charts designed to create a mirage of success. The figures do not expose the over-reliance on the EU, which has kept Tunisia from considering alternative labor markets for its migrant workers, especially at a time when the EU seems to be replacing its Maghrebi labor force with Eastern Europeans whose assimilation in the EU is much easier. Under Ben Ali, the economy's capacity to train exceeded the capacity to employ. About 60.000 to 70.000 graduates are produced each year, a quarter of whom will see little or no employment. Thus, the numbers of those on the margins were swelling and the government relied on the National Solidarity Fund and other mechanisms to placate the needy.

There are problems with all indicators produced all of which rank Tunisia favorably in comparison with other developing states. Generally, this led to upholding the 'myth' of a solid and dynamic economy.

From 'moral economy' to 'immoral distribution'

Ben Ali had created some wealth for Tunisia. But generally, whilst public expenditure largely maintained a distributive economy – namely investment into education, health and food subsidies – the state's rush to the 'Washington Consensus', EU handouts and markets, the reliance on small and medium sized businesses and an emerging spare parts industrial sector, FDI, cheap tourism, and the sluggish textile industry was bound to cause the economy to lose steam.

Unemployment rates of up to 40%-50% in the marginalized regions are considerably higher than the national average of 14% to 16% mostly in the North and Sahel, the country's lush coastal regions. Marginalization of the residents of phosphates basin towns, for example, led to tensions with the national company managing the phosphates sector. Intervention by Ben Ali temporarily calmed the situation, but how proceedings from phosphates as well as other sectors will be more equitably distributed remained to be seen. With 60% of the population under 25 years, the need to engage in sustainable economic development is urgently needed. For youth empowered by education to be marginalized by economic misdistribution is the fodder of protest and social upheaval.

The research fieldtrip conducted by the author in February 2011 after the revolt of January 2011, which included interviews with trade unions' middle-ranking syndicalist chiefs, as well as with many unemployed youth and poor families, confirms a grim picture of Tunisia's marginalized who go on for years without employment.

Some work no more than a few days a month (with the state documenting them in full employment even when they worked one day per week).
Tunisia's political elites may be on the cusp of a democratic breakthrough after the January 14th revolution that ousted dictator Ben Ali. But unless they pay attention to poverty and marginalization, they may face ongoing upheaval and future revolutions by the have-nots. Political equality that does not account for economic equality will mean incomplete revolution. This is of generalizable value for other states where revolutions could unseat dictators, Egypt having been a notable case in point.

France and the Libyan intervention

DANIEL NETHERY
Writer and freelance journalist, Berlin, Germany

On May 31st 2011 as the Libyan government claimed that more than 700 civilians had died as a result of NATO air raids, the French Defense Ministry unveiled architectural plans for a Pentagon *à la française*. Not surprisingly, the architects chose to base the design of the new military headquarters on the hexagon, a reference not only to its American counterpart: the French commonly speak of their own country as the *hexagone*, an allusion to its shape on the map. For Hervé Morin, the former Defense Minister who put forward the idea of combining the resources of the French army, navy and air force on one site "worthy of the fourth greatest military power on the planet", the project represents nothing less than a "Copernican reform".

The symbolism of a French Hexagon is potent. Its construction is a very concrete gesture in Nicholas Sarkozy's tireless campaign to position France, and its President, at the center of international affairs. Should it also signal that the armed forces are to take on a heightened role in the prosecution of French foreign policy, the implications for the Maghreb – which, as Sarkozy likes to point out, lies in close geographical and historical orbit to France – will be significant. Sarkozy's vigorous advocacy for a military response to the Libyan crisis suggests that such assessments should be taken seriously.

Observers have put forward two reasons for the French President's apparent penchant for armed conflict. Following the vote in the UN Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over Libya, some commentators in France accused the President of seeking a war to distract a disgruntled public from domestic policy failures. Edwy Plenel, head of Mediapart and former chief editor of *Le Monde*, wrote a scathing article in which he drew a comparison between the Libyan intervention and the Falklands War and accused Sarkozy of "Napoleonic atavism". Yet while a successful military outcome would no doubt give Sarkozy a desperately needed boost in the lead up to next year's French presidential election, the Libyan intervention was not the first time that the French President had flexed France's military muscle, and not once had this "strong arm" approach to foreign policy improved his standing with the electorate.

Other commentators have suggested that Sarkozy's leadership on the Libyan issue was primarily motivated by his government's mishandling of the Arab Spring. Salam Kawakibi, research director at the Arab Reform Initiative and senior researcher at the University of Amsterdam, doubts that Sarkozy saw the Libyan intervention as a way to distract dissatisfied voters, particularly given the risk that casualties could turn popular sentiment against the war. According to Kawakibi, Sarkozy's response to the Libyan crisis was informed by France's failure to support the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. It is an assessment with which Kristina Kausch, a research fellow at FRIDE, agrees. While not discounting that domestic considerations may have come into play, Kausch points to the haste with which Sarkozy recognized the opposition forces in Libya – breaking the convention that states should only recognize states – as an indication that Sarkozy was especially concerned with making amends for his hesitation in the cases of Libya's neighbors.

The French government was not alone in being caught off guard by the Arab Spring, but its mishandling of events was particularly embarrassing for a President who has made the Maghreb one of the major themes of his first term in office. His proposal to create a Mediterranean Union – an idea which eventually took shape in the form of the Union for the Mediterranean – was a key announcement of his presidential campaign in 2007. The French President set out his vision for the Mediterranean Union in the now infamous Dakar Speech. In an astounding throwback to the colonial era, Sarkozy set out his understanding of France's role in a post-colonial world: to draw on its shared history with its former colonies to build a "shared"

future... particularly in the area of trade. It is a message he has repeated on several occasions, such as during his four-hour visit to Haiti following the earthquake which devastated the country in January 2010.

Libya was perhaps the most successful example of the sort of relationship Sarkozy had in mind. France had been one of Libya's major arms suppliers before the Lockerbie bombing, a role it sought to resume when the EU lifted its arms embargo in 2004. Muammar Gaddafi paid a state visit to Paris in 2007 and agreed to engage in "exclusive negotiations" over arms and technology. These talks led to the so-called Rafale Deal, but the sale was never concluded. France and Libya did, however, sign a statement of intent in October 2010 to increase cooperation in the area of nuclear technology.

France was not alone in looking to satisfy Gaddafi's needs. Russia, which along with France had also been a major arms supplier, was also awarded valuable contracts worth around US$2 billion, with further deals of a similar value in the pipeline. China and Brazil had also become important trading partners. Just one month before the Libyan intervention commenced, the Libyan-Chinese Business Council was inaugurated. Its Assistant Secretary, Mohamed Taher Siala, issued a press release stating that trade between the two countries had reached US$7.5 billion in 2009, while contracts had been signed for Chinese companies to implement some US$21 billion worth of projects.

It is intriguing that all of these potential trade competitors – Russia, China and Brazil – abstained from the vote in the UN Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over Libya. While there is no suggestion that France and the UK sought a military intervention in Libya for trade reasons, the war has thrown all of the Gaddafi regime's deals into jeopardy. Once the bombing stops and the dust settles, Libya will require the help of the international community to rebuild, and it is likely that those countries most involved in the military intervention will find themselves in an influential position.

Exactly what the geopolitical consequences of the Libyan war will be remains as uncertain as the evolution of the Arab Spring itself. The war in Libya is, however, having a very real, immediate impact on Tunisia and Egypt, the two countries where popular movements have successfully toppled authoritarian dictators. Both of these countries are now struggling to accommodate thousands of refugees fleeing the fighting – as many as 250.000 in the case of Tunisia, itself a country of some 11 million people. France, and Europe in general, has done little to address the human consequences of the NATO intervention, while Sarkozy was involved in a push within the EU to strengthen its border laws to ensure that no Libyan refugee would reach European shores.

The Libyan war is also having a significant impact on the economies of its neighboring countries. Francis Ghiles, writing on the Tunisian case in Al Jazeera, quoted figures estimating the damage to infrastructure and losses due to a drop in tourism to be equivalent to around 5% of the country's GDP. He also cited a 25% fall in foreign investment. According to Ghiles, these trends represent an economic and political time bomb where chronically high unemployment, particularly among Tunisia's youth, was one of the causes of the last December's uprising. So long as the outcome of the Libyan intervention remains uncertain, it will require a concerted effort from the international community, in the vein of the response to the Global Financial Crisis, to ward off an economic catastrophe in the country.

Observers have put forward two reasons for the French President's apparent penchant for armed conflict. Following the vote in the UN Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over Libya, some commentators in France accused the President of seeking a war to distract a disgruntled public from domestic policy failures. Other commentators have suggested that Sarkozy's leadership on the Libyan issue was primarily motivated by his government's mishandling of the Arab Spring. The French government was not alone in being caught off guard by the Arab Spring, but its mishandling of events was particularly embarrassing for a President who has made the Maghreb one of the major themes of his first term in office.

The outcome in Libya will be critical not only for Tunisia and Egypt, but for all countries touched by the Arab Spring. According to Kawakibi, the Libyan situation could drain momentum from uprisings in other countries. He also warns that "so long as Gadaffi holds onto power, he is ready to finance counter-revolutionary movements" in countries where popular movements succeed in toppling the government. For Kausch, the impact of the Libyan war is, moreover, not limited to those countries where the Arab Spring is still playing out. The risk that the Arab Spring could come to be seen in a less positive light if the Libyan situation cannot be resolved is, she says, very real. A protracted Libyan stalemate would neutralize the positive example provided by the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions.

In the longer term, the Libyan intervention risks introducing a tint of violence to the memory of the Arab Spring, the significance of which should not be underestimated. Mona Eltahawy, a writer and lecturer on Arab issues and a columnist for the *Guardian*, "relished" the fall of Tunisian dictator Ben Ali as a result of a "revolution that is no longer a euphemism for a coup". The message of a revolution for human dignity is a powerful one, but the NATO intervention in Libya has the potential to detract from the popular character of the uprisings and reinforce a memory of violence that would betray the essence of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions.

The relationship between France and the Maghreb is also very much at stake. Benjamin Stora, a French historian, has commented that the Arab Spring represents an opportunity for the countries of the Maghreb to pick up from where they left off after the national liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s. In a dialogue with Edwy Plenel, he states: "I interpret what is happening in 2011 not as the beginning of a new period, but as the next stage in an interrupted history". By the same token, the Arab Spring has presented France with an opportunity to redefine its relationship with its neighbors across the Mediterranean.

The resignation of the French Foreign Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie on February 27th 2011 sent a clear signal that the repercussions of the Arab Spring could be felt beyond the borders of the states where the uprisings were taking place. Alliot-Marie, like the French government as a whole, was caught out by the rapid pace of the Tunisian Revolution, and her position became untenable as her links to the Ben Ali regime surfaced. But rather than signal any profound change in attitude towards Tunisia and the Maghreb, Alliot-Marie's departure seems to have made her into a very effective scapegoat for the French government's *faux pas*. When, less than two weeks later, Sarkozy came out strongly in favor of military action in Libya, he met with very little debate over the effectiveness of his proposed use of force. Despite being showed up more spectacularly than any other world leader – Gaddafi, reacting to the vote on the no-fly zone, said that his "friend", Sarkozy, "had gone mad" – the French opposition parties and press fell in behind the unpopular President, and polling indicated broad public support for the intervention.

> Exactly what the geopolitical consequences of the Libyan war will be remains as uncertain as the evolution of the Arab Spring itself. The war in Libya is, however, having a very real, immediate impact on Tunisia and Egypt, the two countries where popular movements have successfully toppled authoritarian dictators. Both of these countries are now struggling to accommodate thousands of refugees fleeing the fighting. France, and Europe in general, has done little to address the human consequences of the NATO intervention, while Sarkozy was involved in a push within the EU to strengthen its border laws to ensure that no Libyan refugee would reach European shores.

The Libyan intervention has also placed considerable strain on relations between France and Germany. From the moment Sarkozy presented his idea for a Mediterranean Union – which, in its original form, was to exclude Germany – the President indicated that he intended to use the Mediterranean as a leverage point to shift the geopolitical fulcrum away from the EU. While the Union for the Mediterranean includes EU member states, it has proved to be a largely vacant

structure, and both France and Germany have continued to pursue a piecemeal policy approach to the region driven by economic and energy security interests. The split between France and Germany over North Africa, culminating in Germany's abstention from the vote on the UN Security Council Resolution to impose a no-fly zone over Libya, has revealed just how far the two countries are from agreeing to anything that might resemble a common EU foreign policy. Yet a coherent Europe could play an important role in the future of those countries touched by the Arab Spring who might look to Europe for partnership on the road to political democracy.

The Libyan intervention was also clearly putting considerable strain on the relationship between the different NATO member states. Outgoing US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, speaking on June 10th, complained that Europe was not pulling its weight in Libya. Sarkozy brushed off the comments as those of a "bitter" man about to go into retirement, and took the opportunity to assert the significance of the French contribution to the war effort. On June 22nd, the Italian Foreign Minister, Franco Frattini, responding to reports by NGOs warning of a catastrophic shortage of food and other basic supplies in the area controlled by Gaddafi, stated that his government would support a ceasefire to allow aid to be delivered to the Libyan people. The suggestion of a ceasefire was, however, strongly rebuked by Sarkozy on the grounds that any pause in operations would allow Gaddafi to regather his forces.

The extent to which Sarkozy has sought to tie his fate to that of the Libyan intervention raises questions about his motivation for supporting a military solution in the first place. Neither the explanation that he was seeking a war to distract from domestic policy failures, nor that he was attempting to reassert himself following the embarrassing mishandling of the Tunisian and Egyptians revolutions, is entirely satisfactory. During an emergency meeting of world leaders held on March 19th, Sarkozy spoke of France's need to "assume its role before History". The similarities between this sentiment and that expressed in the Dakar Speech, where he exhorted the "African youth" to rise up and play a role in the "History" that had always passed their continent by, are striking. I have argued elsewhere that, with the hindsight of Sarkozy's first term in office, the Dakar Speech can be read as a statement about Sarkozy's vision of France, rather than having anything to do with its ostensible subject, Africa. Should this be so, Sarkozy's understanding of "History" and how it is related to armed force suggests that the French President may have been predisposed to consider a military solution to the Libyan crisis before exhausting other possibilities like diplomacy and sanctions. The Arab Spring has served as a reminder that nothing in history is inevitable. At the very least, it has shown that it should be possible to forge new, sustainable political relationships that bridge the Mediterranean. At the same time, Sarkozy's discourse rings uncomfortably like that of the "north-south question", so present in French politics in the 1950s: the fate of the French Union, with its protectorates in Tunisia and Morocco, and its *départements* in Algeria. It seems to have taken precedence over the "east-west question", or the push to strengthen ties with Germany and build a stronger Europe which could in turn be a true partner of fledgling democracies in the Maghreb. It will require vigilance on the part of politicians, the press and, above all, the French public to ensure that their leaders pursue policies that truly turn the page on the colonial and dictatorial eras.

EDITORS | Paulo Gorjão • Tobias Schumacher
ASSISTANT EDITORS | Diogo Noivo • Laura Tereno
DESIGN | Atelier Teresa Cardoso Bastos **PRINTING |** Europress

Portuguese Institute of International Relations and Security (IPRIS)
Rua Vitorino Nemésio, 5 - 1750-306 Lisboa
PORTUGAL

http://www.ipris.org
email: ipris@ipris.org

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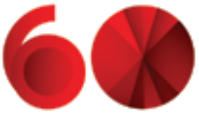
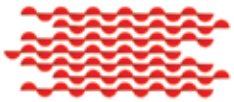
and over  % of the energy we create is renewable, from  and  . We can  the future, as we're creating it. Let's make the  together. Feel our energy. Join us at  www.edp.pt