

DIIS REPORT

NORTH AFRICA:

A SECURITY PROBLEM FOR THEMSELVES,
FOR THE EU AND FOR THE US

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Executive summary

The report is an attempt to answer the question as to why the North African regimes have become a security problem both for themselves, as well as the EU and the US. The basic argument advanced in the report, is that the combination of the 'nature' of the North African regimes, the US 'war against terrorism,' the European fight against illegal immigration and the 'home-grown' North African terrorism, serve to strengthen the North African regimes' concerns with regime security at the expense of political pluralism.

The main findings are that the North African regimes' tendency to cling to the status quo results in both depolitisation and Islamisation of the populations. The depolitisation is accompanied by desperate riots that are seen as about the only way to channel socio-economic and political despair. At the same time, North Africa – especially Algeria – continues to be shaken by still more violent suicide bombings carried out by Osama Bin Laden-inspired Islamists. These developments undermine the regimes' legitimacy and heighten EU and US concerns with security in the region. This leads to the conclusion that while Islamist terrorism is increasing, the 'unholy' alliance between regimes, US and the EU policies, tends to worsen the security situation in North Africa, thereby going against the original American and European goal of exporting democracy. Hence, the policy recommendation of the report is that the US and the EU ought to stop securitising illegal immigration and analysing terrorism as the main security problem in North Africa. Only then, might there be sufficient space for a kind of controlled political pluralism.

Introduction

On the 11th December 2007, two car bombs, one a suicide bombing, exploded near the UNHCR office – the UN refugee agency – and Algeria’s Constitutional offices in the Algerian capital. It is estimated that at least 67 people died in the blasts and many were wounded, making the attack the worst in Algeria in a decade. The Islamist terrorist group *Al-Qaeda in the Islamist Maghreb*, (see below), claimed responsibility for the carnage on a website. It described the UN offices as “the headquarters of the international infidels”. The statement said that “... this is another successful conquest ... carried out by the Knights of the Faith with their blood in defence of the wounded nation of Islam” (*The Guardian International*, December 12, 2007).

The chosen date for the bombings was not incidental. It is a highly symbolic date both in Algerian history, and in the ‘history’ of Al-Qaeda bombings. December 11 is a key date in Algeria’s struggle for independence from France – a date marked by mass protests against a visit by President Charles de Gaulle to Algiers, on December 11th 1960. Algerians mark the anniversary every year, recalling brutality by French forces who cracked down on young demonstrators. Just a week before the bombings, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy paid a visit to Algeria. The bombs may therefore, be interpreted as a way of saying to those who are in power today that they are in the pocket of the former French colonisers, and are thus betraying the ‘glorious combatants’ of the war of independence.

Yet another interpretation is possible as the bombings blasted parts of the buildings of the Constitutional Court. The Court is currently applying the finishing touches to a reform of the constitution in order to allow President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to run for a third presidential period and further, to submit the Parliament to presidential power in the future. The reformed constitution has to be accepted or declined by referendum. There is little doubt, however, that it will be accepted either because the voters stay at home or because they will vote in the affirmative as there is no real opposition as an alternative to Bouteflika.

The message of *Al-Qaeda in the Islamist Maghreb* is alarming. It reflects the Islamist message to the regime during the horrible violence in the 1990s, where Islamist violent groups attacked, killed, or bullied everyone who where suspected of not being ‘authentic’ Islamist Algerians. At that time also, symbolic representations of the ruling elite’s power was also attacked. Schools, police stations, administration

buildings, town halls etc. were blasted. Thus, we might ask whether we now witness a repetition of the 1990s? In any event, as a consequence of the increasing bombings in 2007, the security measures will be strengthened further, and the state of emergency that has existed since 1992 will probably continue.

All the North African regimes are worried about a possible spill-over effect in their territories. Morocco stated very quickly after the bombings that Algeria and Morocco now had to co-operate against terrorism. Whether this will be the case, remains to be seen. From 1994 until now, the Moroccan-Algerian border has been closed because of the mutual fear of each others' violent Islamists.

In order to understand why North Africa is affected by terrorist attacks we have to analyse the structure of the regime system. Furthermore, an analysis of the way Islamism is dealt with by the North African regimes is necessary, in order to understand the regimes' threat perceptions. Subsequently, the inter-state power structure of the North African region will be analysed in order to judge how possible future co-operation between the states is. Hence, the 'frozen' Western Sahara conflict will be discussed as it epitomises the regional inter-state conflicts. Finally, the US 'war against terrorism' and the EU immigration policy will be scrutinised to determine to what extent the current US and EU policies strengthen the authoritarian regimes.

Liberalised autocracy in the Maghreb

Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya constitute North Africa, known in Arabic as the Maghreb¹. The four countries have quite different histories. However, they have all experienced colonisation by France, Spain and Italy². French culture, language and secularism have marked the Europeanised economic, political, and cultural elite that contrasts so sharply with both the rural and poor urban populations' way of living. A tension between the Europeanised elite and different societal layers characterises all four countries. Furthermore, as a consequence of this tension, the elite fears the 'people' and the people despise the elite because of wealth, corruption and European culture.

The political elite's fear of being besieged by the 'people' profoundly marks its way of conceptualising the state, which is considered the property of the regime i.e. the political and economic elite. The elite constitutes the personalised power structure that dominates the state. Hence the state is not neutral but an instrument for the elite in their quest for upholding power. This way of fusing state and regime results in an authoritarian regime system (see below)

Whenever society protests against the policies of the regime, the latter is prone to perceive the protest or critics as a threat to regime survival. The ruling elite therefore tends to cling to the status quo, which in turn, results in the erosion of legitimacy, bringing about further protests. The outcome of such a process is a weak state that permanently considers itself besieged by opposition of any kind, which must, at any cost be suppressed.

¹ In Arabic, Maghreb means: the place where the sun sets, i.e. west of Egypt. The report uses the term Maghreb instead of North Africa because that is the term used outside the Anglophone world.

² Morocco and Tunisia were colonised by France until 1956; Algeria until 1962 and Libya by Italy until 1947. From 1943 to 1951 – to the Libyan independence – Libya was under British and French administration. In Morocco, Spain did not withdraw from Western Sahara until 1975. Spain still possesses two small cities (enclaves) Ceuta and Melilla on the northern Moroccan coast and some small islands – e.g. the island of Perejil near the Strait of Gibraltar. The island's sovereignty is disputed by Morocco and Spain. In July 2002, some Moroccan soldiers planted the Moroccan flag on it. They were immediately captured by Spanish commandos and they told Morocco that they would only leave if they received diplomatic guarantees from Morocco that it would not reoccupy the island. The U.S. solved the conflict and the two sides agreed to restore the situation that existed prior to July 2002. Moroccan feelings about Ceuta and Melilla are much the same as those of Spaniards about Gibraltar, there is a degree of compensation for Morocco in having a European presence in territory claimed as her own. The compensation lies in the Moroccan economic and political pressure on Spain and the EU (Gillespie, 2000, 77). For Spain the two cities are important because they are the gate-keepers of immigration from Morocco.

According to Barry Buzan, a weak state is characterised by “the high level of concern with domestically generated threats to the security of the government, in other words, weak states either do not have, or have failed to create, a domestic political and social consensus of sufficient strength to eliminate the large-scale use of force as a major and continuing element in the domestic political life of the nation” (Buzan, 1983, 67). This does not mean that the state as an organising concept has not taken root in the minds and actions both of regimes and of their oppositions in the Maghreb. What it does mean is that there is no clear separation between the apparatus of the state and the regime which dominates and works through these state institutions, often in a self-perpetuating way.

In contrast to many African regimes, the Maghreb regimes – including the Algerian one – has succeeded in containing violence to an extent that does not break up the state institutions, including those of the army and security forces. The strength, coherence, and effectiveness of the states’ coercive apparatus highlight the ‘robustness’ of authoritarianism.

Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya are all to varying degrees, strong, coercive states. Each possesses huge internal security forces that control the domestic scene. Algeria and Morocco have larger armies because of the ‘frozen’ conflict in Western Sahara. Even Tunisia’s security apparatus, once modest by Arab world standards, has ballooned under President Ben Ali, himself a military man (Entelis, 2005).

Repressive authoritarianism constitutes the ‘deep structure’ of the state system in the Middle East. However, repression is selective and inserted into what Daniel Brumberg calls liberalised autocracy. He characterises the Arab state system “as a mixture of guided pluralism, controlled elections and selective repression. It is a type of political system whose institutions, rules and logic defy any linear model of democratisation. The rulers widen or narrow the boundaries of participation and expression in response to what they see as the social, economic, political, and geo-strategic challenges facing their regimes. To endure, they must implicitly, or explicitly, allow some opposition forces certain kinds of social, political, or ideological power – but things must never reach a point where the regime feels deterred from using force when it deems fit ... They therefore strive to pit one group against another in ways that maximize the rulers’ room for manoeuvre and restrict the opposition’s capacity to work together. Consensus politics and state-enforced power sharing can form an alternative to either full democracy or full autocracy, particularly when

rival social, ethnic, or religious groups fear that either type of rule will lead to their political failure” (Brumberg, 2002, 56-57,67).

The Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian and Libyan regimes are to be considered more or less liberalised autocracies. They possess all the features cited by Brumberg with regard to the definition of the Middle East states. The liberalised autocracy very often fosters riots against what is seen as unjust rule. Another scholar, Mohammed Ayoob remarks that riots often become unmanageable as they overload the political and military capabilities of the state, and lead to an accumulation of crises that further erodes the legitimacy of the post-colonial state (Ayoob, 1995, 30).

Especially Algeria and to some extent, also Libya, Morocco and Tunisia have been rocked by riots recent years. In Algeria, poverty, highly unequal distribution of oil revenue, and widespread corruption have fostered desperation, especially among the unemployed youngsters, but also among skilled workers. Extremely violent clashes between security forces and Berbers in the Algerian region of Kabylia broke out in spring 2001, and one of the Berber parties, *FFS (Front des Forces Socialistes)* has boycotted national elections ever since. In Morocco, the Rif region in the North is often shaken by riots because of the desperate social situation and because the Rif – a region of Berbers – ever since the 1920s, has been protesting either against the French colonisation or the centralised authoritarian monarchy.

Violent riots broke out in Libya’s eastern city of Benghazi in February 2006, in response to the row over the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed. Although the demonstrations were sparked off by the then Italian minister Roberto Calderoli’s declaration that he intended to print t-shirts bearing the cartoons, they also reflected the discontent and frustration that had long been building in the country’s second city. The riots were as much a means of expressing anger with the situation inside Libya as they were about the depiction of the Prophet, and it was not long before protestors began shouting anti-regime slogans. There is in general, a groundswell of anger and despondency at the inability or lack of will of the state to improve living conditions and day-to-day life in the country (Pargeter, 2006: 219).

In Tunisia, social and economic discontent is increasing because of price rises for gas, electricity, water and transportation. Unemployment in Tunisia is also on the increase. Riots in the suburbs of the big towns are not unusual. This context is reinforced by loss of credibility and legitimacy of the Tunisian state because privatisa-

tion and criminalisation of the state hamper the traditional bargaining mechanism. Moreover, public freedom of expression is scarce in Tunisia. Many Tunisian are in jail for minor political acts of opposition, such as internet navigation. This leaves violent demonstrations the only channel for protest (Labidi, 2006).

The repression is accompanied by a certain political overlay in Algeria and Morocco. The objective of regime managed politics in the Maghreb has so far been to give opposition groups space to let off steam and allow for their political participation. However, this has remained controlled and limited in order to preclude factors that might undermine the ultimate power of the ruling elite.

By 1999, an air of optimism had percolated across the Maghreb. The level of violence in Algeria – while not resolved – fell substantively and Algeria's new President Bouteflika seemed to be talking seriously about national reconciliation and an amnesty for those rebels in prison, on the run or still fighting. In the case of Libya, there had been the imposition of wider international sanctions in the wake of the Lockerbie disaster in 1988. Libya decided in 1999 to hand over the two Lockerbie suspects for trial in the Netherlands, which resulted in the suspension of United Nations' sanctions the same year. There were signs of movement in the Western Sahara 'frozen conflict'. In Morocco, the new King Mohammed VI, who came to the throne after his father's death in July 1999, brought hope of a more modern (less brutal) and transparent form of government. However, all the dire circumstances – entrenched liberalised authoritarian regimes; lack of popular legitimacy; strong Islamist opposition movements and smaller groups that engage in bin Laden-style terrorism; economic systems that have lagged far behind other regions in the increasingly globalised economy; large youthful populations clamouring for jobs or visas to the 'West', resulting in migration – continued in varying degrees in the Maghreb.

In especially Morocco and Algeria where the respective King and President promised transparency and change of political systems, large parts of the population are disappointed and alienated, because it looks as if it is impossible for break into the established power structures. Discontent with the ruling elite manifests itself in depolitisation, riots and Islamisation (see below).

The Moroccan King Mohammad VI's guideline has been 'development and *ijtihad*' (*interpretation*). This has meant modernization of the economy, promotion of social welfare, civil society, and incremental political democratisation – all this legitimised and expanded upon by independent, reasoned judgment as opposed to mere

blind imitation of past practice (*taqlid*³). Nevertheless, the Moroccan monarchy is still a neo-makhzen⁴ entity. Co-option of various societal groups and individuals, and balancing them against one another, has been, and still is, a key tool in insuring the monarchy's ultimate authority as the supreme arbiter.

The legislative elections in Algeria (May 2007) and Morocco (September 2007) demonstrated in no uncertain manner the depoliticisation of people. The Moroccan legislative election of September 7th was characterised by the low voter turnout – 37% – and the high percentage of blank votes. The Moroccan authorities did express their concern over the low voter turnout, but showed no sign of self-reflection. They pointed towards the considerable efforts in voter information and awareness campaigns that had been undertaken in the run-up to the elections. Of course, these activities constitute an important effort by both government agencies and civil society to enhance awareness about the electoral process and citizens' rights in a country where almost half of the population is illiterate. However, seen in the light of the evolution of voter participation during the last three elections (dropping from 58% in 1997 to 52% in 2002), the figures suggest that what is lacking is not information but trust. The same applies to the Algerian elections in May 2007. Some parties and some former leaders of the banned *Islamist Salvation Party* (FIS) had called for a boycott. They claimed that the elections were consistently rigged by government, and that participation would lend a fundamentally corrupt process undeserved legitimacy. The result of a common lack of trust in the ruling elite was the low voter turnout – 35 %, which was the lowest since 1997. The same lack of confidence in the ruling elite's capacity for bringing about substantial political and economic change is present in Tunisia and Libya.

Daniel Brumberg's characterisation of the Arab system as a type of political system whose institutions, rules and logic defy any linear model of democratisation is epitomised in the Maghreb. It is the 'simultaneous stop and go' politics that fosters popular powerlessness. For example, in Algeria and Morocco the constitutions allow for political pluralism and freedom of the press, but political pluralism is restrained. For instance in Algeria, overtly religious parties are not allowed. A proposal for a new Algerian constitution, that will be submitted to a referendum either end 2007 or beginning 2008, introduces even more presidentialism in order to control the

³ *Taqlid* is a doctrine in Muslim theology referring to the acceptance of a religious ruling in matters of worship and personal affairs from someone regarded as a higher religious authority without demanding an in-depth explanation of the processes required to arrive at a verdict of a religious scholar.

⁴ The Moroccan Makhzen; an Arab term for Morocco's ruling security-bureaucratic apparatus.

Parliament. At the same time, the population is asked to actively participate in politics. It is also unclear why journalists are sometimes allowed to criticise, whereas on other occasions they are jailed or fined for criticising the ruling elite.

The population's fear of and distrust in the ruling elite's arbitrary politics is almost equal to the ruling elite's feeling of being besieged by the population. The ruling elite considers the population's wish for democracy and a more just distribution of wealth as a threat to the survival of the ruling power. By contrast, large parts of the population conceive the ruling power as a threat to societal security.

The Maghreb ruling elites constantly keep in mind the horrible Algerian violence. In their opinion, it was brought about by the then Algerian President Chadli's decision in 1989, of introducing political pluralism. This resulted in the *Islamist Salvation Party's* (FIS) success in the first round of the parliamentary elections held in December 1991. The second round in January 1992 was suspended by the military that seized power in order to prevent the Islamists from winning the elections. FIS was banned, and a twelve-month state of emergency was imposed. In 1993, the state of emergency was extended and it is still in place, even if violence has decreased considerably since 1999 when Bouteflika was elected president – the first civil president of post-colonial Algeria.

The perceived threat to the survival of the regimes and the recent Algerian violence make it difficult to widen the boundaries of political participation. Maintaining the status quo is increasingly tricky due to the rising popular anger with the ruling elite. Opening up for real political pluralism is very difficult because of the elite's securitisation⁵ of their regimes. For the time being, it looks like that the regimes prefer the status quo of controlled and guided pluralism. However, this kind of pluralism is at risk if the threat of domestic Islamist terrorism increases.

⁵ The term 'securitisation' has been invented by Ole Wæver. It points to Wæver's definition of security: "Security is a speech act, a discursive practice through which a condition of insecurity is identified, threats are pointed out, and an object of security is constructed ... 'Security' signifies a situation marked by the presence of a security problem and some measure taken in response. Hence, 'securitisation' is about the process ... Securitisation can be seen as a more extreme version of politisation, claiming that the issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure". (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998, 23-24, 57-58). The concept of securitisation has been developed to be applied to 'normal' states, not to undemocratic states/regimes where 'normal politics' does not exist in the European way of defining normal politics as identical to democracy. One might state, that Algeria is a clear example of securitisation of the survival of the state because the ruling elite introduced a state of emergency since 1992 which is really *the* extraordinary measure. Banning of certain parties is certainly also a sign of securitisation. However, the statement that 'the issue is securitised only if and when the audience accepts it as such' (op.cit 23) is not quite workable in authoritarian states because it is the state's ruling elite who decides what can be said and who can say what.

Inclusion of Islamist parties

The rise of Maghreb Islamism⁶ since the beginning of the 1980s has been dealt with differently by the four states. The Moroccan monarchy has dealt the least harshly with its Islamists, whereas the Algerian and the Libyan regimes have been the most brute. The Tunisian regime has repressed the Islamist opposition, but not as brutally as has the Libyan regime. After President Bouteflika's election in 1999, the Algerian regime has adopted a somewhat similar strategy to that of Morocco.

Political reform in the Maghreb has so far led to very little expansion of political participation. Those who have often profited most from the limited political openings have been Islamist movements and parties in Morocco and Algeria, whereas attempts at establishing Islamist parties in Libya and Tunisia have been repressed.

The legal Islamist parties recruit particularly the middle-class who is attracted by the promise of secure identity, stability, and the possibility of a certain degree of pluralism. These parties have entered the political stage to pursue an agenda of political reform. They all reject use of violence as a means to achieve political ends. Especially in Algeria, the Islamist parties are keen to emphasise their rejection of violence. This is of course, due to the fear of the return of the horrible violence in the 1990s.

Although the Islamist parties mostly espouse socially conservative positions, they make demands when it comes to reform of the political system. Prominent issues are the fight against corruption, and a separation of powers, good governance, and respect for human rights. However, even if Islamists are keen to promote the strengthening of parliament and of the judicial system, their hands are tied due to general conditions of the authoritarian system⁷.

In Morocco and Algeria, none of the Islamist parties represented in parliament challenge the regime's hegemony or the absolute power of the presidency or the monarchy. The legal Islamist parties have largely refrained from calling for all Islamist

⁶ The author of the report subscribes to *International Crisis Group's* definition of Islamism: Islamism is Islam in political rather than religious mode: Islamist movement' are those with Islamic ideological references pursuing primarily political objectives, and 'Islamist' and Islamic political' are synonymous. 'Islamic' is a more general expression, usually referring to Islam in religious rather than political mode (*ICG*, 2004, note 1) See also Olivier Roy (2002).

⁷ For a similar analysis see also: Bruce Maddy-Weitzman (2006), Ellen Lust-Okar (2005) and Franck Frégosi & Malika Zeghal (2005).

parties to be legalised, as by doing so, they would create more competition for themselves.

The Moroccan King possesses much more legitimacy than the Maghreb republican presidents. The King's legitimacy derives from religion. He is considered *amir al-mu'minnin* (the Commander of the Faithful), and as such, he commands high respect among the masses and it is not permitted to criticize him. The King and – linked to him – the Makhzen, is the most important and most powerful institution. In spite of the King's central role, dominating all other political and social forces, it was clear by the 1990s that in order to maintain political stability, the King had to be pro-active in approach. That meant that late King Hassan initiated in the last years of his reign, controlled, measured steps towards political liberalisation, while the Makhzen headed by the monarch, continued to maintain overarching control.

In 1997, King Hassan II of Morocco opted for a selective integration of the Islamists, not least in response to the violence in Algeria. The rationale behind this move was to force a split in the Islamist movement and to 'pacify' the legalised forms of Islamism. To achieve legal status, the Islamist parties had to recognise the dual constitutional role of the monarch as both religious leader and policy maker. Two parties became registered – *Hizbo Alaadalati Wa Antanmia*, (PJD in its French acronym *Parti de la Justice et du Développement*), the third largest party in Parliament since 2002, and the *Al-Badil Al-Hadari* (*Civilizational Alternative*).

The *Civilizational Alternative* party is a very small elitist party that claims political pluralism and social justice based on Muslim values. It is willing to make alliances with all parties – even secular ones – that endorse democracy.

The PJD – the third largest party – is pro-monarchist and does not endorse the revolutionary rhetoric of social change aimed at creating an Islamist state. On the contrary, it holds that state and society are not to be Islamised as Morocco is already a Muslim country. It nevertheless insists on the principle of defending Moroccan society's Islamist identity through legislative and institutional means, particularly when that identity is perceived as threatened.

The Islamist *Al-Adl Wahl-Ihsan* movement (*Justice and Charity*, or JC) – a very influential movement – is officially banned and closely watched over by the regime, because it calls into question the Moroccan kingdom's political foundations. It affirms the necessity of adopting a republican form of government. The movement

does not hesitate to openly to criticise the King, calling for the construction of an Islamist republic that will respect democratic values and the rights of man. The *JC* is in permanent conflict with the authorities and has, on several occasions, been subjected to repression. It condemns political assassination and armed violence.

The Algerian regime has since 1999, followed the same line as the Moroccan monarchy. In an attempt to split the Islamist spectrum, to politically marginalise the *FIS* – which is still banned – and boost the regime’s tarnished legitimacy, the authorities have permitted three Islamist parties – *al Nahda* (*Renaissance* party), *Al-Islah* (*Reform* party) and the *Harakat al Moutama’ As-Silm* (*Movement of Society for Peace*) – to take part in elections. They are all represented in the Parliament.

These three parties have adapted their ideology to people’s everyday concerns and they are important forces for social change in the region, having spread to different sectors such as trades unions, womens’ associations, young people and students, and networks of businessmen. The parties are conservative pillars of Algerian society and the regime. They present themselves as defenders of the national Islamist characteristics of the country. They insist that Algeria is already Islamist, toning down their demands for an Islamist state. They see themselves as embarking upon a practical apprenticeship of more day-to-day management.

Tunisia has chosen a different route to that of Morocco and Algeria. When the present President Ben Ali came into power in 1987, he initiated a process of reconciliation between the Islamist parties and the regime. Islamist prisoners were released and Islamist parties were allowed to run for legislative elections in 1989 – without saying openly that they were Islamists. The Islamists received 14% of the votes cast. The success of the Islamist *Al-Nahda* party (*Renaissance* party), and the horrific violence in neighbouring Algeria was the background for the brutal repression of the Islamist parties that started in December 1990. Since then, the repression against any kind of perceived opposition has continued. The *Al-Nahda* is banned, and its main figures are either abroad or in jail. The repression has lasted until the present day Islamists are neither allowed to engage in politics, nor assemble for charitable activities⁸.

In Libya, political parties and all opposition groups have been banned since 1972. Qadhafi founded the state on Arabism, egalitarianism, socialism, anti-imperialism

⁸ See for an excellent analysis of the Islamist parties in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria: Isabelle Werenfels (2007)

and his interpretation of Islam as a national identity marker. He repressed all religious opposition. The attack against the religious class resulted in religious opposition to his regime. In the 1980s, the regime was confronted with a myriad of Islamist movements. They were repressed brutally. This resulted in the 1990s in the emergence of even more radical Islamist groups. The regime's refusal to apply legal guarantees to Islamists did not dissuade these groups from trying to violently confront the regime. However, in spite of the repression, the mosques remain – especially in the eastern part of the country – the most important opposition to the regime's politics (Zoubir, 2005, 55-56).

Brutal repression and/or guided integration of Islamist participation in the political system thus mark the regimes' response to religious opposition. The guided and controlled opening up for integration of Islamist participation in Algerian and Moroccan politics has led to slightly more representative formal political institutions and to a more pluralist political debate in Morocco and Algeria (Asseburg, 2007) but to repression in Libya and Tunisia.

The inclusion of Islamist parties has resulted in a kind of 'social-democratisation' and deradicalisation of the parties. They are loyal to the regime. They claim political and social reforms without putting into question the actual power structure. They are conservative with regard to moral behaviour. They are dependent on the regimes' patronage and the regimes are dependent on them in order to continue the status quo. However, this mutual dependency has alienated those parts of the Maghreb populations that take no part in the power-sharing. The majority becomes depoliticised – as the Moroccan and Algerian elections in 2007 demonstrated. Others might take refuge in either the conservative or the jihadi version of Salafism⁹ (ICG, 2004, Roy, 2002, Kepel, 2000).

In Algeria, support for the conservative version of Salafism is increasing. The ruling elite is sympathetic towards this version of Salafism because they are depoliticised and thereby guarantee the status quo. The Algerian regime has even appointed conservative Salafist professors and imams, in order to control mosques and universities (Amghar, 2007).

⁹ The conservative version of Salafism is foremost occupied with the social behaviour of people, and the trust of the movement is to correct behaviour in order to make it conform to the example of the Prophet and his companions, the four 'rightly-guided' caliphs, the venerable founding fathers (*al-salaf al salih*) of the faith. The aim of the 'revolutionary' violent Salafism is to install the Caliphate which has to be purified of all elements that do not fit into what these Salafists consider as 'authentic' Islam.

Salafist conservatism is no threat to the regime because it abstains from violence – being more interested in the Islamisation of moral behaviour. However, the regime’s backing of conservative Salafism might turn out to become a double-edged sword because of the conservative Salafists anti-Western discourse. The Algerian regime is closely linked to the American and European fight against terrorism and immigration. American and European capital is flowing into Algeria because of Algerian gas and oil resources. Hence, the regime is balancing on a tight rope with regard to support to Salafist anti-western attitudes and its approach to the ‘West’.

In all the four Maghreb countries, there is a rise in the attachment to religious identity. Whether this fact is a security problem depends on how the regimes deal with religion. The regimes have tended to include those Islamists that serve the status quo and repressed those who are critical to the regimes. The ruling elite usually instrumentalises Islam for its own purpose – to support national identity-building and regime survival. This results in a lack of critical discussion inside the religious milieu with regard to the relationship between religion, politics and democracy. It might also result in depolitisation or in violence – or both. All the regimes fear their own Muslims, if they do not adhere to the regimes’ way of constructing the relationship between regime, national identity and religion.

In large parts of the European public opinion there is a general distrust of the religious identity and a threat perception of the ‘Islamisation’ of the Maghreb. In reality, European states are supporting the Maghreb regimes that use conservative Islamism in order to remain in power. There thus exists an ‘unholy’ alliance between the regimes’ threat perception and the European threat perception. Both sides prefer the status quo to open discussion as to why conservative Islamism is gaining ground. Furthermore, terrorism in the Maghreb and exported Maghreb terrorism at the regional and international level, tend to preserve the status quo in the Maghreb and strengthen European support of the authoritarian status quo in the Maghreb.

Islamist terrorism in the Maghreb

Until 1988/89, Europe and the US did not view the Maghreb as a security problem. The Maghreb countries were a problem for the region, rather than for Europe or the US (Holm, 1995). However, the outbreak of violence in Algeria in 1992 and the subsequent refugee flow to Europe became a matter of security concern for Europe, especially for France that was also hit by Algerian terrorism. It was not until President Bush's declaration of war against terrorism that the Maghreb became represented as a region of increasing security concern.

The Maghreb has seen a rise of terrorism following September 11th and in the wake of the American-led war against Iraq. For instance, there have been, terrorist attacks on a synagogue in the Tunisian island of Jerba in 2002, in Casablanca, Morocco, in 2003, and the suicide bombings in Algeria in 2007.

The Casablanca May 2003¹⁰ bombings served as a wakeup call in Morocco regarding the dangers of home-grown radical Islamist terrorism,¹¹ generating harsh measures against Islamist activists¹².

In Algeria, on April 11th 2007, two explosions set off by suicide bombers rocked the capital city for the first time in several years. *Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*

¹⁰ Since 2006 a new 'strategy' amongst the jihadist groups has appeared: the suicide bombings. Until then the most common methods used were guerrilla and bombs wounding and killing the 'others' not the bomber. Since then the Maghreb jihadists have been 'inspired' by especially the Palestinian *Hamas* and by Iraqi suicide bombings (Amghar, 2007).

¹¹ The Moroccan jihad Islamists generally adhere to the Moroccan *Islamist Combattant Group* (GICM) which has been operating since 1998. Its goal is – according to the U.S. Department of State – to establishing an Islamist state in Morocco and to supporting al-Qaeda's jihad against the 'West'. (U.S. Department of state, 2005). A new group known as *Ansar al - Mehdi* is reported to have infiltrated Morocco's military and security services (Blanche, 2007)

¹² In the wake of the terrorist bombings in Casablanca Morocco intensified the fight against illegal immigration. Many African were arrested and conducted to the Moroccan-Algerian frontier. A law on extradition of illegal immigration was passed and the same happened in Algeria and Tunisia. Hence, a link between Islamist jihadism and African illegal immigration was constructed (Perrin, 2005).

(AQIM), formerly the *Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat* (GSPC)¹³ took the responsibility for the 30 killed and 200 wounded. It has continued killings targeting especially police, security forces and politicians just as –the *AIS (Armée Islamique du Salut)*, the armed branch of FIS did in the 1990s. AQIM has declared that it carried out the bombings in defence of Islam and the Islamic nation, and that it will continue its operations, and warned Algerians and other Maghrebs to keep their distance from ‘apostates and tyrants’ (see *Introduction*).

The Islamist terrorist attacks put an end to the relative calm that had prevailed in Algeria over the past two years. The new attacks raise concerns whether Algeria might be facing a situation resembling the early 1990s. However, even if these concerns seem overblown it is no doubt that the terrorism is increasing in Algeria in comparison to the last 2 years. Moreover, it is worrying that the killings are executed by suicide bombers. This was not the case during the violence in the 1990s. It might point to cross-fertilisation of an Al-Qaeda tactic to AQIM, which had never used these methods before they declared their affiliation to Al-Qaeda. According to some sources, many AQIM have joined the insurgency in Iraq, thus gaining a high level of expertise in terrorist tactics, lessons which they have apparently brought back to the Maghreb (World Security Institute, 30 April 2007).

World Security Institute, a liberal American think-tank, writes that AQIM in itself is an increasing threat to Algeria, Maghreb and Europe. Two French researchers – known for their harsh criticism of the Algerian authoritarian military-backed state – argue that the AQIM today fulfils a double role: “since September 2001 its mere existence provides the Algerian state with political capital, able to reap the benefits of aligning itself more closely with the West. In the name of the Global War on Terror’, the state is further legitimised in its role as a regional gendarme, integrated

¹³ The *GSPC (Salafist Group for Call and Combat)*. In French: *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* was founded in September 1998 by Hassan Hattab, former GIA commander in the Kabylia region, in the East of Algeria. Hattab split from GIA (*Groupes islamiques armées*) in protest at the GIA’s targeting of civilians and because of its horrible massacres in 1997 – 1998. Another group left the GIA to found the HDS (*the Guardians of the Salafi Call*). According to *ICG (International Crisis Group)* these two groups remain the most powerful in Algeria. The GSPC had picked up a lot of men after the break-up of the *GIA* and is present above all in Kabylia. According to the U.S. Department of State fact sheet on Foreign Terrorist Organizations the GSPC operates in Algeria, northern Mali, northern Mauritania and northern Niger and Canada, and Western Europe (U.S. Department of State, 2005). *HDS* is present in the western part of Algeria (*ICG*, 2004, 14). In 2006, the GSPC was reported to have joined forces with the Moroccan *Islamist Combatant Group* and Libya’s *Islamist Fighting Group*. In January 2007, it announced its transformation into the *Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*. On April 11th the Group took the responsibility for bombings of the government palace and the seat of the Police ‘East Division’ in Algiers. It has been reported, that Hassan Hattab has surrendered to the security forces to benefit from the Algerian *Charter for Peace and Reconciliation*. Algerian officials have declined to confirm this news (Algeria-Watch, September 2007).

within a US and European geo-political and military strategy in the Sahara and the Mediterranean, aiming to stem the flow of migrants heading north through Algeria, and control territory which is rich in hydrocarbons. At the domestic level, the AQIM's violence also serves to justify the state of emergency in Algeria and the continuation of laws which contravene international human rights convention" (Burgat and Gèze, 2004, 19).

A British expert in North African studies, Jeremy Keenan, argues along the same lines, writing that the terrorism in the Sahara is the product of the Algerian intelligence service in an attempt to gain further US political and military support (Keenan, 2004).

It is a fact that AQIM spreads fear amongst the Algerian population and constitutes a security problem to individuals, as well as being perceived by the regime as a threat. However, it is difficult to know whether the Algerian state is boosting the fear in order to strengthen its own authoritarian regime. What one can say is that memory of the violence in the 1990s makes people and the state very sensitive to a resurgence of terrorism. This fact might produce support for the regime, but on the other hand, the regime might also become de-legitimised because it appears as if it cannot halt the terrorism.

The four regimes' tough anti-terrorist laws might also produce societal anger. Since the passage of a new anti-terrorist law was rushed through the Moroccan parliament in 2003 following the Casablanca incidents, thousands of terrorist suspects have been arrested and sentenced to prison without any trial. In all four states, counter-terrorism laws allow for extended periods of police detention without bringing the person before a judge. The lack of access to a lawyer during the *garde à vue* (in Algeria and Tunisia), or at best, very restricted and delayed access after several days of police detention as in Morocco, heightens the risk of torture or ill-treatment in custody. It is reported by eminent jurists that security forces or intelligence services are involved in arbitrary and sometimes undisclosed detentions in Algeria and Morocco since the Casablanca terrorist attack. (International Commission of Jurists, 2006). The result of the terrorist attacks has thus been a return to some of the authoritarian excesses, including flagrant abuses of human rights, arbitrary arrest, torture, and unfair trials that have been applied not only against terrorists but also for the purpose of curtailing political and civil rights in general (Entelis, 2005). Exactly the same is happening in Algeria. For example, criticism of the President's policies can now be punished by up to ten years imprisonment.

Libya, just like the other Maghreb regimes,¹⁴ has a security interest in co-operating with the US in the fight against international terrorism, because of the internal Islamist opposition to the regime and furthermore, Libya wants to demonstrate that that after having been considered a rogue state for years, it is now working together with the 'West'. For example, it has handed in to the US information about *the Combatant Islamist Group* which is on American terrorist lists that had been operating for years in the East of Libya against Qadhafi.¹⁵

The fight against terrorism strengthens the authoritarian regimes' control of society. It might evolve into pure repressive authoritarianism. If this happens, radicalisation of youngsters in the suburbs of the big cities might expand, especially in the poor suburbs of big cities where especially poor youngsters and unemployed, but well educated young men are recruited to Islamist jihadism.

The regimes are certainly aware that the more violent the actions of jihadist groups are, the more legitimate regime repression against them appears in the eyes of national and international actors. Actors such as the US and the EU have so far largely accepted the interpretation of the Maghreb's authoritarian rulers – namely that state and society are equally threatened by jihadism. This European acceptance of the ruling elite's interpretation might lead to a further undermining of legitimacy. If this happens the elite might further insist on the necessity of 'containing' societal protests resulting in a still further increasing lack of legitimacy. If the regimes silence opposition to discussion on why jihadism exists, the human rights situation in the Maghreb might very well worsen, and we will not witness liberalised authoritarianism, but purely repressive authoritarianism.

¹⁴ In November 2001, President Bouteflika paid a visit to President George W. Bush in order to assure him that Algeria supports the U.S. in the 'war against terrorism and to tell him that 'the world did not take seriously the Islamist terrorism before 9/11 (*El Watan*, November 7, 2001). At the same occasion he handed over to George W. Bush a list of Algerian terrorists living abroad.

¹⁵ The four states have all supported the fight against the Talebans in Afghanistan but none of them have backed the American – led war against Iraq. If this had been the case they would have been met by popular anger.

The 'Frozen' Western Sahara conflict

The domestic level of threat perception remains high in the Maghreb. At the interstate level – especially between Morocco and Algeria – the threat level has also been high since the independence of the four countries.

Because of their colonial history, the four Maghreb regimes watch zealously over national sovereignty. International and regional recognition of each state's territorial rights play a pivotal role in their security concerns. They have all been and still are 'realists' in the sense that balance of power is their central preoccupation. The rivalry – the balance of power – between agricultural Morocco and the oil-gas rich Algeria constitutes the basic structure in the various alliance patterns in the region. The two countries were engaged in a war – the so-called three-week Sand War in 1963, attributed to the French drawing of borders during the colonial period. However, the main regional security problem has been and still is the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara, which began in 1975. This occupation has continued because of the intransigence of the Moroccan claim for integration of Western Sahara into the Moroccan territory and because of the intransigent Algerian support of the independence movement *Polisario* (*Frente popular de liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro*) and its claim for territorial independence. The Western Sahara frozen conflict epitomises the Moroccan–Algerian regional balance of power. It also illustrates the durability of the rivalry between Morocco and Algeria. The internationalisation of the conflict that was 'handed over' to the UN in 1991 has changed nothing: the conflict remains frozen and the rivalry between Morocco and Algeria still continues.

Morocco perceives Western Sahara as an integral part of Moroccan sovereign territory. The late King, Hassan II, turned the issue into a powerful force of national unity in 1975 and a means to control the threat to his power from political parties and the army. His son, King Mohammed VI, has not changed this link between construction of national identity and the Western Sahara (Jensen, 2005)

In Algeria, the Western Sahara question is presented as a matter of principle. Like the Algerians themselves, the Sahrawis (the indigenous people of Sahara) are firstly seen as victims of colonisation, who are entitled to the right of self-determination. Algeria has therefore always insisted that the Western Sahara conflict only has two concerned parties: The *Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic* (SADR) and Morocco.

Furthermore, the Algerian army perceives of the Western Sahara as a territory that assigns an important defence role to the army (Mohsen-Finan, 1997).

The stalemate in Western Sahara followed on from a 16-year war (1975-1991) pitting Western-Supported Morocco against the Algerian backed Sahrawi guerrillas of *Polisario*. The armed conflict ended in 1991, when the Security Council backed an agreement to hold a referendum on independence, but only with the consent of the two parties, most importantly Morocco. The UN MINURSO¹⁶ force began monitoring the ceasefire in 1991.

In 2003, the UN's special envoy, former American Foreign Minister, James Baker presented a proposal *The Peace Plan* as a potential solution. The idea was to grant Western Sahara five years of autonomy as a trial period and then hold a final status referendum. The choices would be autonomy, integration with Morocco, or full independence. To sweeten the deal for Morocco, Baker proposed that non-Sahrawi Moroccan settlers in the Western Sahara could participate in the vote. Morocco rejected the proposal because it included the possibility of independence, whereas *Polisario* accepted it.

Owing to the Algerian-Moroccan dispute over the Western Sahara, the Maghreb attempt at creating the *Arab Maghreb Union* (AMU)¹⁷ has never been able to function (Holm 1995, 2002). Regular AMU summit meetings have been suspended since 1994. In March 2005, some observers thought that the meeting between President Bouteflika and the King, Mohammed VI could be seen as the premise for a rapprochement with regard to the Western Sahara. It was rumoured that the Algerian-Moroccan border was about to be opened as a first symbolic gesture marking the renewal of ties between the two countries. Following this event, Libya, which then held the chairmanship of the *AMU*, announced the date of a summit for heads of state to be held in Tripoli in May 2005. This meeting was postponed however,

¹⁶ MINURSO is the French acronym for *Mission des Nations Unis pour l'organisation d'un Referendum au Sahara*.

¹⁷ In 1989 Algeria and Morocco agreed to disagree about the future of Western Sahara. The same year they launched the AMU (*Arab Maghreb Union*) in the wake of the crumbling of the Berlin Wall and in the perspective of a European monetary and economic union that exacerbated the Maghreb fear of being de-linked from European economy. The changes that took place at the European level did not favour the Maghreb states. A union agreement that could strengthen all the Maghreb states and allow them to face the new challenges was therefore in order (Deeb, 1993, 193). The stated aim of *AMU* was to: reinforce the fraternity ties between the people of the Maghreb, achieve growth and prosperity of the societies and guarantee their rights, contribute to the preservation of a peace founded on justice and equity, formulate common policies in different domains, work towards the facilitation of the free movement of individuals, goods, capital, and services, establish a common market and an economic union as the last step in the process of integration.

because as the former Moroccan information minister told Aljazeera: “It is regrettable that Algeria is still persisting with its approach to the question of Western Sahara. It tends in the opposite direction of Moroccan interests” (*Arab World*, May 23, 2005).

However, in spring 2007 there appeared to be some movement around the ‘frozen’ conflict with a Moroccan proposal presented to a UN Security Council meeting on April 11th. Morocco came up with a proposal for ‘negotiating an autonomy status in the Sahara region that has to be autonomous in the framework of the Kingdom’s sovereignty’ (Moroccan Embassy in Denmark, January 2007). This initiative was launched by Morocco as a ‘third way’ between *Polisario*’s claim for an independent sovereign Western Sahara State, and the Moroccan quest for integration of Western Sahara in Morocco. *Polisario* proposed at the same time a ‘mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara’ (*Polisario*, April 10, 2007).

Polisario did not reject the option of autonomy, but requested that it be listed among several choices, including full independence and full integration, to be submitted by referendum to the people of Western Sahara. It seemed as if both parties made concessions but in reality, they stuck to their usual positions: Integration into Moroccan national territory versus independent Sahrawi state. So, the stalemate continues and the UN peacekeeping force MINURSO is likely to have to continue its mission in Western Sahara.

If the UN decides to withdraw MINURSO from Western Sahara there might be a risk of military clashes between Morocco and the *Polisario*. On the one hand, neither Morocco nor Algeria are interested in an intensified level of threat. They both prefer status quo – the frozen conflict – to open conflict. On the other hand, the fight against regional terrorism and the need for Maghreb cooperation, both economically and against terrorism, pushes for a solution. However, as one scholar writes “it is very difficult to imagine a solution that is left solely to the parties involved given their irreconcilable positions” (Darbouche, 2007). *International Crisis Group* does not exclude a resolution of the conflict if Morocco, *Polisario* and Algeria were left to negotiate the terms for themselves. These terms would be based on a package of reciprocal concessions. They would need to take into consideration the preservation of the identity of the Sahrawi population and the effective representation of its interests, Algerian concerns with the preservation of strategic equilibrium in the region, and for Morocco, the integrity of the national territory and the monarchy’s

legitimacy (*ICG*, June 2007). Other scholars suggest that the EU and the U.S. become more involved in a possible solution (Martinez, 2006). However, neither the U.S. nor the EU are interested in diving too deep into the conflict, both being more preoccupied with upholding good relationships with Algeria and Morocco.

Morocco and Algeria are the main rival players of the Maghreb. The two other actors, Libya and Tunisia constitute a smaller 'couple'. Historically, they have sided with one in order to contain the other. The pattern of enmity and amity has changed over time according to each specific regional situation. Libya has often changed alliances – having either a foot in the Middle East, in Africa or in the Maghreb or in all concomitantly. There has been a rather high level of suspicion towards Libya's 'Rambo' policies, that for example, led Algerian, Moroccan, and Tunisian regimes to distance themselves from Libya's international terrorism. They committed themselves to implementing the UN Security Council resolution imposing a blockade on Libya, and made a contribution to an air ban. This resulted in Libya shunning the AMU and refusing to preside over it for years.

Libya waged war against Chad in 1973 occupying the Chadian Aouzou strip – a contested border. In 1987, the Chadian forces were able to force the Libyans to retreat from the Aouzou. In 1994, the International Court of Justices granted Chad sovereignty over the Aouzou which ended Libyan occupation¹⁸.

Tunisia and Libya have had border disputes and Libya has attempted to destabilise the Tunisian state. Libya has for example supported Tunisian political opponents in the Gafsa¹⁹ in 1980, which resulted in a military clash between Libya and Tunisia in Gafsa in 1983. In 1985, Libya expelled thousands of Tunisian workers, mainly as a result of the downturn in the Libyan economy associated with shrinking oil revenue. In retaliation, Tunisia expelled hundreds of Libyans, including diplomats.

¹⁸ Libya was internationally isolated from 1992 until 2003 because of its terrorist actions abroad (Lockerbie bombing 1988). The Security Council passed in 1992 a resolution demanding the arrest and handover of the responsible for the attacks, the renouncement of terrorism and the abandonment of the development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In 1999 Libya extradited the suspected in the Lockerbie attack and UN suspended sanctions against Libya. In 2000 Libya mediated successfully in the kidnapping of some European citizens in the Philippines. This paved the way for the resumption of diplomatic relations with the EU. After September 11 Qadhafi proved information on terrorist groups (most of them opposed to Qadhafi's regime) to the US in order to demonstrate that Libya was not a rogue state. In 2003 the Security Council lifted officially its sanctions. In 2004, Libya ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and stopped production of weapons of mass destruction. All the American sanctions were then lifted and Libya was excluded from the 'axis of evil'. Libya became 'normalized' (Pargeter, 2006).

¹⁹ Gafsa is a mining town in the southern part of Tunisia.

The existing border disputes between all of the regimes trace their origins back to the process of frontier creation during the colonial period. This is certainly true of the one major conflict that dominates the Maghreb – the Western Sahara conflict, but also true of the resolved Chadian-Libyan conflict of the Aouzou strip²⁰.

All the actors are affected by the frozen conflict of the Western Sahara as it makes economic, social and cultural co-operation very difficult. They engage in exchanging bilateral cooperation in order to circumvent the Western Sahara conflict. They deepen bilateral relations privileging non-regional partners, as exemplified by the free trade agreement signed between Morocco and the US (2003); the strategic partnership between Algeria and Russia (2001); the partnerships concerning illegal immigration between Libya and Italy (1998); the bilateral association agreement between the EU and the Maghreb countries; and the Agadir Agreement (2004) for the establishment of a free trade zone between Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Circumvention of the conflict and strengthening of bilateralism are the only possible regional policies as long as the partners of the conflict only think in zero-sum terms, and as long as the US and the EU 'define' the Maghreb on the basis of their own threat perceptions. The Western Sahara conflict is a security problem for the Maghreb. This is not the case for the EU and the US. However, the American and European fight against terrorism and illegal immigration point to 'securitisation' of the Western Sahara which is still perceived as a dangerous area through which smugglers, terrorists and illegal immigrants pass.

²⁰ The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is to a certain extent considered a part of Maghreb because it had been involved in the Western Sahara conflict. Together with Morocco it occupied Western Sahara in 1976. Mauritania was however humiliated militarily by *Polisario* in 1979 and was forced to give up its claim to the southern part of Western Sahara. Until the international terrorism became a hot security topic, Mauritania did not play any important role in the Maghreb. Since then Mauritania has been drawn closer to the Maghreb because it is said that Islamist terrorists are operating in Mauritania and they may have connections with the Algerian *AQUIM* (*International Crisis Group*, 2006).

The Maghreb, European, and American fight against illegal immigration and terrorism in Sub-Saharan and the Maghreb

Until now, we have defined the Maghreb as a constellation of Algeria and Morocco, (the main actors), Tunisia as a smaller actor and Libya as the unpredictable actor that tries to vie with Morocco and Algeria as an important regional player. These four actors are supplemented on the policy stage with Sub-Saharan actors. However, the Sub-Saharan states do not form a constituent part of the Maghreb, and they are not involved in the Maghreb inter-state rivalries. It is the threat perceptions of the Maghreb regimes and of the US/EU (see below) that have drawn the Sub-Saharan states closer to the Maghreb. Thus, states such as Mali, Niger, and Senegal might object to Maghreb security policies, whenever there is a threat either to societal security or to regime security.

Security dynamics have certainly changed since 9/11. Perceived threat of terrorism and illegal immigration has pushed the Maghreb security concerns further South. Sub-Saharan immigrants are considered a threat to Maghreb societal security and frequently both Morocco and Algeria construct a link between terrorism and illegal immigration from Sub-Saharan.

The Sub-Saharan immigration to the Maghreb has provoked racism in the larger Maghreb towns. In Libya, for example, violent racist riots broke out in 2000. Hundred of people were killed. Subsequently, Libya expelled many Sub-Saharan immigrants (Haddad, 2005, 86). In Morocco, racism against the Sub-Saharan is increasing (Aliou, 2005, 56) and the same applies to Algeria. Police raids in the poor urban suburbs of the big cities where the illegal immigrants are living are becoming more frequent. Most often, these illegal immigrants are sent to huge immigration camps at the confines of the Sahara desert, where there is a lack of water and food. The southern part of the four Maghreb countries thus produces a new kind of space: a space of relegation. These stretch from the Nigerian to the Libyan border, the Algerian to the Malian border and the Moroccan to the Mauritanian border (Bensaad, 2005, 26 - 27).

The Maghreb 'dehumanisation' of the illegal immigrants is due both to the usual Maghreb way of dealing with 'unwanted' persons and to the EU's illegal immigration policies. Illegal immigration from the South is top priority on the EU security

agenda²¹ and the EU puts pressure upon the Maghreb states to readmit illegal Sub-Saharan immigrants who have made it to Europe, back to their countries of origin via the Maghreb. Thus the EU's claim of re-admittance of illegal immigrants puts the societal and economic burden on the Maghreb states that contribute to the 'de-humanisation' of the illegal immigrants.

The EU tries to externalise the European border by 'ordering' the Maghreb states to closely control their own maritime borders. The EU considers the Maghreb as an advanced post in its remote control of illegal immigration. This has in fact resulted in 'migration conditionality' (Bensaad, 2005, 23) i.e. if the Maghreb regimes does not comply with the EU's conditions with regard to illegal immigration, they will have difficulties in obtaining loans and credits. Therefore, the Maghreb regimes have entered into bilateral agreements on illegal immigration with European member states. Morocco entered an agreement on readmission with the United Kingdom in 2003 and with Spain in 2003. Libya has signed the same kinds of agreements with Italy and Malta and has permitted Italian military personal to watch over illegal immigrants on Libyan soil. Those immigrants whose nationality is not known are kept in detention camps in Libya. At the EU's request, Morocco has claimed visas for Congolese, Senegalese, Malians, Nigerians, natives from the Ivory Coast and from Guinea. Tunisia has signed re-entry agreements with Italy and the same applied to Algeria in 2003.

Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco have only reluctantly entered agreements whereas Libya has been keener on signing and has even established official reception areas which the other three states officially have refused. The Libyan zeal is due to its wish to be seen in the best possible light with regard to its relationship with the EU, especially after its prolonged status as a rogue state. However, this eagerness is certainly also due to Libya's own harsh immigration policies. Whenever there is social unrest or Islamist attacks, immigrants are expelled, and during the latest in 2004 thousands of Nigerians, Chadians, Malians, Senegalese, and Bourkinabians were expelled.

The illegal immigration however, has not resulted in a joint Maghreb fight. Due to mutual suspicion, Algeria did even not show up to a meeting on illegal immigration in Morocco 2006 – between 50 European, Maghreb and African states. The reason was apparently, that Algeria did not want to be present in Morocco because of the

²¹ The report does not deal in detail with the European immigration politics because the report mainly focuses on the interrelationship between internal Maghreb and European/American security concerns

Western Sahara conflict (*International Herald Tribune*, July 11, 2006). In this way, the high level of threat perceptions in the Maghreb works in favour of continuing bilateral and multilateral agreements with the EU and its member states, and not for regional cooperation.

The Maghreb regimes in turn also use their role as advanced posts in the fight against illegal immigration to negotiate and to put pressure on the EU. For example, Libya has used this tool to enter the European arena and Morocco benefits from European loans, credits and aid.

The illegal Sub-Saharan immigration has had three important effects: the borders have been pushed farther down into black Africa; it has strengthened the regimes' fear of social unrest and exacerbated the violation of human rights; and the cooperation on illegal immigration (and also terrorism) has drawn the Maghreb and the EU closer together than before.

The Maghreb has to a certain degree, been a part of Europe ever since the 18th century due to its status as a colonised region. This was the case until the mid-1950s, and 1962 in the case of Algeria. The Maghreb as an area of specific European interest was inscribed into the Treaty of Rome (1957) entirely because of French colonial interests in the Maghreb. At the time of the signature, Algeria was still a French colony. Algeria was thus perceived as an indivisible part of the EC. Bilateral agreements were therefore made with the Maghreb states to grant continued colonial preferences, with France as the major Market (Joffé, 1999, 246). Since 1990, the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, and Algeria sliding into the horrible violence, the EU was conscious of the need to design an overall Mediterranean Policy. It was to be based upon free-trade, political dialogue about the definition of security threats and dialogue about the means to use in order to prevent the Maghreb (and the rest of the Southern Mediterranean) sliding into chaos.

EU policy has changed over time, from being almost uniquely about economic politics from 1957 up to 1990, it became politicised and since the adoption of the European-Mediterranean Partnership – the so-called Barcelona Process (1995), the EU policy has become a mixture of politicisation and securitisation, (see note 6) especially towards the Maghreb. The securitisation moves were due to the fear of immigration, fundamentalist Islamist spill-over to Europe, (especially to French Muslim communities), and fear of Islamist terrorism. However, it was not until September 11th 2001 that the concerns with terrorism and illegal immigration

resulted in common European fear of the Maghreb. Until then, it had mostly been the Southern European countries that had pressed changes, and applied pressure to take the perceived threats from the Maghreb more seriously.

The combination of the European fear of radicalisation of Muslim communities in Europe and the increasing Islamisation of Maghreb societies, has made the EU an important outside power in the fight against illegal immigration and terrorism. However, the EU is not the only outside power that is penetrating the Maghreb and the Sahara and seen as being an agent in the further blurring the southern borders of the Maghreb. The US has penetrated²² the Maghreb and the Sahara with the goal of tracing terrorists in the Sahara and the Sahel²³. The American intervention and cooperation with the Maghreb states results in further blurring of the southern borders and is a move towards a kind of militarisation of the 'waste and vast land'.

Until 2001, the Maghreb had only a peripheral status in American eyes. After September 11th, security and political cooperation with Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria were strengthened. Morocco, the longstanding ally of the US, was granted the status of preferential non-NATO ally in 2004, and Algeria is now regarded as a key regional player (Ammour, 2006, 5). Algeria is central to the American 'war on terrorism'. The fact that the Algerian regime has been fighting against Islamist jihadists since the early 1990s, has drawn the US closer to Algeria in the common fight against terrorism.

The US considers the Maghreb as a foothold for penetrating further South, where – according to the US – yet another area of expansion of terrorism is developing (Zoubir, 2006). The US perceives the Sahel as a vulnerable area because of its low demographic density and its permeable borders. American decision-makers state that terrorist groups, local as well as international, devote themselves to all kinds of smuggling, including weapons, and recruit new members among the local population (Rémy, 2004). The Sahel is regarded by the US as 'the new front in the global war against terrorism,' and thus the objective of the US is 'to facilitate cooperation among governments in the region and strengthen their capacity to combat terrorist

²² The verb 'penetrate' refers to the Buzan's and Wæver's vocabulary with regard to the regional security complex (RSC) theory. They write that penetration occurs when outside powers make security alignments within a RSC (Buzan, Wæver, 2003, 46). The U.S. is an outside power that make security alignment with regional states (op., cit.46).

²³ The word Sahel comes from the Arabic *Sabil*, meaning shore or coast, and refers to the lands on the edge of the Sahara desert

organisations' such as the GSPC (Pope, 2005). It was with this perspective in mind, that at the end of 2002, the Pan Sahel Initiative (*PSI*) was launched, consisting of Chad, Niger, Mauritania, and Mali.

In March 2004, General Charles Warld, the then deputy commander of the US *European Command* (EUCOM), claimed that members of Al-Qaeda were trying to establish themselves "in the northern part of Africa, in the Sahel and the Maghreb. They are looking for sanctuary as they did in Afghanistan when the Taliban were in power. They need a stable place in which to equip themselves, organise and recruit new members" (*Le quotidien d'Oran*, 6 March 2004).

In 2003/4, American Special Forces of the EUCOM were detached to train the security forces of Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger²⁴. A follow-up under the name of *Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative* (TSCTI), that in effect replaced *PSI* was launched, with the objective of reinforcing the capacities to fight terrorism in the area. It comprises the four former Sahelian states as well as Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal, and Nigeria.

TSCTI officially started in June 2005 with Exercise Flintlock 2005 (Zoubir, 2006)²⁵. Two days before the exercise started, GSPC attacked an army outpost in Mauritania near to the Algerian and Malian borders. There were claims that between 100 and 150 GSPC fighters were involved (Ulp, 2005). It has not been proved whether it is correct that GSPC was able to launch such an attack, but it was represented as proof of the necessity for joint counter-terrorism operations.

The researchers Toby Archer and Tihomir Popovic, and to some extent, *International Crisis Group*, contest that EUCOM has consistently overplayed the threat of Al-Qaeda-related terrorism in the Sahara to justify its importance to the 'global war on terrorism' (Archer and Popovic, 2007, *ICG*, 2005)²⁶. From an objective point of

²⁴ The landmark incident for common counter-terror measures was the hostage-taking of 32 European tourists in the Algerian Sahara in February-March 2003 by some 60 members of GSPC. However, Algerian newspapers doubt whether *GSPC* was involved in the kidnapping because the group issued no communiqué claiming responsibility and made no financial or political demands. (Mellah, Rivoire, 2005). However, Algerian and American intelligence services claimed that the leader of the group, *El Para*, was al-Qaeda's representative in the Sahel, charged with establishing al-Qaeda's bases throughout the Sahara and turning the Tibesti mountains of Chad into Sahara's Tora-Bora. (Keenan, 2004, 273).

²⁵ In September 2007 the second operation 'Flintlock' was held in the Malian capital city Bamako.

²⁶ The Algerian Foreign Minister, M. Mourad Medelci stated in October 2007 that 'Algerian sovereignty is indisputable and American military bases on the Algerian territories are not on the agenda' (El Khabar, 2007).

view it is difficult to assess whether the US overstate the threat. However, this is not the prime purpose of this report. The importance lies in the American threat perception of the Sahel. The US argues that the Sahel has to be considered a threatening area and that the Maghreb and the US have common interests in combating terrorists in that area – maybe even with military means. One might of course state that this American way of dealing with terrorism is far from unusual. It is rather, the American global standard. What is unusual is that the US has penetrated an area that until some years ago was considered to be an area of fragile states that were threats to their own societies but not to the US. Now, however it is considered a danger to stability and peace in the whole of Africa and in the various Arab countries, and therefore to the US as a global power.

As long as the US, Maghreb, and Sub-Saharan common operations against terrorists remain ‘invisible’ to the Maghreb populations, the Maghreb regimes will probably continue to support the US penetration into the Sub-Sahara and the Maghreb. However, if the regimes allow American military bases in the big Maghreb cities, they will be met by public opposition, and therefore the regimes have tended to prevent such expansion²⁷. This happened when the U.S. in the winter of 2007, tried to place the *African Command* (AFRICOM) base either in Libya, Algeria or Morocco. All the regimes – with the exception of Morocco – immediately turned down the American request, declaring that they were firmly against any of its neighbours doing so either (*Algeria-Watch*, 29. April 2007). This statement was a hint to Morocco, that in the beginning answered rather positively to the American demand. However, at the end of June 2007 the Moroccan Foreign Minister refused the presence of an American base on its soil, possibly putting the concerns of its neighbours and population above those of its ally.

The stern response from the three regimes is “a reflection of public opposition to US policy in the Middle East and a resentment with their own governments’ dealings with the US in the war against terror at the expense of the rule of law” (*Washington Post*, June 24, 2007). The Maghreb involvement in the international war against terrorism has indeed increased anti-Americanism feelings amongst the Maghreb population.

²⁷ Never since the independence, the Maghreb regimes have been able to control the southern borders that confine Sahara. The area is characterized by the passage of Berber nomads (the Tuaregs), of smugglers and immigrants.

The scholar, James Keenan argues that there is a growing anti-Americanism and an anti-national government sentiment harboured by people in the region – especially amongst the Tuareg, who feel that they have been provoked not only in Algeria, but also in Mali, Niger, and the Maghreb ((Keenan, 2004, 490)²⁸.

The Maghreb regimes are very well aware of the populations' anti-Americanism. They thus balance on a tight rope between support of the US 'war against terrorism' and the populations' resentment at US 'neo-imperialism' in the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan. The fear of terrorism and the subsequent threat to regime survival makes the regimes work together with the US. This is, in part, balanced out by the societal fear of loss of Arab and Muslim identity due to the US penetration into the Maghreb, which in turn, makes the regimes distance themselves from overt American intervention and involvement.

The Maghreb regimes and the majority of the societies condemned the attacks on World Trade Center, September 11th, however the Moroccan public opinion like others in the region, blame the US because of its policy in the Middle East, and in particular, its unrestrained support for Israel against the Palestinians. The invasion of Iraq in March 2003 did nothing but accentuate anti-Americanism in the region and the regimes condemned the action.

The 'war against terrorism' and Sub-Saharan illegal immigration have profoundly affected the relationship between both the US and the EU and the Maghreb. It has expanded the borders of the Maghreb and further eroded the notion of sovereignty in the southern part of the Maghreb, into the Sub-Saharan. This change has had one serious side-effect both in the Maghreb and in the Sub-Saharan: increasing anti-Americanism. Added to this, the Maghreb is politically squeezed between the two outside powers: the US and the EU. The EU securitises illegal immigration and the US securitises the Sahara/Sahel. In the midst of the 'troubled sand and water' the Maghreb regimes securitise their own survival as their societies are clamouring for democracy and welfare.

28 TSCTI may be bringing benefits to immediate communities in which they are taking place. It can have positive effects in terms of training and support for local forces in controlling their own territory and cooperating with neighbouring militaries.

Conclusion: from ‘security is democracy’ to ‘security is status quo’

“... a key element of political dialogue with other countries (with the Southern Mediterranean) and those countries whose cooperation is deemed insufficient to tackle terrorism would risk a loss of aid and trade” (European Council June 2004).

“Our neighbours are not just citizens of the “third countries”. They are our close partners and friends. We share practical interests, ideals, and aspirations and we face common challenges to our security ...we want to cooperate more closely in promoting our common foreign policy priorities ... in addressing our common security threats, like the fight against terrorism” (the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, 22 April 2005).

“The European Neighbourhood Policy must not be an instrument of settling for the status quo but of committing the European Union to support the aspirations of the peoples of our neighbouring countries to full political freedom, with democracy and justice” (European Parliament 2005).

The representation of the EU as a ‘norm exporter’ (Pace, 2007) is the ordering principle of the EU-discourse on the relation between the EU and the Maghreb. Export of political and economic liberalism is represented as security policy – as export of common security. The EU’s *European Neighbourhood Policy* (ENP) – launched in 2003 – expresses the same wish of export of political and economic liberalism. The ENP is designed to offer the neighbours the chance to participate in various EU activities and the privileged relationship should build on mutual commitment to common values principally within the fields of the rule of laws, good governance, their respect for human rights, the principle of market economy and sustainable development (Communication from the Commission 2004). However, at the same time it is declared that “such reforms (political and economic reforms) cannot be imposed from outside. They must be generated from within” (12 May 2004). The EU fears thus for being considered a neo-colonial power that imposes its own rules just as France, Italy, and Spain did during the colonial period. In fact, the Maghreb regimes – especially Algeria – do refer to the period of colonialism nearly each time the EU tries to further political reforms in the Maghreb.

The fear of the return of a form of colonial past is one important reason why the EU tends to shy away from export of democracy. Another very important reason is that the EU fears destabilization of the Maghreb regimes that might open up for further terrorism and immigration. The EU's fear of the return of the past and the fear of future collapse of the Maghreb result in a political conception that dictates that status quo *is* security. This de facto policy goes against the EU-conception of democracy *is* security (Malmvig, 2006). The European Parliament is highly aware of this discrepancy between democracy as security and status quo as security. However, as long as illegal immigration and terrorism are the top priority on the EU security agenda, it will be extremely difficult for the European Parliament to change the policy of the European Council and that of the Council of Ministers.

The EU status quo policy towards the Maghreb might lead to further strengthening of the Maghreb regimes and any increased repression might lead to further illegal immigration and terrorism. If this happens, the EU's self-perception as an exporter of democracy would be seriously put into question, both in the eyes of the Maghreb people and amongst those in Europe.

It is therefore of utmost importance that the EU de-securitises the question of illegal immigration. The EU cannot and will not impose democracy on former colonial states. However the result of this 'turning the back to democratisation' results in a failure to adequately question the Maghreb regimes' proclivity to use repression in order to pacify the populus.

If the US and the EU did not securitise illegal immigration and terrorism, it would maybe create more space for guided and controlled pluralism. Furthermore, if the US and the EU stick to their representation of themselves as exporters of democracy and human right there might be a possibility for a discussion of how the Maghreb regimes could start a process of de-securitisation of the relationship between society and regime. If this were to occur a space for de-securitization of the 'frozen' Western Sahara conflict is a real possibility.

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