

# North Africa: Power, Politics & Promise

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*Ray Bush & Jeremy Keenan*

It is six years since this journal dedicated an issue to power and politics in North Africa. Number 82 in 1999 explored the significance of North Africa which is often seen to be different from the rest of the continent and also why the region is integral to it. It looked at themes of economic reform, stalled political liberalisation and failed transition to independence for Western Sahara. Many of the contemporary themes most pressing for peoples in North Africa remain the same. There have also been several alarming new developments notably around issues of labour, security and resources. In short, imperialist aggression and militarisation that we have witnessed in Iraq is also evident in its accelerated build-up in North Africa stretching from Western Sahara east to Djibouti.

The issues of similarity that bedevil the opportunity for democratic economic development in North Africa relate to persistent, combined and uneven incorporation of the region into global capitalism and the pull of globalisation. Here there is one issue that relates both to the continuity of past issues in the region and the contemporary new pressures that confront it. Central to the processes of (dis)incorporation, the power of capital and the dominance of international and local capitalist elites to shape national and regional development is the ability to access labour power, control its spatial and employment location and the ability for it to be socially reproduced with minimal cost and maximum security for employers. The role of migration from the region into Europe and also between countries in the region (and from sub-Saharan Africa), as relative economic power determines access to new sources of value, persists as a crucial motor for development. Control of labour as the sole source of value and political opposition to the power of the State continues to shape economic policy in the region. It received new impetus, however, after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. Europe's, and more specifically the US's security agenda, seeks to keep African labour in the continent for fear that it will contaminate order in Europe.

Thus the emphasis by European ministers who speak on immigration is of the need to reduce 'illegal' entry, to regularise the immigration of *skilled* workers and to reduce the push factors encouraging migration to Europe by increasing aid to Africa. No mention of the loss of skills in Africa, of the centrality of remittances for families depending upon such flows and no mention of the contradiction between the free flow of goods, capital and services in a supposedly global world economy and the frontiers and barriers of entry to labour in Fortress Europe. European ministers use a language of rights to defend their national constituents and promise asylum for the persecuted. Yet they repeatedly fall short in delivering responsibility of governments to protect and ensure decent living conditions for those escaping persecution. European states fail repeatedly to also ensure security and safety for employed foreign workers and those who work in the twilight world

of gang-masters and employment pimps. Many of these issues are referred to by the far-reaching essay by Baldwin-Edwards and they are pursued by Keenan.

It remains the case that State policy in the region and the region's political economy cannot be assessed without looking at the ongoing social crisis promoted by structural adjustment. Tadros provides an evocative and illuminating case study of a densely populated area of Cairo where access to health and education provision has been significantly and adversely affected by the economic reform agenda since 1991. She explores the extent of social upheaval and household distress experienced by a large community that struggles to access efficient and caring health and education services. The essay conjures a dramatic feel for life that is important to capture at a time when most discussion of the impact of reforms seems ironically not to include references to the people who are suffering shortfalls in service provision.

The essay by Tadros is also important for another reason; namely, that most debate among orthodox commentators on North Africa, and especially the broader Middle East North African (MENA) region, talk favourably about the region's ability to keep widespread poverty at bay and promote policy that retains relatively equal income distribution. Poverty in the region is less acute than it is in sub-Saharan Africa. And the pace of immiseration is slower than in other regions of the world, partly because of safety nets from the State, now challenged by the consequences of economic reform. A mushrooming of Islamic welfare organisations has also protected the most poor from worsening health and a lack of education provision, thereby subsidising inefficient and fragmented State provision. Work much cited by the influential *Arab Human Development Report* stresses MENA's comparatively low incidence of poverty for a developing region, defined as \$1 or \$2 a day. These measures indicate an increase in poverty in the MENA region from 22 per cent living on \$2 and 1.8 per cent on \$1 per day in 1996 (Adams and Page, 2001:24) to 29.9 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively in 1998. The UNDP Report explains relatively low levels of poverty in the region as being the result of a history of egalitarian distribution practices (UNDP, 2002:90) and the ability of the poor during hard times to draw on income and assets from the relatively prosperous period 1970-1985. Yet, the situation is worsening.

The region may also have some of the world's most equal income distribution, the result of high shares of income accruing to the bottom quintile of income distribution, namely 7.2 per cent, the same proportion that accrues to this group in the OECD. Nevertheless, even defenders of economic reform recognise that relieving the vulnerability of the poor is a Herculean task. Egypt, for example, needs to create 900,000 jobs a year just to employ new entrants into the job market, and this is without coping with existing underemployed and unemployed in a population of 68.5 million. And globalisation does not offer labour intensive employment opportunities, in Egypt or elsewhere. But there is much wrong with the way in which poverty is assessed in North Africa. Real Purchasing Power Parity for the average citizen fell between 1975-1998 from 21.3 per cent to 13.9 per cent, or one-seventh of that of the average person in an OECD country (UNDP, 2002:89). Uneven development in the region has also seen living standards fall in Morocco, Egypt and Sudan and there have been increases in income inequality particularly between town and countryside. It is especially noticeable that commentators on the region seem to have forgotten 'crucial issues of money and power' (Le Vine, 2002:2), and such has been the ascendancy of neo-conservative

policy-making that there seems to be an amnesia that the growth figures of the 1960s and 1970s, under authoritarian populist regimes, were certainly as high, if not better, than in the contemporary period. Such has been the hegemony of neo-liberal thinking that peasants and workers have become invisible in discussion of the politics and society of the region. To mention these social forces and classes would mean referring to a period of populism and the social contract of the State delivering its responsibilities to the poor that it can no longer meet (Beinin, 2001:147-8).

A further issue that continues from debate in this journal is the failure of political liberalisation. Egyptian political life is in turmoil. Demonstrations supporting the independence of the judiciary and support for two judges who have argued for the autonomy of the judiciary from the executive branch have offered a real challenge to the authority of the Egyptian State. Street demonstrations, mass arrests and running battles between internal security forces and protesters have led to optimistic opposition press headlines like *The Regime Falls* and *Expecting a sudden collapse of the regime*. But *how* the increased frequency of demonstrations has emerged in the region's most populous country, and one that is the most closely allied along with Israel to the US, needs exploring further. There might be optimism in the air about 'regime change' but there is also a feeling that the Mubarak regime et al. will not accept even limited political reform.

In September 1999 we noted the optimism of Hosni Mubarak's third unchallenged Presidential campaign. He promised reform and called for greater political participation to accompany economic liberalisation, but the old guard, literally the aging male monopoly's grip on power, continued. On the eve of his fifth term election in 2005, it is unsurprising that Mubarak again promised reform. But on this occasion there were nine rival candidates, although only two, Ayman Nour of the *Ghad* and Noaman Gomaa of the *Wafd*, were considered serious contenders. A multi-candidate presidential election resulted from US pressure, but at the same time, Washington was appalled at the arrest and shameful treatment of Nour. He lost his appeal in May 2006 and was sentenced to five years in prison for what most believe are trumped up fraud charges. A local Cairo-based grassroots movement for constitutional change also added to reform pressure. Continuing in power, the ruling National Democratic Party begun during the end of 2005 to try and reconstitute itself as a reforming organisation. The President's son, Gamal, has taken charge of policy and forges ever closer links with the US (including a secret visit to Washington in May 2006) although as yet he still needs the unconditional support of the military. He continues to deny that he will inherit his father's position, but no one believes him or his father's protest when he states, in reference to Assaad's succession, that 'Egypt is not Syria'.

It is without doubt a major source of encouragement for democrats that pressure on the NDP has continued from within Egypt by a social movement, *Kifaya* (Enough), acting as an umbrella for a range of disaffected intellectuals, youths and workers. For the first time people could recall, some anti-government protests and hitherto unheard of anti-Mubarak pronouncements, led by *Kifaya's* demonstrators, took place unimpeded, for a short time, by the zealous security forces. Many demonstrations were broken up with outrageous acts of State violence resulting in the intimidation and imprisonment of some of the organisers, including at one demonstration, aggressive attacks and assaults on female protestors.

Voting irregularities led human rights groups to ridicule the fairness of the autumn 2005 Presidential election. Voter turnout from Egypt's 32 million registered voters was less than 10 per cent, and the claims that Mubarak would deliver his campaign promise was viewed by many as another illustration of government smoke and mirrors. Mubarak promised five constitutional reforms: reducing presidential power in favour of boosting the power of the cabinet and parliament; supporting the rights of citizens and public freedoms; reinforcing party-based political life; empowering women, and upgrading the performance of local municipalities. Yet there was no mention of the continuing emergency law, the use of military courts, summary and systematic arrest and torture and the fate of the country's 17,000 political prisoners. As Amr El-Chobaki at Egypt's Al Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies put it:

*The endgame, during a fifth mandate, will see the regime seeking to hold on to power without any increase in accountability (Al Ahram).*

If the role of courageous members of a better organised and bigger social movement provided Egypt's regime of ageing technocrats with a wake up call for relaxing Egypt's political straightjacket, an equally disturbing issue for the ruling NDP was the success of the Muslim Brotherhood in the November parliamentary elections. Before the voting, during which polling days resembled war zones of conflict between the security forces and eligible voters, the NDP had 388 seats from a 454 seat legislature. After the voting, the NDP had 311 seats and managed also to claim many so-called independent candidates who, it seems, did not require much encouragement to affiliate to the ruling party. Although banned, the Muslim Brotherhood stood at the polls and increased its membership of the *Majlis* from 17 in the 2000-2005 Parliament to 88 in the 2005-2010 Parliament.

The fall in the size of the NDP majority, which remained overwhelming, might mean that ministers, including the Prime Minister, become subject to a humiliating vote of 'no confidence'. And while the increase in the size of the Muslim Brotherhood vote does not automatically mean that Egypt's voters have become religiously devout, it does show a loss of confidence in the established secular parties: *Tag'ammu*, Nasserists, and the *Waft*. A consequence of the growth in support for the Muslim Brotherhood was that it sent the NDP into a frenzy of declared reform, concern for Egypt's downtrodden and the need for growth, security and development. But the reality midway through 2006 is that the Egyptian State's strong-arm response to opposition has re-emerged, both against liberal street demonstrators and members of the Muslim Brotherhood who continue to be routinely picked up from their homes and from the street. The US will support Mubarak's ruthless repression of opposition as long as the prospect of democracy in Egypt implies the election to office of Washington's enemies. The US has already experienced such an outcome in Palestine, along with its failure in Iraq, and will thus resist pressuring Cairo for further political liberalisation.

The way regimes maintain power and authority, and how they withstand opposition, is developed in this issue by Beatrice Hibou. Using Tunisia as a case study, Hibou provides a fiercely analytical and exciting characterisation of the way power is exercised in Tunisia. Specifically, she traces the way power is practiced in social, cultural and economic behaviour, how domination is evidenced in everyday economic practices and political discourse and how Tunisian government policy embodies and promotes the power of the State through the exercise of public policy. She explicitly rejects what she calls functionalist models of power that link

economic reforms and political systems and she rejects the notion that power can universally be promoted by international agencies. And she rejects too, a simplistic idea that President Ben Ali and his cronies, or 'their' institutions, are independent of economic and social mechanisms. Instead, through her detailed case study of the privatisation of the Tunisian State, she argues that power is exercised 'through everyday practice of social and cultural disciplining'.

### **Security, Resources & the US War on Terror**

A new dimension to the political economy of North Africa is the way in which it has featured in various US strategies associated with its 'War on Terror'. A related but more long-standing issue is how regime stability can ensure sustained resource flows to North America and Europe. Keenan explores these two themes. He looks in detail at what he calls the launch of a 'second front' across the Sahara and Sahel in America's global 'War on Terror' and the almost frenetic exploration for and exploitation of oil, gas and other mineral resources such as uranium, gold and, on a scale which is difficult to comprehend, water. Not a single country in North Africa and the Sahel has been spared the searching probes of both Western and Asian oil, gas and mining companies over the last 2-3 years. Even Russia, which has more than enough gas for its domestic needs, seems to be getting in on the act, perhaps outflanking Europe's attempt to lessen dependency on Russian gas supplies.

Much has changed in the region since the end of the period 1999-2002. The end of the millennium witnessed a marked improvement in North Africa's overall security situation. In the 1990s the bulk of North Africa and the northern Sahel had been effectively isolated from the outside world as a result of a series of violent domestic conflicts. These were most notably Algeria's 'civil war' between Islamic militants (the *Groupe(s) Islamique(s) Armé(s)* (GIA) and since 1998, the *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSPC)) and the country's security forces. The period had also been characterised by rebellions by Tuareg and other ethnic minorities across much of the Sahel. In the case of Libya there had been the imposition of wider international sanctions in the wake of the Lockerbie disaster. By 1999, however, an air of optimism percolated across North Africa. Between 1999 and 2000 the level of violence in Algeria, while not resolved, fell from about 200,000 killings in the 1990s to around 200 per month. Foreign tourism, which had plummeted to zero emerged again and the country's new president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, seemed to be talking seriously about an amnesty and national conciliation. Libya also began to open up; in Mali the 1996 Timbuktu Peace Accord appeared to have taken root, while in Niger, the last Tuareg rebels had thrown their arms onto a 'Fire of Peace' at Agades in 2000. There were even signs of movement in the Western Sahara, the disputed area of which is the subject of a timely essay by Mundy that not only examines the recent evolution of the conflict but also explores new horizons in Western Saharan nationalism. And in Morocco, the new King Mohammed VI who came to the throne after his father's death in July 1999, gave hope of a more modern and transparent form of government.

Yet the relative 'desecuritisation' of the region turned out to be nothing more than a blip. By 2002-03 the region had reverted to the repressive authoritarianism that has for so long characterised the strong *mukhabarat* (security) state systems in the region. Power in North Africa's countries, as John Entelis recently remarked, 'is in the hands of the unaccountable few governing the unrepresented many.'<sup>1</sup> Keenan's

essay shows how the catalyst for this 'reversion to type' was the opportunity created by the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington for the Bush-Cheney administration to launch a North African, 'Saharan-Sahelian' or 'second front', as it has been variously known, in the global 'War on Terror'. But as Keenan argues, America's post-9/11 involvement in North Africa is having the opposite effect to the Bush administration's stated objective of bringing democracy to these countries and the Arab world through its 'Broader Middle East Initiative'.

Washington's military support for the regimes of the region, especially its lead-ally, Algeria, along with the huge surge in oil and gas revenues, has had the counterproductive effect of 'making the *mukhabarat* State more robust and thus less inclined to accede to societal demands for greater democracy'.<sup>2</sup> Far from furthering political stability, security and democracy, Washington's post-9/11 involvement in the region has taken much of North Africa and the Sahel into an extremely dangerous spiral of increased authoritarianism and repression, increased regional instability and insecurity, increased popular resentment of both Washington (anti-Americanism) and their own regimes and the increased threat of militant extremism.

A key feature of this spiral is the link, as in all such rentier states, between oil, repression and the lack of democracy. In North Africa's case, this link has two crucial dimensions. The first is that global energy shortages, combined with the high price of both oil and gas, have galvanised a frenetic surge in the exploration for and exploitation of oil and gas throughout not just North Africa but almost every other country on the Continent. In Libya, for example, over 60 foreign oil and gas companies won concession bids in 2005, while some two dozen major foreign oil and gas companies are now operating in Algeria. Mauritania became an oil producer in 2006, while all the other Sahelian countries (Mali, Niger, Chad and Sudan) now have several foreign oil companies operating in them. The expansion of the hydrocarbons sectors in these countries has not only increased the level of security required in ring fencing and securitising what are effectively 'offshore' zones, but the increased foreign exchange earnings have directly enabled the strengthening of the *mukhabarat* state's systems of security, control and repression.

The second dimension is far more pervasive and significant. Launching the 'War on Terror' across what can be described as the pivotal axis region of Africa – the Sahelian border between Muslim/Arab Africa and predominantly-Christian, sub-Saharan, 'Black' Africa – enabled Washington to create the ideological conditions for its 'securitisation' and 'militarisation' of much of the continent. Through that it has also secured (although not entirely successfully) US strategic national resources and especially oil. The essay by Michael Klare and Daniel Volman provides an analysis of the US's militarisation of Africa and its oil production and its perceptions of the threat posed to US strategic interests by China's growing interests in African oil.

The 'War on Terror' in North Africa (and across the Sahara and Sahel) has been fabricated by the American and Algerian secret intelligence services. Exceptions to this include the specific actions of certain Maghreb-based terrorist groups, the bombing of the synagogue in Tunisia in 2002 and the suicide bombings in Casablanca in 2003. There have also been related actions by Morocco's shadowy Islamic Combatant Group, their likely involvement in the bombings of Madrid's Atocha Station in 2004, and the continuing 'low-level' actions of the GSPC. With these exceptions noted, almost every alleged 'terrorist' incident in the Sahara and

Sahel regions since the launch of this front in the 'War on Terror' in 2002-03 was either a fiction, in that it did not happen, or it was fabricated by the Algerian and/or US intelligence services.

Amongst other things, this raises serious questions about the role of the media and academe in this disinformation and 'Truth'. The 'official' version of 'the truth', as portrayed by the US administration, its allies around the world, and substantiated by some 3,000 media articles and a not-insignificant section of academe that shares the media's increasing dependency on 'cut and paste' research, is that much of the Sahara-Sahel is a dangerous terrorist zone. It (the Sahara) is what senior Washington and US military personnel have described as 'a magnet for terrorists', a 'Swamp of Terror' and a 'terrorist infestation' which, in the words of US Air Force General Charles F. Wald, deputy commander of US-EUCOM, 'we need to drain'.

Another 'truth', is that the 'terrorist' leader in this zone (*El Para*) is not merely an agent of Algeria's secret military intelligence service (the *Direction des Renseignements et de la Sécurité* – DRS), which works in close alliance with US intelligence services, but that he was trained in the 1990s as a Green Beret by the US Special Forces at Fort Bragg in North Carolina. Such is the strange world of 'terrorism' and disinformation.<sup>3</sup>

It is from the perspective of this 'other truth', expressed by many in the region, that the US 'War on Terror' needs to be explored. In all countries in the region, the US presence has led to the increased aggrandizement and confidence of the State's repressive system and its agents. In each country, without exception, there are examples of democratic representations of civil society – some religious, many secular – and legitimate political opposition being branded as 'terrorists'. In Libya, as Alison Pargeter shows us, the regime has been assisted in preventing a Libyan Islamist opposition by western governments, notably the US and the UK, designating the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) as a terrorist organisation and has been rewarded by Washington by being taken off the list of states that 'sponsor terror'. In Mauritania, almost all opposition to President Ould Taya (until his overthrow last year) was branded as part of an Islamist (GSPC) terrorist network. In the rest of the Sahel, marginalised ethnic minorities are once again being singled out, not as 'former rebels', but as 'putative terrorists'. The pattern, through varying levels of subtlety, is being repeated in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco.

Indeed, it appears that little has changed from the 1990s except the use of new electronic surveillance technologies and the insertion of the US into the local alliances of repression. It is through this insertion, that we see how the security establishments in these states have been legitimised, 'upgraded' and locked more closely into the US/Western/globalised repressive security system through an architecture that is distinctly American. Even the key personalities remain largely *in situ*. In Algeria, for example, Generals Mohamed Mediène (Toufik) and Smaïn Lamari, who were responsible for many of the nastier incidents in Algeria's 'Dirty War' of the 1990s, are still running the State's secret intelligence and counterterrorism services.

'Security' extends beyond 'terrorism'. It extends, as Baldwin-Edwards's essay illustrates, to such things as both people and narco-trafficking. Keenan's essay touches on two aspects of this area of 'putative terrorism', as the US's regional security analysts define it. One is that much of this trafficking – people, cigarettes, hard drugs and arms – is run in most of these countries, notably Algeria, by agents of the State. Much of the data, as for example on 'illegal' migrants, on which Europe

bases its analyses and policies, is thus incorrect. For example, the expulsions/repatriations of illegal migrants through Tamanrasset, one of the main gateways across the Sahara, have been systematically over-invoiced by the regional governor (*wali*) as merely one dimension of widespread, systematic embezzlement by State officials. Similarly, much of the billion-dollar-a-year trans-Saharan trafficking businesses (cigarettes, drugs, etc.), are managed by 'bosses' who are closely linked to the top echelons of the security establishment.

## Political Opposition

But trafficking businesses also provide livelihoods to an increasing proportion of the region's population, especially in the Sahara where America's 'War on Terror' has more or less destroyed the labour-intensive tourism industry, at least for the time being, and where the massive development of the oil and gas industry, and other forms of mineral extraction, provide relatively few or largely disliked (e.g. uranium mining) labour opportunities.

The question of labour and resource exploitation in the Saharan regions raises a number of issues which are especially pertinent in explaining certain forms of political organisation and opposition that are developing there.

The major resource exploitation in the region is hydrocarbons (oil and gas). This is a capital-intensive industry requiring comparatively little local labour to supplement a small, predominantly expatriot and highly skilled labour force. Indeed, it is this particular feature of the labour requirements of the oil industry that explains the compatibility between foreign oil production and repressive dictatorships. However, that is not primarily what is at issue in North Africa's oil-based states, as local populations are experienced and familiar with the limited labour requirements of the hydrocarbons industry. Rather, the expansion of such resource development is generating political opposition on three other fronts.

The first of these relates to the question of why oil revenues are not benefiting the regions from which the oil/gas has been extracted. This is not such an issue in Libya where oil revenues are seen to be funding such massive national infrastructural schemes as the Man-Made River and, since 2005, public housing. In Algeria, however, where corruption is so endemic as to be a major impediment to the country's future economic development, the most frequently asked question by the peoples in the oil and gas producing regions is: where have the revenues gone? Beyond the obvious strengthening of the country's military and security forces, there is little sign of expenditure on much-needed economic reforms, social services and infrastructure. While the government boasts colossal foreign exchange reserves, the masses simply ask how much is being siphoned off into the political and military elites' Swiss bank accounts.

Two other fronts of emerging political opposition in relation to resource exploitation concern the increasing awareness of environmental degradation and fraud and the abuse of indigenous rights, especially amongst the Tuareg populations of the Sahara-Sahel. This is problematic in that none of the many international agreements and conventions on indigenous rights is recognised or has been ratified by any of these states. This provides foreign oil, mining and water companies with a certain legal freedom of abuse. But emerging local political organisations are likely in the near future to appeal over the heads of their own

governments to international organisations, such as the UN, and the governments of the foreign companies concerned in an attempt to achieve compliance with both internationally recognised conventions and the relevant laws and standards operative in the countries in which these companies are headquartered.

Local populations are increasingly aware of national struggles, of the struggles of labour in neighbouring states and also the importance of challenging corporations in the parent states. For example, workers in Niger are beginning to organise against the appalling working conditions of the uranium mines, which are controlled effectively by French parastatal interests, while many more of the country's citizens have demonstrated against the huge hikes in water costs that have stemmed from the effective privatisation of the country's entire water supply system. There is also a small but growing awareness and fear that such multinational companies, having seen the success of Libya's Man-Made River, may have designs on acquiring and exporting the hundreds of thousands of cubic kilometres of 'fossilised' water contained in the Sahara's deep aquifers.

Yet the region's greatest potential environmental threat from such resource exploitation is almost certainly in Chad and Cameroon. There site plans indicate that ExxonMobil has failed to insert the internationally required safety valves into the 1,100 km pipeline that takes Chad's oil via Cameroon to the Atlantic coast. While this may have provided a cost-saving of up to \$500 million,<sup>4</sup> the discovery of this fraud, currently veiled by President Déby's revocation of his government's agreement with the World Bank and the latter's dereliction of its oversight duties, is likely to lead to a further escalation of the political instability, increased repression and violence that has already spilled over from Chad into the Darfur region of Sudan. Not only has Darfur become embroiled in the overspill of Chad's growing internal unrest, but whereas the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan led to momentous optimism throughout almost the entire country, such optimism, as Flint and de Waal highlights, has not followed the recent Darfur Peace Agreement, which, although signed in Abuja on 5 May, remains contested.

Towards the other end of the Sahel, the trigger for any widespread political unrest is likely to come from the provocation of the region's marginalised, but geographically extensive, ethnic minorities who have born the brunt of the US presence in the region over the last three years. Keenan describes how the Niger government attempted in 2004 to provoke the Tuareg into taking up arms so that they could be portrayed to the Americans as 'putative terrorists'. He further describes how similar pressures lie behind the recent (23 May) attack by Tuareg on army bases in Northern Mali. In summarising local sentiment, he warns how the intervention of external forces (US, Algerian or Libyan) could just spark a Sahara-wide conflagration.

While US rhetoric may claim that the security situation across most of North Africa and the Sahel has improved since the 1990s, it has, in fact, not merely reverted to type, but lain bare all the potential and likelihood of serious regional unrest.

## Endnotes

1. John P. Entelis, 'The Democratic Imperative vs. the Authoritarian Impulse: The Maghreb State between Transition and Terrorism', Note 2 in *Strategic Insights*, Vol. IV, Issue 6 (June 2005), available online at: <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/Jun/entelisJun05.asp>.
2. Ibid.
3. This 'other truth' is based on six years continuous 'ground research' into North African, Saharan and Sahelian security; see, Jeremy Keenan, *Alice in the Sahara: Moving Mirrors and the USA's War on Terror in the Sahara*, Forthcoming, Pluto Press 2007.
4. Jeremy Keenan, 'Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline: World Bank & ExxonMobil in Last Chance Saloon', *ROAPE*, Vol. 32, No. 104/5, June-September 2005, pp. 395-405.

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# Domination & Control in Tunisia: Economic Levers for the Exercise of Authoritarian Power

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**This article analyses the exercise of power in Tunisia. It does so by offering an explanation that differs from standard studies of authoritarianism, which generally focus on classifications, definitions, and terminological questions, and view power as something that can be possessed and thereby used. In contrast, the analysis here argues from two traditions within historical sociology; Weber's political economy and Foucault's analysis of the exercise of power, in order to demonstrate that techniques of domination are embedded in the most everyday economic mechanisms such as in the tax system, solidarity practices and the industrial *mise à niveau*. These practices serve both to advance the 'economic miracle' and simultaneously function as techniques of coercion and repression. An analysis of 'privatisation of the state' is then used to illustrate one mode of government and its attendant forms of domination.**

## **Contrôle et domination en Tunisie: les modalités économiques de l'exercice d'un pouvoir autoritaire**

*A partir d'une critique des analyses dominantes de la relation entre «régime autoritaire» et «miracle économique» en Tunisie, cet article entend proposer une lecture originale des relations de pouvoir et des modes de gouvernement en faisant émerger les mécanismes d'exercice du pouvoir et les bases socio-économiques sur lesquelles il repose. A la croisée de deux traditions intellectuelles de la sociologie historique de l'Etat – l'économie politique weberienne et l'analyse foucauldienne de l'exercice du pouvoir et de la domination – Béatrice Hibou suggère, d'une part, que les rouages économiques fondent aussi les relations de pouvoir qui autorisent la domination, et parfois la répression et, de l'autre, que ces pratiques peuvent tout aussi bien servir la coercition que permettre au miracle de se réaliser. Pour mettre en évidence ces ambivalences et l'incomplétude des logiques d'action, l'auteur entre dans le détail des pratiques économiques quotidiennes. La fiscalité, la mise à niveau et les négociations continues entre entrepreneurs et autorités politiques et administratives constituent un premier champ d'analyse: elles montrent la réalité de la contrainte, mais aussi bien des arrangements, des accommodements et même de l'adhésion. Cette dernière est en partie rendue possible par la prégnance du mythe réformiste, mythe partagé par tous, en partie par les avantages que les uns et les autres en retirent. L'analyse de la «privatisation de l'Etat» – notamment dans*

*sa modalité originale du 26.26, ce système de «dons» contraints et obligatoires – constitue un second temps de la démonstration. En Tunisie, les modalités indirectes et privées de gouvernement ne sont pas contradictoires, ni incompatibles avec la tradition dirigiste et l'interventionnisme incessant. Elles doivent plutôt être analysées comme des techniques complémentaires dans l'art de gouverner, qui autorisent l'exercice d'une punition et d'une gratification, mais assurent également une sécurité économique et sociale. Elles participent du paternalisme et du contrôle social, et permettent simultanément contrôle et ascension sociale, surveillance et création de richesse. C'est pour cela aussi qu'il ne s'agit fondamentalement pas de répression et que si domination il y a, elle est souvent acceptée.*

## **Understanding Tunisia: Two Traditions**

Tunisia has been the subject of several recent informative essays and analyses. Taken together these studies can be seen as participating in two main interpretive traditions. These can be summarised as either 'Ben Ali's Tunisia' or 'Economic and Political Tunisia'.

### **'Ben Ali's Tunisia'**

This expression refers to a common trend of analysis in both academic and non-academic writings. These works share three characteristics: the strong man, the sultan or the chief, is at the centre of political analysis and, consequentially, power relations are analysed as relations between the proprietor and his possessions. These analyses are often very general, and do not delve into the details and descriptions of specific mechanisms for the exercise of power. Sometimes they include purely political inquiries that consider 'Ben Ali's Tunisia' as simply an authoritarian regime, a dictatorship in which the head of state controls all mechanisms for policing and repression (Anderson, 1995; Lamloum and Ravenel, 2002). At other times they partake in the tradition of the liberal political economy of authoritarianism, developing rather functionalist arguments about the role of the economy in the regime; for example, analyses of Tunisia as a form of Sultanism (Chehabi and Linz, 1998) or as a bully Praetorian regime (Henry and Springborg, 2001). These first two categories are characterised by a strong tendency to personalise power. The authors of these texts tend to emphasise a number of features that underscore Ben Ali's personal responsibility for state repression: the breadth of arbitrary decisions that perturb administrative functions; the existence of a system of loyalty founded on fear of, and gratification by, the chief; and the lack of a social basis for political power associated with the perceived apathy and passivity of the given society. Another type of analysis includes the writings of human rights activists and those engaged in humanitarian associations who emphasise the importance of the police and institutional repression, as well as the absence of freedoms of expression.<sup>1</sup> This type of analysis is also evident among the regime's active apologists who attribute Tunisia's economic, social, and political advancement directly to President Ben Ali (Chaabane, 1996; Mbougueng, 1999; Chirac, 1999).

### **'Economic & Political Tunisia'**

While less colourful than the first way in which Tunisian politics and society is interpreted, the idea of economic and political Tunisia highlights the break between

the economic, social, and political spheres in that country. Works that fall into this category tend to share similar assumptions. They assess the economic performance, and sometimes the political and social situation of Tunisia, in terms of success or failure, without inquiring into the workings of political power, or the details of economic, political, and social mechanisms for sustaining it. These studies are sometimes authored by political scientists who tend to marginalise economic or social processes (Benedict, 1997; Camau, 1997; Camau and Geisser, 2003). They are also attributed to political economists who see the political field as exogenous and only rarely enter into the dynamics of power relations (Murphy, 1999; Anderson, 1995; Bellin, 2002; Henry, 1996). But because academic works on Tunisia are few and far between, this type of analysis is most often carried out by politically committed (*engagés*) observers, whose positions vary from unconditional support of the regime to the most severe condemnation of it. On the one hand the 'Tunisian miracle' is theorised as a mixture of clear economic success, the development of social programmes, and the march towards democracy (Chaabane, 1996; Lombardo, 1998).<sup>2</sup> Such unconditional support for the 'Tunisian model' is founded both on the construction of the myth of the 'economic miracle' and an understanding of the specificity of democratisation in a country like Tunisia (which, as a formerly colonised, developing country that is also Muslim, has long been handicapped relative to a Western trajectory).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, open critiques highlight the contradiction between economic success and ferocious political repression (Beau and Tuquoi, 1999; Daoud, 1994; Simon, 1999).<sup>4</sup> Between these two extremes, positions oscillate between the targeted support of social and economic programmes (which meanwhile ignore the political situation)<sup>5</sup> and critical support, which recognises an economic success story that has been 'spoiled' by an increase in political restrictions.

## Power & Repression in Tunisia: a Model Plague

In avoiding the pitfalls of broadly these two positions I want to highlight the apparent contradiction between political repression and the 'economic miracle'. I concentrate on this point not to account for past errors and biases of the texts cited above. Rather, following the works of Michel Foucault, I locate the mechanisms and socio-economic bases of the exercise of power in order to highlight techniques and processes of knowledge (*savoir*) that constitute political power in Tunisia today. Although it is now a commonplace understanding, it is nonetheless important to recall that no government is founded exclusively on violence and repression, even totalitarian governments (Arendt, 2002). Repressive systems function well beyond the mechanics of the police apparatus, working through economic, political, and social mechanisms and it is these that most accounts of political power in Tunisia fail to recognise.

## The 'Miracle' & the Foundations of Political Domination

The basic machinery of the repressive system can be found in the mechanisms mobilised by the regime, by international donors and commentators. All of these serve to extol both Tunisian society's capacity for adaptation and reform as well as the economic and social aptitude of the regime. It is obvious that the police and its techniques for repression, *stricto sensu* (imprisonment, torture, bans on meetings, and harassment of opposition figures) play an undeniable role in Tunisian political life. Likewise, we cannot underestimate the importance of violence, fear, and a general ambiance of mistrust. But these methods of repression are only applied against

active militants and, in the case of Islamists, they also affect their entourage. While these actions clearly impact on the public perception of the regime's repressive character, they do not fully account for the modalities of the exercise of power in Tunisia today. Instead, mechanisms for control and domination of the entire Tunisian population are anchored in the most everyday relations of power. As the following remarks show, if policing has an unquestionable influence on people's frame of mind, perhaps even more than on the organisation of daily life, control takes place, above all, through constant coercive practices involving economic and social activities. And these coercive practices are themselves inscribed in relations of force that are internal to society; they are at the very heart of the struggles that pervade society.

### **The 'Social Death' of Islamists**

One example highlights the impossibility of separating economics from politics. It highlights the necessity of recognising the continuum that exists between repression and political control, and the most commonplace economic and social practices. That example was the fierce repression of the Islamists following their relative success in the 1989 elections. Many documents attest to the inhumane treatment suffered by *Mouvement de la tendance Islamiste* (MIT) militants (later to become *Ennahda*<sup>6</sup>), practices to which they continue to be subjected today. Abusive treatment includes violent arrest, imprisonment, torture, mistreatment leading to death; solitary confinement, imprisonment in overcrowded conditions, lack of beds, sleep deprivation; malnutrition, dehydration, poor hygiene, the rapid spread of diseases; negligent or altogether nonexistent medical care; drug addiction; unsafe working conditions; prohibition of prayer; frequent and humiliating cell searches; sexual abuse.

However, very little has been said about the living conditions of former political prisoners after their release.<sup>7</sup> The discrimination suffered by these ex-detainees is particularly worthy of our attention. It reveals how disciplinary and normalising practices constitute the very exercise of power in Tunisia. In a similar vein, we might cite the blurring of 'public' and 'private' spheres or methods of criminalising political activity unauthorised by the State (Lamloum, 2001). Although ex-detainees no longer face the threat of physical violence, many claim that post-carceral discriminatory practices are often more difficult to bear than the inhumane and degrading treatment suffered in prison. For instance, they are required by administrative fiat to report to a designated police precinct several times a day. These precincts are often very far from the residences of ex-detainees, which mean that they frequently cannot find work and are denied the possibility of participating in even the most basic social practices. Even when they are no longer subject to these administrative controls, they still have many problems finding work and establishing themselves in society: former civil servants are fired, while those who worked in the private sector find themselves up against former or potential employers who are harassed, threatened, and blackmailed by either the social security system or the tax administration, and who are thereby effectively dissuaded from rehiring newly-released prisoners. Former prisoners who attempt independent work are also harassed by the fiscal authorities, the municipal police, or other administrators. Detainees' wives are sometimes forced to divorce; family members and intimates are encouraged to renounce all assistance because of police intrusions into households or because of blackmail with regards to employment or social security. Social security cards of former detainees can be destroyed, excluding them from access to

health care; students are prevented from registering in universities and thus are forced to continue their studies abroad. After having come close to physical death in prison, ex-detainees experience 'social death' that is often seen to be more difficult to bear. The preceding discussion demonstrates how absolute control and domination can be achieved through economic and social mechanisms rather than through the direct intervention of the police. Nevertheless, the aim of such practices is normalisation, not definitive exclusion. If Islamists and former political prisoners agree to follow the rules and recognise the norms of the dominant political system (that is, by renouncing political Islamism and criticism of the regime), they are allowed to reintegrate into the economic and social life of the country. The illustrations that I have just given can be interpreted by using Foucault's notion of inclusion (1975).

*The plague is the moment in which the surveillance of a population is carried to its extreme,' wrote Foucault, 'where hazardous communication, disorderly communities, forbidden contacts can no longer take place. The moment of the plague is that of the exhaustive surveillance of a population by political power, whose capillary ramifications constantly reach into the very core of individuals, their time, their dwellings, their positioning, their bodies (1999:44).*

The plague then provides a model for the analysis of positive technologies of power, such as inclusion, observation and the formation of knowledge.

## **Mechanisms & Procedures for Control, Domination & Repression**

In order to understand the specificity of the exercise of power in Tunisia we need to comprehend the details of day-to-day practices and behaviours. These include the concrete procedures and techniques of power and subjection especially in the economic and social sphere. Moreover, we cannot expect to understand these mechanisms without recognising the continuum of power relations that extend from global strategies and the large machinery of the state apparatus, starting with the police, to, at the other end of the spectrum, the infinitesimal tactics that touch the 'core of individuality'.

### **'That's the Price we have to Pay': Negotiations & Settlements**

Tunisian businessmen view the constraints placed on private enterprise by the political system as the 'price' to be paid for certain advantages. As one noted in conversation with me, 'What weighs on us is also what protects us,' while another affirmed that 'this is the price we have to pay.' These business benefits include social peace and geopolitical stability as well as market protectionism, fiscal exoneration, and administrative exemptions. All of these ensure an enterprise's financial health, not to mention that of the entrepreneur. Such protection is seen as compensation for a political system widely perceived as one of observation and control, and whose tactics include such obtrusive practices as incessant administrative interference, diverse levies (including those extracted through the famous National Solidarity Fund, *Fonds National de Solidarité*, to which I refer below), more or less obligatory gifts to the RCD (*Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique*) and other police associations, fear of predation by Ben Ali's 'clans', and official censorship. This 'price to pay' interpretation can be challenged by pointing out its allegiance to ideas of compensation, exchange, and inevitable return, all manifestations of the Manichean vision explicitly put forward by the regime. This interpretation would reduce 'politics' to the regime and, furthermore, to an exchange commodity.

Nevertheless, the entrepreneurs interviewed above affirmed a crucial point: administrative, economic, and social mechanisms are by nature ambivalent or equivocal. They allow simultaneously for control and for margins of manoeuvre, for domination and for resistance, for economic constraints and for opportunities, for financial advantages and for costs to be extracted. In other words, businessmen are subjected to the disciplinary power – and even policing – of the Tunisian political system, and in turn enter the very system by contributing to and fueling its logic of negotiation and settlement.

A number of studies on practices of resistance in authoritarian regimes underscore this coexistence of strong interdictions and the systematic and acknowledged subversion of these interdictions (Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule, 2003). In Tunisia, this is the case for the control of satellite dishes (Bras, 1999) or the internet (Chouikha, 2002), as well as the tax system (Hibou, 2003) or the informal economy (Hibou, 2006). But these paradoxes should be understood less in terms of the installation of repressive measures by the dominant, to which the dominated respond by ruse and resistance, than in terms of social struggles and power relations that are highly ambivalent and are inscribed, themselves, in these very struggles. There is not a system of power that manages and shapes both control and tolerance (or a safety valve) as long as the regime is not endangered (Larif, 1991; Chouikha, 2002), but rather mechanisms of 'resistance' that are inscribed in power relations and are simultaneously practices of accommodation, agreements, and negotiations (Hibou, 1999c). The example of the tax system is revealing in this regard.

### **The Twists & Turns of the Tax System**

As in many developing countries, the Tunisian tax system comprises two complementary issues relating to tax evasion. On one hand, taken together, the failure to declare, under-declaration and the weak rate of tax collection are estimated by the Internal Revenue as representing 50 per cent of tax income. These figures are to be taken with great caution: they are above all political, participating in a political discourse, and very clearly provide the Tunisian state with a certain degree of latitude. Concretely, the public disclosure of such figures serves to justify controls and levies of all sorts, enabling the government to openly discredit, and subsequently negotiate with Tunisian businessmen. On the other hand, tax controls have been intensified over the past eight years to make up for losses arising from the free-trade agreement with Europe (evaluated at 70 per cent of customs income or 18 per cent of total tax income), as well as the decrease in income from oil. Entrepreneurs complain about the arbitrary nature of these controls and the weight of back payments. It must be noted that, for the past three decades, the administration and the political system have openly tolerated tax evasion in order to increase their legitimacy, but also and above all, as they claim to encourage the 'development of a national bourgeoisie'. The current context, being marked by the decline, or even the disappearance, of income from oil and phosphates and the application of liberal norms (in particular, budgetary rigour), no longer permits this tolerance of tax evasion. But this by no means undermines the role of taxation as an instrument of negotiation. Although obviously never explicitly stated, tax fraud, a common practice among the large majority of entrepreneurs, continues to be tolerated and even encouraged. On one hand, much of the tax legislation is murky, such as that pertaining to VAT (value added tax). On the other hand, there is often a large gap, in time as well as content, between presidential discourse, the adoption of law, application of decrees, and reality. Legal texts relating to tax issues are oftentimes inaccessible, even when state decisions have been dependent upon them.

Businessmen practice tax evasion for a number of reasons and under a number of guises. Sometimes tax evasion can occur almost unintentionally, as an unexpected result of an imperfect command of current rules and regulations. Other times it is practiced as a means of alleviating the financial costs of an enterprise, or even of ensuring survival in the face of domestic, and especially international, competition. In other cases, tax evasion can manifest itself as a power struggle with fiscal authorities, as a preventative tactic in view of future levies, or as a 'counter-conduct' or subversion of an administration's behaviour when that administration is perceived as both intrusive and arbitrary. From the point of view of the state, however, tax fraud enables central power to justify its arbitrary interventions in economic matters and allows civil servants in the tax administration to benefit from bonuses in proportion to recovered taxes. Indeed, it is interesting to note that the name for the General Direction of Taxes in Tunisia is the Direction of Tax Controls. At times, back taxes are so significant that they lead to negotiations between the government and the taxpayer. For the most serious cases, such negotiations take place directly between the company director and the President. One of the biggest conglomerates in the country, which owed back taxes of three or four times its annual profit, managed to have them reduced by half in exchange for a contribution to the NSF (National Solidarity Fund, or the so-called 26.26, which refers to the fund's postal account number) and the listing of one of its companies on the stock market. A certain implicit haggling is at the heart of all fiscal practices, as is suggested by the example, *a contrario*, of perfectly legal businesses that do not contribute to the 26.26. It is thus by no means certain that the business community, even while claiming to be the victim of central power, is the real financial loser in this game.

Tax evasion in Tunisia should not be interpreted as a sign of lack of controls, resistance by 'civil society', or a safety valve generously accorded by an omniscient central power. Nor should it be seen as compensation for the absence of political representation and civil liberties. Fiscal practices are never simply a game of negotiations and settlements; the fiscal arm can be used for repression as well, especially since it is generally viewed as a site of struggle, power relations, compromises, and the exercise of power more generally. This widespread belief results in part from a romantic and certainly biased interpretation of Tunisia's history, particularly its fiscal history. The Tunisian *imaginaire* is fueled by the myth of resistance to taxation as a way of supporting both the struggle for national liberation and the opposition to power, perceived as 'external' (Chérif, 1986; Ganiage, 1959; Brown, 1974; Bachrouch, 1977; Hénia, 1980; Dakhli, 1990; Chater, 1984). This *imaginaire* is fed, in turn, by current practices, whether the use of sanctions, laissez-faire policies, or the granting of fiscal amnesty. The latter results in the appeasement of tensions and the possibility of reconciliation between business and central power. Indeed, the tax system is considered a seat of power. Whether or not the aforementioned strategies are efficient is of little importance; what matters is that the tax system is perceived as an instrument of punishment. And this perception is all the more fertile given that the popular interpretation of certain events as illustrations of the tax system's repressive power continuously serves to reactivate this *imaginaire*. Thus when a struggle breaks out between the authorities and members of the opposition, one of the first repressive measures to be employed is taxation or social security (*Caisse nationale de Sécurité Sociale* or CNSS). Judge Yahyhoui, who is now a symbol of independent justice in Tunisia, began a fierce struggle against the Tunisian authorities and President Ben Ali himself over a personal tax matter.<sup>8</sup> Here, we find the essential ingredients of the Tunisian system

of repression, which touches private lives and the intimate sphere; it mixes public and private and spans the continuum from details to broad political strategies.

### **Multiple Economic Procedures & Techniques of Domination**

The example of the tax system demonstrates all the political ambivalence of a mechanism that exerts power through economic means. The primary function of taxation is not, however, repressive. Yet when repression does occur through economic means the tax system is undeniably the most efficient and systematic instrument available. But the preceding developments allow us to nuance this assertion by raising two issues. First, discipline is not the principal motor of the tax system in Tunisia: bureaucratic processes, adaptations to the international economy, clientelism, social and economic patterns of behaviour and, most importantly, the necessity of sufficient state revenue all determine the shape of the Tunisian tax system. Second, 'fiscal punishment' is rarely ever executed 'from above'. In the rare cases where the tax office actually decides to exert decisive control or domination, such actions are made possible by a preexisting environment: a whole series of mechanisms and patterns of behaviour that serve as footholds for the tax administration and for political power.

This article is just one part of a more extensive study and cannot therefore develop further examples to illustrate this point (Hibou, 2006). I will simply point out some of the primary sites where the logic of policing, control, and repression infiltrate economic and social processes. Apart from the tax system, these sites include the social security system, social programmes for disadvantaged people, rural and urban development programmes, and bank credit. In a more general sense, they also entail financial mechanisms, aid and privileges for enterprises, privatisation, the liberalisation of domestic and international trade (like the nationalisation, protectionism, and permits that preceded them), solidarity and the invocation of civil society, the 'management' of Islam, and the control of illicit, illegal, and informal practices. I cannot here either detail an analysis of the procedures and techniques through which the logic of control, domination and repression permeate economy and society. Beyond the tactics, discussed below, whose effects and tactics are to blur the lines between the public and private spheres, there are a number of additional mechanisms worth mentioning. These include the perpetually refueled processes of social exchange and negotiation, recourse to nationalist principles while simultaneously recognising the need to be connected to the world economy, and the construction of a discourse surrounding the 'economic miracle' and the 'stability and security of Tunisia'.

Numerous techniques make the 'economic miracle' both a discourse of truth and a technique of power. We might cite, for instance, the strategic choice of comparisons: measuring Tunisia's economic performance against that of sub-Saharan Africa rather than that of Asia or Turkey, or judging present advances against strategically chosen periods in Tunisia's history. There has also been a systematic amnesia with regards to past performance; the appropriation by the administration and central power of social dynamics; the elaboration and concealment of facts; recourse to secrets and rumours; a continuously blurred line between 'transparent' and 'opaque' practices; the absence of critical analysis and a free press; selectivity of information used and the deployment of such information; modes of presenting domestic decisions according to current fashion and international rhetoric; and difficulties of access to information. This situation is not specifically Tunisian (Minard, 1998), but it is applied here in a systematic and centralised way in devices

for the production of knowledge. The 'economic miracle' is thus a fiction that can neither be invalidated, nor even partially challenged (Arendt, 2002; Ricoeur, 1983). This is why unemployment statistics or the poverty levels are often deliberately concealed for years.

It was precisely this discourse on stability and security, emphasising the efficacy of the regime's decision to prioritise order that incited the Tunisian authorities to deny, for four days, that the Islamist terrorists had carried out the Djerba attack, an event that was presented, as we might imagine, as an accident. The significance of this discourse on security, and its widespread acceptance, can only be understood by going beyond the simple idea that it represents a single man's design (President Ben Ali), a direct product of the sultan's palace, the latter being constrained to follow this strategy in order to 'remain in power'. Instead, the security stance is deeply rooted in Tunisian political struggles. Because the relative success of the Islamists in 1989 was experienced as a political upheaval by a large portion of the population, the Tunisian authorities were able to manipulate public opinion in order to intensify and generalise the perception of a massive threat. This strategy only functioned because it had effective relays in society, because it took root in the already divisive fabric of Tunisian society on the question of political Islam (Lamloum, 2001). This division, moreover, refers back to other historical opposition (Dakhli, 1990) that continue today, even within the political opposition (Khiari, 2003), and this, despite the fact that, on the one hand, its members being both 'Islamists' and 'democrats,' all shared their 'hatred' of Ben Ali and that, on the other hand, *Ennahda* was wiped out by years of repression.

These illustrations indicate how mechanisms of repression are by no means the President's monopoly. Neither are they the monopoly of Ben Ali's regime, his entourage or police services. On the contrary, they are deeply rooted in Tunisian society and in social and economic mechanisms of power, all the more so because they participate in processes of state formation. Political control and repression, two undeniable facets of Tunisian life, are the result of a

*multiplicity of often minor processes, with different origins, scattered locations, which intersect, repeat, or reverberate, resting upon one another, distinguishing themselves according to their space of application, converging and elaborating, little by little, a general method (Foucault, 1975:162-163).*

## **The Privileged Space of Perpetual Reforms**

Economic and social reforms are particularly interesting sites for the observation and analysis of repression and control. On the one hand, as I indicated above, discourse on reforms and on the 'economic miracle' constitutes one of the principal techniques of power and the production of knowledge in Tunisia today. On the other hand, after 'development', 'reforms' are now at the centre of the international community's understanding of 'underdeveloped' countries.

## **Reformism as a Traditional Form of Power in Tunisia**

The 'new' theme of liberal reforms in Tunisia must be understood with respect to a very specific historical trajectory: the tradition of Ottoman and then Tunisian reformism which has characterised the political economy of the country since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Tlili, 1974; Bachrouch, 1984). Reformism, and most notably the work and myth of Khayr ed Din, continue to inform the understanding of relations

between national construction, international insertion, and economic transformations, captured by stigmatised and ambiguous oppositions, such as modernity/archaisms or secularism/obscurantism.<sup>9</sup> Since the great era of the Fundamental Pact (1857), administrative, social, economic, and political modifications have always been formulated in terms of reforms. This is the case under the French Protectorate (1881-1953); during the nationalist movement (1930-1953); in independent Tunisia from the 1950s to the 1970s, including the socialist period (1960-1969) and in the developmentalist rhetoric typical of the entire so-called Third World up to the present era of structural adjustment and liberalisation (Hibou, 2005).

It is as if this rhetoric of perpetual reforms fulfils a particular purpose in the formation of the state and in mechanisms of control and domination; we might say that perpetual reforms function as an effect of power. In spite of the government's rhetoric of 'Change' (*Le Changement*) and, similarly, the voluntarist discourse of the international donors that puts forth the notion of radical change, the reforms implemented since 1987 (the implementation of structural adjustment programmes corresponds with the 'medical coup d'état' of Ben Ali), are a continuation of the history of economic policy in Tunisia. First, the liberal turn took place in 1970. But, more importantly, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ideal of Tunisian reformism has been both liberal and technicist, even though it has also been interventionist and centralising. There is doubtless an 'authoritarian reformist tradition' (Camau, 1987; Krichen, 1987:297-341) which should not, however, be taken as the imposition of modernising and technical reforms 'from above'. This tradition has endured precisely because it has been anchored in existing mechanisms of power and, concomitantly, because it has been able to structure power relations more generally.

### **The Example of 'Mise à Niveau'**

A good example is the case of the Tunisian '*mise à niveau*' (bringing up to standard) – a programme mostly financed by the World Bank and the European Union, designed to prepare industrial firms for international competition.<sup>10</sup> In the Tunisian government's tradition of industrial interventionism,<sup>11</sup> this programme was a 'state affair' (Camau, 1997). It was guided by the principles of a form of liberalism that was both interventionist and authoritarian.<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, the *mise à niveau* is implemented in a highly interventionist way: it is urged, if not imposed, upon private actors; incontestably, the dynamic of the process comes from the administration. To use the language of Tunisian officials, entrepreneurs are invited to make the 'civic gesture' of following the movement. It is without doubt a heavily bureaucratic process, a far cry from the liberal discourse on competitiveness. Enterprises are invited or obligated to open up to and prepare themselves for international competition. But, they are to do so in a decidedly old-fashioned way: the incentives are subsidies and financial facilities that entrepreneurs interpret as a continuation of past policies. And they are obtained through bureaucratic and political relationships. On the other hand (and contrary to received wisdom, which sees economic liberalisation as a means of depoliticising economic action), the *mise à niveau* is a highly political process. The programme manifested the will to modernise from above and to exercise political control over enterprises (Cassarino, 1999, 2000; Camau, 1990, 1987; Krichen, 1987).

Entrepreneurs are better off adhering to this process if they are to be well received by the state. The events (or adventures) which accompany the entry (or rejection) of one or another firm into the *mise à niveau* reveal less the enterprise's will to modify its management, to open its capital or to invest, and more the importance of

relationships between the business world and presidential power. In keeping with this reformist tradition, moreover, the will to political control goes hand in hand with the capacity for adaptation and a certain pragmatism as well as a responsiveness to recriminations. Thus, despite these attributes, international donors support the programme because it illustrates the Tunisian bureaucracy's capacity to understand and integrate international constraints, to translate them into concrete measures, and to transform these measures as the context evolves. In response to difficulties encountered in implementation, the *Bureau de la Mise à Niveau* developed discourses and, occasionally, new procedures. At the beginning of the process, there were only subsidies for material investment, but after confronting many bottlenecks, these subsidies were extended, with beneficial advantage, to non-material investments. Likewise, the *mise à niveau* was initially only designed for businesses at the micro-economic level, but it now relates to other sectors at the meso-level: administration, banks and, more generally, the firms' environment, macro-economic level.

But this portrayal of the *mise à niveau* programme is insufficient. The political voluntarism that characterises the Tunisian authorities' discourse of control and command should not be understood as necessarily true; it is rather one procedure amongst other techniques of power which produce knowledge. It is deployed internally, of course, but it also has its exterior usages. And international donors are less taken by the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme than by its conceptualisation and the discourse surrounding it. Thus, despite the many qualifications he made during our discussion of the very mixed results of the *mise à niveau* program, one of the international bureaucrats I interviewed in Tunisia concluded that, 'here, they know what they want; they have a plan that is generally positive.' Furthermore, and more importantly, the entrepreneurs are by no means simply 'subjected' to a politically instrumentalised reform process. The Tunisian authorities' global strategy of control and domination is effective only because it is located locally. Entrepreneurs are active in this process: the most dynamic firms have benefited from this through subsidies for investments that have reduced their indebtedness. Others enter into these arrangements in a quest for financial or business opportunities, or as a means to gain greater autonomy. This is what explains the weak rate of investment in the *mise à niveau* programme and the great number of firms that do not go beyond the diagnostic phase. Moreover, enterprises do not necessarily adopt strategies that adhere to the objectives set by the administration, such as the modernisation of the production apparatus or the increase in competitiveness. Investments are oriented less towards industries than towards services (insurance, tourism), commerce (agro-alimentary, textiles), and agriculture (especially animal husbandry). They seek out protected sectors (sometimes with the participation of foreign investors, who are only interested in access to the domestic Tunisian market), fiscal advantages (with very low levels of taxation in the agricultural sector), financial advantages (easy credits in the tourism and agricultural sectors), or investments for speculation (on agricultural lands or land suited for tourism). Some fear that Tunisia will become an entrepôt economy: the country has often played such an intermediary role between Europe and Africa or the Ottoman Empire. Also, the trend toward conversion to commerce inspired by liberalisation programmes and the *mise à niveau* is now accompanied by a trend toward the re-exportation of goods, like second-hand clothing, and the creation of free trade zones. In sum, the *mise à niveau* programme allows for control, the exercise of power, and even repression, but this is only because the procedures employed respond to solicitations 'from below', on the part of entrepreneurs.

A similar analysis could be made with respect to privatisation or work relations (Hibou, 2006). The heterogeneous, variable, and unstable character of investment incentives are moreover manifestations of both authoritarian endeavours and the depth of processes of negotiation or, quite simply, power relations and force relations (*rappports de force*) between the administration, the political sphere, and entrepreneurs (Baccouche, 2000).

### **Privatising the State as a Procedure of Control**

Reforms succeed one another, but all are not similar. Modes of government are transformed according to international configurations, economic and political transformations on the domestic level, material constraints and opportunities. In Tunisia as elsewhere, the present phase of reform, a dominant manner of governing consists of what I call 'the privatisation of the state' (Hibou, 1998, 1999d, 1999e, 2003).

There are many instances that suggest the demise of the state. The state increasingly delegates its regulatory or even sovereign functions to private intermediaries; 'markets', 'networks', and private actors have become increasingly important; and pressures from the international economy have become more direct. It is also clear that recourse to violence for private appropriation has become a predominant mode of governing in many countries. Nonetheless, the state not only resists these changes, but it continues to structure itself through constant negotiation between the 'public' and 'private' realms, and through processes of delegation and *ex post facto* control. In other words, the 'privatisation of the state' does not necessarily mean the loss of its capacities for control or its cannibalisation by private interests. It does, however, refer to its reconfiguration and the modification of modes of governing that are induced by national and international transformation.

Privatisation is at the heart of liberalisation reforms that have been applied to all developing countries. But this is not limited to public enterprises, public services, and other economic actors in keeping with the 'promotion of the private sector'. This orthodox aspect of the reform process – the gist of the dominant discourse of the international community – is only one element in the 'construction' of economic policy (Berman and Lonsdale, 1992; Bayart, 1994). Privatisation has also diffused to other domains and other state interventions. And this is not simply the result of incentives taken by the bureaucracy or political power. Instead, it is the effect of at least two highly interconnected movements. First, the reforms themselves have produced lateral, unintended, and often undesired consequences that have enabled this diffusion. These include the reduction of budgetary expenditures, which has imperiled national administrations; the delegitimation of public authorities; the fragmentation of decision-making processes; the primacy given to international legitimacy over domestic legitimacy; the emphasis put on the speed of modalities for action and on results over means. Second, through specific strategies, conflicts, and compromises, as well as negotiations undertaken between different social groups, various economic and political actors have transformed the context and the substance of the reforms. In so doing, they have etched out a new outline of the state and new contours of modes of governing (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Hibou, 1998). Thus, today, privatisation involves development, economic resources, regulatory functions, and the sovereign functions of states. As diverse as they are, both programmed and spontaneous processes of privatisation have certain points in common: they are well-regarded by the reigning liberal discourse; they make

increasing use of private means for governing; and they modify both economic *and* political regulation, as well as forms of sovereignty. In this sense, they displace and blur the frontiers between the public and private domains. This 'vulgarisation' (or popularisation) of privatisation is now a dominant form of governing in countries of the South, the 'formation' of privatisation having largely overtaken its 'construction'. It should be underscored that reference to the privatisation of the state, even if it has an ironic dimension in respect to donors' discourse, is not simply a play on words. More than that, this expression reflects the generalisation of the use of private intermediaries for what were until now state functions as well as the reconfiguration of the state itself.

Tunisia underscores the extreme ambiguity of 'the public' and 'the private', and consequentially 'privatisation' as well. Tunisia is in some ways a country that is strongly marked by public interventionism. The programme for the privatisation of public companies, and especially private banks, is relatively undeveloped and hardly applied. Concessions to private companies and the delegation of public services to the private sector are much less widespread than in many other countries. Moreover, the authoritarian regime never sought to delegate its security functions, its maritime ports or its customs service to private entities. Tunisian 'liberalism' is characterised by significant state interventions, which are most often direct, largely due to the fact that its bureaucratic apparatus is rooted in the functions of power and in a strong state (*dirigiste*) tradition. The political history of independent Tunisia is that of strong controls over society by a centralising state (even if this state must constantly assure its legitimacy, which has been at times highly contested).

This bureaucratic tradition and direct public interventionism is not contradictory and does not hamper the emergence of different modes of government, in which private intermediaries and non-state actors are increasingly present. This 'privatisation of the state' takes many, diverse forms. These include repeated recourse to civil society, to NGOs, and to other non-state actors which are seen to have the virtues of efficiency and flexibility. They are also seen to be critical of the administration and incompetent bureaucracy. Such criticism is even repeated by the Head of State, who does not refrain from denigrating the very bureaucratic apparatus that is supposed to accomplish the policies he defines and, *in fine*, manages. Likewise, the kind of rhetoric about the role of entrepreneurs, the market, private initiative that we find in many countries today is also part of Tunisian public life. An entirely different aspect of this privatisation is the development of corruption and the monopolisation of wealth by 'clans' close to Ben Ali. Intermediation is increasingly the only function of allegiance to official discourse and especially to the personal benediction of the President. Public life has become monopolised by people with highly personal links to Ben Ali. Finally, this process takes on one form that is perhaps the most significant: the privatisation of the power to tax, a state function par excellence.

These different modalities of the privatisation of the state have at least two common characteristics. The first is the diffusion of a discourse (but not necessarily practices) which place primacy on private actors, individuals, the market and, at the same time, criticism of the public sector, of the administration, and of the state. The second is the ambivalence, blurring, and fluidity of the 'private', which becomes reified. In Tunisia, for instance, non-governmental organisations are actually governmental. Similarly, the private sector is still highly dependent on the state for public interventions. Private intermediaries base their power on their proximity to the highest function, which is, of course, public. And the President is constantly obscuring his status, blurring the distinction between its public and its private

nature through his different funds as well as through his approach to the administration.

### **Privatisation of the State & Exercise of Power**

Of course, these modes of action have always existed. Previously, this type of intervention, posture and the different modalities of 'privatisation' were merely ingredients of the Tunisian political system and power relations. However, they now constitute one of the main foundations of politics in terms of power and in terms of legitimating discourses and rationalities of power. Similarly, the monopoly over resources and the rise of corruption are evidently not specific to this time period but their significance is. Previously, Bourguiba's intimates surely sought to establish personal capital and new wealth. But this quest took place in the context of a war for succession, the rotation of the political elite, positioning in the public sphere, through economic exchanges, and relations of power. Power struggles took place on the public scene of politics, and these economic practices were mostly 'collateral damage'. Under President Ben Ali, these practices have become constitutive of the system of control, and even of repression, in Tunisia today. All political stakes are stillborn; those who benefit from these monopolies and exactions are close to the President. They are private actors and not political pretenders; their only objective is to accumulate wealth. In other words, the meaning of the personalised management of power has been transformed, and it is in this sense that we can speak of a rupture.

During Bourguiba's reign, state management also took on private forms. It was largely restricted to political interests and political aims, in a political game that remained, in spite of it all, open to those of the inner circle. Since Ben Ali's rise to power, monopolisation of resources, corruption, and diverse economic accumulation have become new modes of governing. Thus the private management of the state has been extended to various domains: predation on large contracts, intermediation, stock-holding in privatisations and concessions, land and housing speculation. It has also been extended beyond traditional clientelism, including racketeering, forced joint ventures with entrepreneurs in significant markets, non-payment of suppliers, the constitution of private monopolies and duopolies, and the use of non-refundable loans. More than that, the interference of these private circles in economic life has taken on a new political significance. It is in this sense that we can talk about the privatisation of the state and move beyond analysis in terms of just corruption. Privatisation is a supplementary and fundamental means of control of economic and political life by the regime. Through the politics of repression, the political field and the public sphere are monopolised by the president; the economic and financial fields are now the only sites of conflict, the only objects in which stakes can be placed. All the recent politico-financial affairs attest to this (the El Taïef affair, the pharmacist's episode, etc.).<sup>13</sup> Even if the agents of inveiglement or corruption are private, or even mere hoodlums, politics is always present, being the only thing that tolerates them, uses them, and confers another meaning on their activities.

These affairs constitute a clear political warning to a business class that is increasingly reticent with respect to these kinds of activities and the evolution of the regime. Thus the regime's extreme susceptibility to charges of corruption and predation, the imprisonment of Sihem Ben Sédrine, the harassment of journalists like Taoufik Ben Brick or Tunisian militants of Attac attest to its reluctance to face criticism. The regime sustains itself less through repression and the use of public force than by its hold on economic and social life. And this hold does not transpire uniquely in a public manner through economic and social policy, through pedant

administrative interventions or through political clientelism. The regime increasingly bases its power on hybrid means (semi-public, semi-private) through intermediaries recognised as such by the Presidency or, more directly, by a personal allegiance to the President and his discourse. The frontiers between the economic and the political are increasingly blurred, which is a primordial aspect of the privatisation of the state.

Although practices are not very different from one time period to the next and do not necessarily concur with official discourse, we cannot discount the fact that certain things are given exemplar status in the rhetoric of the Tunisian authorities. These include the private sector, private modes of action, private actors of development or even private actors of public life. The latter are valorised despite the fact that the bureaucracy remains present in all economic domains, and despite the fact that state actors remain strongly involved in economic life. Whatever the reality, businesses, 'civil society', the market, and private economic actors are now the ultimate referents, the legitimate institutions. This discourse trivialises the 'private' practices of power while also seeking to legitimate them. Modes of government are gradually modified by this discourse and by the systematic denigration of the administration and the presence of the 'clans' in the state apparatus. The administrative environment is deteriorating. Even if it remains central, the administration is partially dispossessed and especially delegitimised – for example, by working for the 26.26 while it has the capacity to manage similar public programmes. Likewise, all major decisions are taken by the competent administrations, but they are also and especially made by 'Carthage' (the location of the presidential palace).

### The Example of 26.26

The case of the *Fonds National de Solidarité (FNS)* is a good example of how power in Tunisia is exercised. Established in 1992, The National Solidarity Fund, better known as the 26.26, which is its postal account number, is a fund designed to 'eradicate shaded spaces' ('*éradiquer les zones d'ombre*', as official rhetoric put it) and poverty by the year 2000. It is worth noting that this fund did not disappear in 2000. Instead, a new one, the *Fonds National pour l'Emploi* – the National Fund for Employment – was added to it. This latter fund shares the same philosophy as the first. The FNS is intended to supply the basic needs of those sectors of the population that have been hitherto denied. The official presidential statement underscores that the FNS is a new mode of social policy that is to be carried out through the solidarity of all citizens. Although these arguments are not false, they are not the only ones put forth. Many social instruments existed in the 1990s and even in the 1980s, such as the programme for integrated rural development, the programme for rural development, and the programme for needy families.

Generally speaking, the financial modalities of the 26.26 are very specific (Lombardo, 1998; Ayad, 1999; Zamiti, 1999; Hibou, 1999b). On the resources side, it is well known that the so-called voluntary donations are mostly given under duress. All the firms have to give 2DT per month and per employee to the FNS. They also have to donate large sums at certain moments of the year, such as 7 November (the anniversary of Ben Ali's arrival to power), 8 December (Solidarity Day), during the election period or, more generally, to ensure the authorities' good will. An entrepreneur who does not openly perform his solidarity duty risks difficulties insofar as he would be subject to tax controls, would find it difficult or perhaps impossible to have access to public markets, and would be an ideal victim for

bureaucratic delays and other red-tape. Civil servants have to give a day's earnings every year and peasants have to give 1 per cent of their resources. All Tunisian 'subjects', whether in Tunisia or abroad, receive constant pressure when having papers issued (ID, passport, driver's license) or when seeking other administrative services. But the state also gives a substantial amount to the fund. It is very difficult to know exactly how the 26.26 really earns its money. Officially, the resources of the FNS reached an average of 15 MDT without contributions from the state budget. But many observers question these figures. One estimate indicates the resources of the FNS to be more or less 24 MDT per year, accounting for contributions by enterprises only. That figure is twice the amount of official resources according to the official budget for 1997 (11,7 MDT) (Ben Romdhane cited in Ayad, 1999). Those in the economic milieu estimate these resources at 40 MDT, 38 MDT of which come from the biggest businessmen (Simon, 1999).

On the spending side, it is impossible to have detailed data other than the official information. There is no budget, no beneficiaries list, no chart of management organisation, no pattern of resource distribution, no evaluation of the fund's activities. The Tunisian research centre CERES conducted an evaluation in 1998, but due to political pressure, conflicts between researchers ensued and no final report was published. This opacity does not necessarily mean that money is not distributed: it most certainly is, although in a clientelistic, discretionary (Khiari and Lamoum, 2000), and inefficient way (Zamiti, 1996).

While payments to the fund are onerous for some enterprises, the total amount allocated to the 26.26 is not quantitatively significant insofar as social policies have been diversified through numerous forms of intervention for over three decades. But the visibility of the FNS is explained by the motivations that underlie its implementation. It expresses both a political discourse directed towards the middle classes (Benedict, 1997; Bras, 1996) and the ambition to eliminate the principal 'scourge' that threatens order and discipline: it represents the desire for the political control of the poor and the elimination of Islamists and uses the very methods that Islamists themselves copied from the single-party, as is suggested by the vocabulary and rhetoric used to justify the actions of the FNS.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, it is a way of circumventing the pressures exerted by both the IMF and the World Bank with regards to the decrease in social spending and budget cuts. At the same time it is another instrument of the system of negotiations and settlements between the business community and the presidential palace. The 26.26 reflects a strong correlation between, on the one hand, tolerance of the non-respect of certain rules and, on the other hand, gifts to the 26.26 (Hibou, 1999c); it demonstrates a strong capacity for appropriating and controlling social security and, lastly, it is a manifestation of the 'privatisation of the state', since the obligatory nature of the gift and the absence of any control by public entities allows one to approach the 26.26 as a form of private taxation (Hibou, 1999a).

Despite being instrumentally important, 26.26 cannot be reduced to a mere stratagem: indeed, it reflects a real concern with social problems. Since 1994, Ben Ali brought together more than 20 *Conseils ministériels restreints* (CMR) – which are the real decision-making entities of the regime to review employment, youth, and job training. He launched numerous studies and committees whose goals were to probe questions such as employment, youth, and new technologies. In so doing, Ben Ali demonstrated his awareness of the political risks stemming from unemployment, youth and social tensions, and general discontent<sup>15</sup> and was more acute than the moribund political opposition claimed. And, last but not least, the 26.26 is a symbol

of Ben Ali's personality cult. The FNS is his own creation; he is the only owner of the account (there is no control by Parliament or by the Account Court); and all the donations are made in the name of the President and not in the name of the state, or of the otherwise oft-criticised administration (Camau, 1997).

Above all else, the 26.26 is a mechanism for enforcing order, a tool, which, by eliminating the 'shaded zones', claims to anticipate the inevitable social and economic dangers of poverty. It is likewise a technique of discipline and control that renders manifest the subjection of those who are perceived as its 'objects' and the objectivisation of those who are subjected to its control. In its exercise of power, the 26.26 makes visible those subjects that require surveillance; it turns each individual into a 'case' to be gauged, classified, listed, exemplified, corrected, excluded, or normalised. But like the other mechanisms reviewed in this study, it works only because such techniques are part of networks of power in which individuals circulate. The entrepreneurs I spoke with (but this applies to individuals and families as well), are subjected to the 26.26 but they are also the relays through which it works. As intermediaries of Tunisian state power, individual businessmen may, for instance, enact exactions on salaries; they may negotiate payment in exchange for tax reductions or tax evasion; or they may obtain contracts, access to markets, or administrative in-roads. The 26.26 only functions because it finds an echo in the constant demands by economic actors for protection, aid, and facilitation. Intermediary elites and notables, the upper levels of the professional and social hierarchy, act as indispensable links in the FNS's collection of sums: the entrepreneur applies pressure on his employees; the school principle on teachers, parents, and students; the administrative director on his team of civil servants; the *omda* on the chiefs of Party sub-units (*chefs de cellule du Parti*); the latter on artisans and independent workers.

This process works, moreover, because all requests must pass through the hands of notables, partisan elites and intermediaries officially recognised by central power. 'The tyrant subjugates one person by means of another' (Etienne de la Boétie, 1993:214). Similarly, the public's acceptance of the very principle of the FNS derives from the high value traditionally accorded to practices of solidarity. The latter were remobilised during the 1980s by the Islamist movement, but their legitimacy is rooted in an earlier, apolitical conception of Islam. Principles of redistribution and social development participate in the history of the construction of the Tunisian national state, and the funds, be they private or public, partake in these practices. In the case of the 26.26, 'power transits through individuals, it is not applied to them' (Foucault, 1997:26).

There are other, simultaneous and related processes of statisation and the nationalisation of economic and social phenomena. As we saw above, this is the case for the *mise à niveau* programme and the form of interventionist and centralising liberal reforms. It is also true for the management of Islam (Bras, 2002):<sup>16</sup> the state and the highest Tunisian authorities responded to the rise of Islamist protest by creating numerous state structures for the administration of Islam, producing many norms about Islamic practice which has led to the bureaucratisation of that religion. This is true with regards to salary negotiations (Fehri, 1998; Bedoui, 1990, 2004; Khiari, 2003) which are handled not by employees or labour unions and entrepreneurs or bosses, but by the central administration which reviews them every three years in a highly bureaucratic fashion. It is true for economic success, since all cases of such success are 'naturally' attributed to the administration, the state, and the Tunisian authorities. And it is true for justice (Mamlouk, 2000) which does not function

according to the law, but rather according to social and national protection and to the rationale of the defence of society.

## Conclusion

In order to understand the exercise of power in Tunisia, we must put aside paradigms that have structured post-war developmentalist thought, as well as those that inform the present-day Washington Consensus. I have rejected the dualist and technicist accounts of the way in which political power is created and maintained. I have also critiqued a functionalist vision of economic reforms and the link between economic reforms and political systems. Economic reform can be instrumental to a political system, such as that of Tunisia, but not in terms of a global, orchestrated, and highly mastered organisation by the highest authorities or external development banks. Similarly, political control and strategies of repression are not held by President Ben Ali and his entourage, nor by the institutions and networks that are somehow supposedly independent of economic and social mechanisms. Instead, economic and social mechanisms otherwise independent of system of political control simultaneously end up serving logic of domination or even repression. This dynamic resonates well with Michel Foucault's analysis of power (1975:208):

*Power ... works like a machine. And if it is true that its pyramidal organisation gives it a 'chief,' it is the entire apparatus that produces 'power' and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field. This is such that disciplinary power is both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always attentive, leaving no shaded space and constantly controlling the very people who are supposed to control; and absolutely 'discreet' since it is constantly at work and mostly silent.*

Within this sociological analysis of power in Tunisia, however, I have also underscored one mode of government, that of the privatisation of the state. The practice of domination and even repression in Tunisia are hereafter increasingly mobilised by this specific form of governance.

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## Endnotes

1. CNLT, Rapport sur l'état des libertés en Tunisie, Tunis, miméo, 15 mars 2000; CNLT, Deuxième rapport sur l'état des libertés en Tunisie. Pour la réhabilitation de l'indépendance de la justice, Tunis, miméo, 2002; LTDH, Rapports annuels 2001 et 2002, Tunis, miméo; CNLT, Rapport sur la situation dans les prisons en Tunisie, Tunis, le 20 octobre 1999; LTDH, Les murs du silence. Rapport sur les prisons, Tunis, 2004; Amnesty International, Le cycle de l'injustice, MDE 30/001/2003, London, June 2003.

2. See also the advertising financed directly by the Tunisian government (the MédiaFrance supplement inserted regularly in *Le Monde* or the same supplements in *The Herald Tribune* or *The Financial Times*), as well as those financed indirectly by the large Tunisian companies (eg. the advertising paid by the Poulina group in *Le Monde*, 16 October 1999, in preparation of the elections and selling the merits of a stable and prosperous country).

3. 'It is not democracy that creates development, it is development that creates democracy,' writes Séguin (1999), justifying the official philosophy adopted by Tunisia with regards to the necessarily specific nature of democracy in non-Western and undeveloped countries.

4. Newspapers such as *Le Monde*, included detailed and otherwise interesting reports, such as the series of articles by Catherine Simon that appeared on 21, 22 and 23 October 1999. Paradoxically, human rights organisations also adopt this interpretation and do not extend their critique to the economic realm.
5. Taken from a confidential document written by a European economic agency, the following quotation details, in exhaustive manner, the different reasons to congratulate Tunisia: 'Tunisia has maintained an annual growth rate close to 5 per cent over the last 10 years, while preserving the coherence of its social tissue thanks to an active policy related to health, education, housing, and the modernisation of civil society. The prudence and rigor of its economic policy allows it to maintain these fundamental great equilibriums'.
6. See note 1.
7. Interviews with former political prisoners, family members of detainees, lawyers, and human rights activists, especially during December 2001, December 2002 and December 2003. Citation: Interviews with former political prisoners, family members, lawyers, and human rights activists.
8. Personal communication with Judge Yahyaoui, Tunis, December 2001 and December 2002
9. Nineteenth century's authors are Khayr ed-Din, 1987 and Bin Dhiat 1871. On Tunisian reformism, Tlili, 1974 and 1984; Bachrouch, 1984; Abdesselem, 1973; Mardin, 2000. On the myth of the 'reformist tradition', Hibou, 2005.
10. This programme has been conceived after the signature of the association agreement with the European Union (Barcelona Agreement, November 1995) even it has a more general ambition with the preparation of the implementation of the new rules of the WTO.
11. Signoles (1985) makes a distinction between, on the one hand, the statist voluntarism (in industrialisation, urbanisation and transformation of the Tunisian space) and, on the other hand, results, efficiency and even actuality of the concrete measures.
12. Bellin (1991) shows that, whatever the discourse and the qualification of the policy, the latter was always characterised by both strong state interventionism and an orientation in favour of the private sector. Waltz (1991) underscores the authoritarian nature of the regime: however, she concludes that there is an inevitable opposition between reforms and authoritarianism and personality cult. I think that current events show how this assumption was (is) naïve.
13. The owner of a laboratory and a number of other pharmacists were arrested under the pretext that they had been selling a pharmaceutical product without proper authorisation. In reality, their arrest was a political manoeuvre on the part of members of Ben Ali's 'clan'. These members had sought to participate in and profit from this flourishing pharmaceutical business, but the company's owner refused. Kamel El Taief, a businessman who had worked closely with Ben Ali during the coup d'état on 7 November, was incarcerated for several days in 2001 for publicly denouncing the president's 'family mafia' and its illicit economic activities.
14. On that score, the Tunisian press is edifying: the role of the FNS is 'to eradicate shadow zones' (FNS propaganda), to pass from 'darkness' to 'light' (*Le Renouveau*, 8 December 1996, which uses religious terms), to 'rescue society's rejected' that were previously attracted to Islamism (*Le Renouveau*, 11 December 1994), and to 'canalize oboles and gifts' (*Le Temps*, 22 March 1993). 'Facing dangers inherent to such situations, which are on the point of idling the national edifice and putting into question the homogeneity of the nation,' the '26.26' should 'reintegrate entire swathes of the national territory' (*La Presse*, 9 December 1996). The objective is less to weaken social inequalities than to fix the fundamental principles of a society anxious to safeguard its indivisibility and whose primary force is its seamless aggregation' (*La Presse*, 9 December 1994).
15. According to INS official statistics, in Tunisia those seeking employment numbered 71,300 per year for the 1996-2000 period; this figure will rise to 79,200 for the 2001-2005 period, 73,200 for the 2006-2010 period, and 53,100 (which is the level of the 1970s) by 2011.
16. Certain citations from central power's discourse give insight into the statist and national nature of control: 'The High Islamic Counsel of the Tunisian Republic will do everything in its powers to preserve the nation, with respect to its religion, from all moral laxity, all confinement, and all that could have a negative influence on the foundations of the authenticity of the nation' (cited by Bras, 1996:234). Islam will be open and modern so as to 'preserve spiritual values ... and oppose the

dangers of closure and extremism, and to conserve the civilisational foundations of the Tunisian personality' (cited by Bras, 1996:237).

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# The Political Contradictions of Algerian Economic Reforms

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*Lahouari Addi*

**From the outset, independent Algeria's political economy was marked by a paradox, for which it is still, today, paying the price. In 1962, the State, which is essentially public, was privatised, while commercial activities, which are essentially private, were made public. That was the time when revolutionary elites in the Third World thought that faith alone was enough to develop the country, using the State but without setting up the institutions guaranteeing free expression for the social groups organised as parties, trade unions, vested interests in order to participate in the political process. In the Boumedienne-Abdeslam period (1965-1978), the economic sector of the State was expected to absorb all commercial activities, from the large-scale steel industry down to the small local bakery, preventing the different social groups from enjoying any economic autonomy. Nor were they expected to make any claims on the political order. The State had set itself the task of satisfying all social needs through the so-called public sector whose vocation was not to make any profits, but to serve the public and, as a priority, the most destitute among the population.**

*Cet article traite des réformes économiques en Algérie, à l'ordre du jour depuis les années 1980, non encore réalisées malgré les discours des gouvernements successifs. Visant formellement à opérer la transition de l'économie administrée vers l'économie de marché, ces réformes se heurtent à la nature autoritaire du régime dans lequel des clans puissants utilisent les institutions de l'Etat pour s'enrichir. Ils s'opposent à la concurrence et à la mise en place d'un capitalisme manufacturier productif, préférant la spéculation et le commerce comme seuls modes d'accumulation.*

*Par ailleurs, l'Etat refuse toujours de se débarrasser du secteur économique public déficitaire, craignant de faire exploser les chiffres déjà élevés du chômage. Il préfère continuer à financer les déficits des entreprises sous sa tutelle et à distribuer des salaires vidés de leur pouvoir d'achat par des dévaluations massives, tout en interdisant la liberté syndicale pour empêcher les travailleurs de s'opposer aux effets de ces dévaluations.*

*L'embellie financière, suite à l'augmentation spectaculaire des prix mondiaux des hydrocarbures à partir de 1999, n'est pas mise à profit pour augmenter les capacités productives du marché national. Un programme de reconstruction a été lancé, certes nécessaire, mais rien n'a été prévu pour encourager la production. Au lieu d'exploiter les formidables ressources financières pour modifier le caractère rentier de l'économie, le gouvernement a opté pour une politique distributive qui allège*

*momentanément les effets du chômage et qui permet à une couche privilégiée de s'approprier une part importante de la rente énergétique.*

This public sector soon suffered serious deficits affecting the purchasing power of most of the population. In other words, it worked against the interests of the public at large, which was contradictory to its main mission.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the fact that it provided a material basis for the bureaucracy, whose living standards increased enormously, the public economic sector created revenue that benefited groups linked to political personalities and who also amassed huge private fortunes. But the sheer magnitude of the wasted financial resources, as well as the economic, political and social consequences made it apparent, also to the leaders, that the so-called public sector had to be reformed. However, while efforts were made to improve the performance of the economy, the same political order that had prevented the economy from becoming effective was maintained.

From the 1970s up until now, Algeria has always had a very high level of investment (around 30 per cent of the GNP) but which, somehow, seems unable to generate the expected growth. This is mainly to be explained by the country having a dual political system composed of both real power (held by the military) and formal power (embodied by the government and the president).<sup>2</sup> The existence of a power above the institutions makes it possible for the latter to be utilised by hidden networks in order to create private fortunes. This situation reinforces predatory practices and widespread corruption while discouraging production. The Algerian economy is characterised by a double 'rent-mechanism': first, the whole economy depends on the export of raw materials which provides a non-domestic income whose volume is not related to the capability of the national market to create such a volume of wealth; second, private fortunes accumulated stemming from this non-domestic income are linked to production. In other words, the economic wealth Algeria possesses is not produced by local labour. Private fortunes are accumulated, not through the exploitation of work, but rather by speculation and support from the State apparatus.

The authoritarian character of the regime is organised around the *rentier* nature of the economy which, in turn, reinforces it: fictitious pluralism, election fraud, prohibition of trade union freedoms, lack of the rule of law. Access to the rental income is not, however, available to everyone; it is only for the powerful clans. This means that economic agents are not equal before the law in the sharing out of the national revenue. The clans that are linked to the real power (the military) use the fiscal administration, customs and the law to eliminate any troublesome rivals. In a perceptive article that recognised the intimate relationship between the economy and the nature of the regime in Algeria, William C. Byrd remarked that:

*the ostensible objective is that of modern and neutral institutions, but the fundamental function of these institutions is to protect the transactions of a caste of economic agents whose power is based on control of the army and the security services ... Numerous magistrates act on behalf of the clans when they wish to eliminate or imprison managers that are inconveniencing the business of these interest groups.<sup>3</sup>*

In the following article we shall show, after having recalled the need for reforms, that the political economy of the government is concentrated on distribution and not on production and that it does not have the means to overcome the obstacles preventing transition towards the market laws. To the extent that the economy is not autonomous and depends heavily on political power, one may well wonder

whether commercial activities in Algeria can be studied by economic science as formulated by classical or neo-classical approaches.

## **The Need for Reform**

For historical reasons the State owns a vast economic sector that enables it to redistribute income through 'political salaries'. This means that, as the salaries are distributed by loss-making enterprises, they are not part of the surplus product but are advanced by the State with no recovery on outlay, for political reasons. As it is not subject to the laws of the market, the public sector that employs hundreds of thousands of people is adversely affected both by a deficit that is so huge that it reduces the purchasing power of consumers and by the way it promotes a parallel market that feeds colossal fortunes that are built, not on wealth creation but mainly on transfers of wealth. The so-called public sector does not follow any market logic but the political logic of a 'Nanny State' that aims at silencing all claims for an alternative political regime. However, the model, which is based on unpredictable oil income, has poor future prospects as from the 1980s the leaders themselves have realised that the Algerian economy would collapse without its oil revenues.

The first reforms were put forward after the death of President Houari Boumedienne in December 1978. His policy had been to develop the country by giving priority to heavy industry. It was under the presidency of Chadli Bendjedid (1979-1992) that there were two attempts to rectify the policies of the 1970s. The first time (1980-1988) a tendency to favour light industry tried to improve Boumedienne's legacy, taking into account the backwardness in agriculture, the shortage of water, the housing crisis and the absence of public infrastructure. This correction to the model was carried out by the government of Prime Minister Abdelhamid Brahimi but its main result was just to reduce the size of public enterprises; in fact, this was the period of the great restructuring of State enterprises into smaller units. Brahimi thought that the bad management of the economic units was caused by their size. But the creation of hundreds of smaller enterprises did not cure the disease from which the public enterprises were suffering, which was that they were not profitable and hence generated a deficit.

The fall in the world prices of hydrocarbons in 1986 created a serious financial crisis<sup>4</sup> and the State no longer possessed the financial means to hide the deficit of the public enterprises and to import food. In October 1988 this resulted in shortages that led to riots in the main towns. Some 500 people were killed and over 1,000 injured. Brahimi was dismissed and replaced by Mouloud Hamrouche (1989-1991) who introduced more radical reforms with a view to pushing the country into a market economy. This would mean the end of the State monopoly which harboured the networks of predators on the public wealth. The reforms were meant to terminate the *rentier* system that had benefited the 'barons' of the regime, who pressured Hamrouche to resign.

Hamrouche had tried to change the legal environment of the public enterprises to give them autonomy and to free them from stifling administrative supervision. To this end he created 'holdings' through administrative councils that had authority over the enterprises and that evaluated their commercial efficiency. A complex legal structure was set up to submit the State enterprises to the laws of competition and to give them an incentive to be productive.<sup>5</sup> This experiment did not have enough time to succeed or to fail, but it challenged the profiteering mechanisms of the economy

administered by the *nomenklatura*. In June 1991 Hamrouche's government fell because it had damaged powerful interests.<sup>6</sup> Imperfect as they were, his reforms of State monopolies, foreign trade, currency and credit and competitiveness on the public enterprises would have prevented the hidden clans from using the State to enrich themselves. Since then the economic policy of successive governments, favouring distribution over production, has been characterised by a liberal discourse, a still strong presence of the State in the economy, and a privatisation that has benefited the groups linked to the ruling class.

### **A Policy Based on Devaluation & the Building of Infrastructure**

After Hamrouche left, government after government went back on the reforms, although they did not renounce the discourse on the transition towards the market. From 1993 to 1996 a murderous wave of terrorism swept the country and this was also a time when the State had been on the verge of stopping all payments. Loans had to be negotiated with the international financial institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund which posed as a condition that a structural adjustment programme be implemented. The State finances were saved by credits from the IMF and the European Union, whose representatives were told by the Algerian negotiators: 'It's either us, with all our defects, or an Islamic republic just one hour's flight from Europe and to whom the inhabitants of your *banlieues* will owe allegiance.' Alarmed to the point of panic, the Westerners paid up without making any conditions on how their credits were to be used. Craft was necessary, feet had to drag and laws voted that would never be applied. Policy fluctuated between a discourse on reform and laxity in letting the deficits mount up, according to the conditions of the moment.

However, in order to obtain the necessary credits, the government did partially apply the IMF directives, dissolving hundreds of local public enterprises. This threw 200,000 people out of work although this loss of jobs was partially offset by the setting up of paid militia (community guards, GLD (*Groupes de Légitime Defense*), patriots and other auxiliaries of the security services). A plan for privatising the public sector was decided and voted on numerous occasions by the National Assembly but only the enterprises making easy profits, like hotels, were sold off. The government did not want to commit itself too far in these reforms, in spite of the official liberal discourse. It preferred to change the parameters of distribution, depending on political-administrative decision-making.

To overcome the economic difficulties and obtain credits from the international institutions, the government carried out several devaluations. This increased the State finances in local currency and compressed social demand. The report of the World Bank observed that between November 1990 and April 1991, the dinar was devalued 100 per cent, which explains the strong inflation rate (29 per cent) in 1991. The government continued with this policy: from 1992 to 2000, the value of dollar increased from 22.78 to 75.34 dinars. Thus the latter underwent a reduction of 370 per cent, which increased the availability of local currency from 377 billion dinars to 1,044 billion. Altogether, from 1990 to 2000 the Algerian currency was devalued by 500 per cent!

This monetary policy had an impact on the purchasing power of wages. According to the *Annuaire statistique pour l'Afrique* (United Nations, 2001), the price index for consumption in Algeria (food, clothing, electricity, etc.) rose by 464.8 in 2000, using

a base of 100 in 1990. The increase is still greater if 1989 is used as a comparison: according to the *Annuaire Statistique de l'Algérie (1999-2001)*, the index price in 2001 was 557.59 using 1989 as the base figure. During this period, the price of electricity and gas (run by a State company) increased almost ten times (929.06) and that of drinking water 8.5 times (846). The index of prescribed medicine reached 1,131.70. These figures show the impoverishment of the population, measured by the fall in consumption levels per inhabitant, which dropped by 30.4 per cent compared with 1980. The poverty threshold in 1988 affected 16.6 per cent of the population in rural areas and 12.2 per cent in urban areas. In 1995, the figures were 30.3 per cent and 14.7 per cent respectively, according to World Bank figures.

What was new was the impoverishment of families with only one income, which has caused them to fall below the poverty threshold. To avoid this, members of the same family decide to live under the same roof to enable the domestic unit to benefit from several incomes. The average wage is not sufficient, as it had been in the past, to ensure a decent minimum for a family of four (a couple, plus two children). The average wage of an industrial worker is 12,000 dinars (equivalent to 120 euros) and that of a secondary school teacher, 15,000 dinars. Very tough strikes demanding salary increases often break out in the school sector organised by unions not recognised by the authorities. Many teachers have been dismissed from the national education system for illegal union activities and condemned by the courts. The movement among the teachers is dangerous for the regime because it demands a return to the purchasing power of ... 1980! This would mean that a secondary school teacher would need to earn some 50,000 dinars to compensate only partially the devaluation effects since 1988. Increases in salary have been promised but they will not cancel the loss of purchasing power of the 1980s. Does the State employer have the means to pay an income that enables the physical reproduction of the labour force? A wage in a productive economy is expected to satisfy the food requirements necessary for an average family, taking into account the price of meat, vegetables and fruit, clothing, transport, etc. The regime is afraid of a wage demand by all the workers which, for the State budget, would cancel out the past devaluations. This is the reason why it prohibits the freedom of trade unions.

The devaluation of the currency has also created difficulties for a number of small and medium enterprises in the private sector, which have been forced to close and lay off workers because of the excessive cost of imported inputs and the competition of foreign products permitted on the national market. According to the *Annuaire Statistique de l'Algérie*, the unemployment rate was 26.41 per cent in 1997, 28.82 per cent in 2000 and 27.30 per cent in 2001. In 2005 it came down to 22.5 per cent, but it is still the highest in the Mediterranean region. Youth unemployment is still very high, reaching 40 per cent of the population aged 20 to 26 years in certain regions.

The liberalisation of foreign trade, by lowering customs duties, has opened up the national market to products imported from South-east Asia (clothing, shoes and so on) and has made national production more vulnerable. This policy has shrunk the bases of productive work and reinforced the trading and rentier character of the economy in which wealth comes from speculation. This can be seen in the breakdown of employment in which agriculture and industry account for barely 25 per cent of the total. The increased

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**Division of Labour by Sector**

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Agriculture	15%
Industry	10.2%
Construction/ public works	10.3%
Trade	14.7%
Services	25.2%
Administration	23.1%

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revenues of the State, following the constant rise in the price of hydro-carbons since 1999, has not augmented the purchasing power of the poorer sectors of society. The government has no intention of revaluing the level of the dinar to protect national production and the wage-earners. And yet, the currency of neighbouring Morocco, which has far fewer financial resources, is exchanged at 11.3 to the dollar while the Algerian dinar is exchanged at 77.22 to the dollar. It is estimated that the financial surplus in 2005 was \$61.01 billion, which relieves the government of pressures from the international monetary institutions.<sup>7</sup> This financial bonanza has made it possible to implement a programme to relaunch the economy, injecting a sum of \$50 billion over five years. The sectors benefiting from this programme are public infrastructure (East-West autoroute, railways, urban transport), the distribution of drinking water, agriculture and social housing. As this programme got under way it has been calculated that the growth rate rose to 6.8 per cent in 2003, but it should be remembered that it is based on the exports of hydro-carbons (more than 35 per cent of the GNP) and the activities of sectors like construction, public works and services, which transform wealth but do not create it.<sup>8</sup>

The government of Ouyahya has no plan to relaunch production to prepare public and private national enterprises to resist competition from the foreign products that have taken over the internal market. It is true that infrastructure is indispensable to all economies and the lack of them is a drawback, but they do not create wealth. Income from oil that is used in the programme to relaunch the economy is creamed off by foreign outflows. In fact, it is mainly foreign companies, better equipped and more efficient than the national enterprises, that have been awarded the contracts to carry out these projects.<sup>9</sup> The government has not drawn up a strategy to reinforce the productive capacity of national enterprises, public or private, to enable them to implement the projects submitted to international competition. The oil income that finances the \$50 billion relaunch programme mainly benefits the foreign companies that are carrying out the various infrastructure works. Moreover, wages generated by this investment will mostly be spent in the consumption of imported goods, which certainly does not promote local accumulation. It is as if the wage-earners' demands were addressed abroad obstructing the development of a national market. A large part of the State's investments and salaries thus goes outside the country, rather than helping to develop fixed capital.

All the figures, both governmental and those from the World Bank, show the heavy dependence of the Algerian economy on the exports of hydro-carbons, which account for 98 per cent of incoming revenue. In 2005, exports other than hydrocarbons were less than a billion dollars, according to the *El Watan Economie* of 15 January 2006.<sup>10</sup> With the price of oil at \$60 per barrel and more, the reforms will be postponed, as they are no longer required by the regime whose need is to resolve its political difficulties and not to improve the performance of the economy. The financial surplus made possible by the high cost of oil per barrel will buy social peace for a few years. That is what the government of Ahmed Ouyahya is doing: hiding the deprivation of the population, sprinkling some largesse here and there and wasting huge financial resources in consumption that does not reproduce them.

### **Obstacles to Making a Transition Towards the Market**

The Algerian experience in making reforms shows that the transition towards the market has to be a political decision that provides a legal framework for economic activities in all the competing commercial relationships. Without the public

authority regulating these relationships, ensuring *inter alia* independence of the judiciary and trade union freedom, the market will be dominated by forces which, based on political positions, will oppose competition. Without competition there is no market. Competition destroys profiteering mechanisms and liberates an economic dynamic that cannot be opposed by privileges that have been acquired by force. This is why the market is the expression of the autonomy of the trading sphere and also of the capacity of civil society (parties, unions, media, associations, etc.) to impose formal and institutional relationships of authority that cannot easily be deviated to serve private ends. The laws of the market correspond to those of the State, as Jürgen Habermas has observed, agreeing with the analysis of Karl Polanyi about the relationship between the market and the State.<sup>11</sup>

The market is the transformation of effective demand into supply (in the sense that J.M. Keynes gives to these concepts), in competitive conditions guaranteed by a neutral Weberian bureaucracy (such as customs, taxes, justice). Quantitatively the most important element of effective demand in the national market is the wage. The economic policy of the government, as we have shown, tends to reduce the purchasing power of wages (potential consumers of what is produced by the national market) and this gives rise to speculators who transfer capital abroad and who are consumers of imported products (luxury clothes, sophisticated household appliances, automobiles, etc.).

Wage policy is not the only obstacle to creating a genuine market which is not favoured by the elite who are attracted to posts in the State. There has not been any pressure on the State from the social elite to make a radical reform of the administered economy because this elite, which is both dominating and paternalistic, does not want to give up its guardianship over society which it subordinates to its own interests. Trained in State schools, the elite do not invest in the autonomous spaces that could create enterprises. It prefers to cling to the State apparatus that provides it with its livelihood, recognition and privileges. It has to be recognised that the State does not usually train elites for the benefit of society; it trains them for itself, so as to control and dominate society. The Jacobin culture inherited from the colonial past has reinforced this tendency, while Algeria, as opposed to France, does not have autonomous intermediary social bodies to act as counterweights to the central power and tilt power relationships towards civil society.

This is one of the reasons for the weakness of the private economic sector, which is not deeply rooted in production, preferring to grasp trading opportunities and receive clientelistic protection that enables it to appropriate the revenue distributed by the State. The economic reforms create the hostility of all social strata: the governing elite would lose a tool for the redistribution of wealth and thus the means of obtaining allegiance; the social elite is opposed to them because it chooses to depend on the State to legitimise its superiority; the national private sector prefers the high rate of profit on monetary assets in speculative activities and finally the ordinary people, composed of employees, workers and unemployed are afraid of being subjected to the law of the jungle and to price competition without the protection of the State which, up until now, has promised employment, health coverage, education, etc.

While there is unanimity against the market, it is not for cultural reasons but mostly because of class interests. Hostility against the market is not irrational, as some experts believe; on the contrary, it is rational, if one accepts as rationality the defence of the interests of the social groups concerned. It is rational only in the short term,

because in the long term, it is in the interest of everyone to make the transition towards the laws of the market. But who would dream of sacrificing his immediate interest for the future collective interest? On this very question, the elite has not fulfilled its mission of enlightenment, of being the *avant garde*, which shows its lack of historical perspective. One can hardly expect an unemployed person, bogged down in problems of daily survival to have a vision of the future, but unfortunately members of the elite, overly concerned with their petty ambitions of individual comforts, are an obstacle to the formulation of a project for the future. It is this vacuum that has been filled by the Islamic utopia which, lacking any command over the collective destiny, gives rise to flights of fantasy. All this shows up the penury of a political culture that drastically lacks a scientific knowledge of (among others) the mechanisms of production and the distribution of goods and services. There is no modern political culture in public opinion which enables the different governments to manage economic difficulties through purely monetary mechanisms to the detriment of purchasing power – the weakness of which is a handicap for the national market.<sup>12</sup>

### **Can Commercial Activities in Algeria be Explained by Economic Science?**

This question should be posed because the social sciences have historical content. The *problematique* of the political economy, as outlined by Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Karl Marx (through his criticism) has, as its content, the creation and distribution of wealth through prices, whose relationships form a system that is structurally coherent. How can this content then be explained if a local price system is utterly inconsistent? Political economy is governed by the law of value (that the neo-classical economists call, for ideological reasons, the marginal productivity of the factors of production) which postulates that labour alone is the source of wealth creation. What happens, therefore, to *rentier* economies whose wealth is not in proportion to local productive labour? Do Ricardian and Walrasian theories have any relevance for these *rentier* economies or is it necessary to develop other conceptual tools to understand the variations of value in a mercantile logic? The *rentier* economy is not subject to the dynamics of decreasing yields in industrial production and it is therefore alien to Walrasian price theory – which, incidentally, inspired the World Bank experts in their elaboration of the notion of structural adjustment. The idea is that prices should express the forces of the market – and not of the administration – in order to *adjust* automatically in a system that is self-regulated and interdependent.<sup>13</sup>

It would be interesting to know why prices in Algeria do not obey Walrasian price theory and why they are not related to wages, the price of the labour force being a measure for all other goods. In Algeria, an average worker's monthly wage would just about pay for 12 kilos of mutton (10,000 dinars). This is obviously inconsistent as, for the classical political economy, wages represent the cost of reproducing the labour force.<sup>14</sup> It is precisely for this reason that the price system in Algeria is 'unreal'; it is not related to wages that, in a market economy, are the measure of value which makes the price system consistent in terms of reproduction and accumulation. It is the price of the labour force that conditions the proportional relationships between goods and services – relationships that are expressed in monetary terms. A rigorous analysis of the Algerian economy should explain why the distribution of goods and services goes against Walrasian logic and show how to build a theory of goods and services in Algeria.

The most useful concept for such an effort is that of rental income which the classical economists considered should be eliminated in order to free the surplus created by the exploitation of labour. When the political economy was first developed, it had the political and ideological aim of showing the predatory nature of rents in order to discredit the social classes for which they were the main form of income.<sup>15</sup> We should be looking to Ricardo, and not to Walras, to develop the tools needed to approach the Algerian economy. It was in fact Ricardo who identified the mechanisms of rents, showing the need to get rid of them in order to reinforce the purchasing power of the real wage and thus to expand Keynes's effective demand. But first of all, there has to be a genuine political rupture in order to put an end of the control of the State by hidden forces that base their power on the security services. It must be borne in mind that Ricardo's work had, as a background, the struggles of the bourgeoisie. He gave them the key to understanding the mechanisms of the reproduction of material wealth by imposing the autonomy of the economic field and by terminating the pillage of the parasitical feudal strata whose legitimacy was based on their relationship to political power.

This situation is very similar to the privileges of the social groups that are now linked to the real power in Algeria. Even the reports of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which are not particularly revolutionary, are somewhat perplexed by Algeria which, they insist, possesses all that is necessary for sustainable growth. They now identify the institutions as being responsible, drawing attention to the administrative blockages, feeble authority of justice, and corruption.<sup>16</sup> These obstacles are due to the political nature of a regime that is incompatible with regulation through the laws of the market.

## Conclusion

Algeria has been in the process of reforming its economy since the 1980s, always hesitating to opt decisively for the laws of the market, in spite of an official discourse that confirmed the break with the socialist option and the welfare State. This inability to enter into the market, is not caused by technical or financial difficulties; the causes are political, because the laws of the market assume that there is an autonomous economic power, with independent trade unions and an autonomous legal system as counterweights. But the regime fears this as it has always used the economy, as it has used violence, as a political resource in order to maintain itself in power.

If the economy were to be reorganised to submit most economic activities to regulation through the market the political price would not allow the regime to survive. The latter is not in fact renouncing the manipulation of the economy which is a political source of legitimacy and which helps to obtain the allegiance of broad sectors of the population. If the *rentier* nature of the administered economy is to be terminated – the declared objective of the reforms – the regime would have to be radically changed. In other words, there would have to be a real political rupture to modernise the State in order to give its institutions the authority that they should have. That would require identifying and neutralising the hidden forces within the institutions, abolishing the duality of State power (real and formal), making the legal system autonomous so as to put an end to corruption, protecting the press, submitting all the economic agents to current legislation, liberating civil society (the one State authorised trade union – UGTA, political parties, associations, newspapers and so forth) from supervision by the security services. All this constitutes a

programme that would require the most powerful actors in Algerian politics to renounce their personal interests and privileges or envisage the emergence of a social movement capable of modernising power relationships in Algeria.

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## Endnotes

1. A public sector can function at a loss but the public must be informed and accept that the shortfalls be covered – which means giving up other public expenditure. In other words a public economic sector only exists if the State is controlled by the public which expects it to play the role of arbiter, respecting the laws voted by its elected representatives. This is not the case in Algeria where it is now necessary to rebuild a frontier between the public and the private, both in the economic as well as the political sphere; the public sphere can only exist if there is a rule of law that protects it.

2. Regarding this bi-polarity of power between the State and the army in institutions, see Lahouari Addi, 'Army, State and Nation in Algeria', in Kees Kooning and Dirk Kruijt, *Political Armies, the Military and Nation-Building in the Age of Democracy*, Zed Books, London/New York, 2001.

3. William C. Byrd, 'Algérie: contre performances économiques et fragilité institutionnelle', *Confluences Méditerranée*, No. 45, Spring 2003.

4. The world price of oil fell from \$40 a barrel in 1979 to \$12 in 1986!

5. For Hamrouche's reforms see Ghazi Hidouci, *Algérie: la libération inachevée*, La Découverte, 1995 and Georges Corm, 'La réforme économique algérienne: une réforme mal aimée' in *Maghreb-Machrek*, January-March 1993.

6. M. Hamrouche did however commit a strategic error in that the reforms had no chance of succeeding without the support of the military. Such support should have been obtained or else the military opposing the reforms publicly denounced. At all events, the army lost the opportunity with M. Hamrouche to start a genuine transition towards a market economy

7. The authorities decided to reimburse a large part of the debt which fell from 80 per cent of the GDP in 1993 to 21 per cent in 2002. In 2005 the debt was calculated at \$21.5 billion and the intention is to reduce it as much as possible, reimbursing through advance payments.

8. Moreover, there was a good rainfall in 2003 which enabled agriculture to increase its share of the GNP.

9. It is planned to spend \$5 billion in water distribution and \$3 billion in transport, of which \$1.2 billion will be used for the Algiers metro. See Pierre Mourlevat, *Exporter en Algérie*, Ubi France editions, 2005.

10. According to Mohamed Bennini, Director of the Agence algérienne du commerce extérieur, 'exports, apart from hydrocarbons, would cover only 20 days of national imports', in *La Tribune* (Algiers), 28 March 2006.

11. See J. Habermas, *L'espace public*, Payot, 1962 and K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1944.

12. In a modern democracy, social groups and different economic agents would never have accepted the extent of the devaluation that Algeria underwent during a decade

13. The World Bank experts tend to favour an increase in all prices, except for wages, the level of which is expected to cover the social needs of an average family. This is certainly determined by competition but also by workers defending themselves through their unions. These experts are more concerned to integrate the economies of under-developed countries into the hierarchy of the international market than to advise them on enlarging their own national markets. They naively believe that a low salary will bring a comparative advantage on the world market. This may be true in the long run but, as J.M. Keynes emphasised, in the long run these low-waged workers will all be dead.

14. Wages are not established according to social needs, but by the international competition of capital. Faced with this implacable competition, workers, organized in unions, negotiate wage levels, accepting a rate of productivity that enables capital to confront competition. This does not happen in Algeria because workers have no right to free trade unions. The UGTA (Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens) is the only official trade union and it obeys the instructions of the government.

15. His is the same analytical effort that is expected from Algerian researchers: to show the predatory character of the fortunes accumulated, thanks to positions in the State and to the State's monetary policy. For the same reason the policies recommended by the World Bank and the IMF will not engender development because the basic assumptions are invalid and do not correspond to Algeria's commercial realities. Even though the reports of these two institutions mention the necessity for political reforms, they do not sufficiently emphasise that these are a prerequisite for sustainable development

16. According to the World Bank, the private sector is still held back by a hegemonic and loss-making public sector, difficult access to industrial land in the large towns, an outdated and inadequate banking system and finally, by difficult access to economic information. ♦

## Libya: Reforming the Impossible?

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*Alison Pargeter*

**The violent protests that broke out in Libya's eastern city of Benghazi in February 2006 in response to the row over the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Mohamed came as no big surprise to Libya watchers. Although the demonstrations were sparked by Italian minister Roberto Calderoli's declaration that he intended to print t-shirts bearing the cartoons, they also reflected the simmering discontent and frustration that have long been building in the country's second city. Indeed, the protests were as much a means of expressing anger with the situation inside Libya as they were about the depiction of the Prophet and it wasn't long before protestors began shouting anti-regime slogans. Although Benghazi has traditionally been a rebellious region kept deliberately impoverished by the regime, the frustrations expressed by those in the incident are not unique to the eastern region. There is a groundswell of anger and despondency among much of the Libyan population at the regime's apparent inability or lack of will to improve living conditions and day-to-day life in the country.**

Some of this frustration has been fuelled by failed expectations that Libya's rehabilitation and the subsequent return of American business into the country would bring about real change on the ground. Indeed, the suspension of United Nations sanctions in 1999 following Colonel Qadhafi's decision to hand over the two Lockerbie suspects for trial in the Netherlands and the announcement in December 2003 that Libya was to abandon its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programmes, which in turn opened the way for most US bilateral sanctions to be lifted, raised expectations both internally and externally that this new international openness would be followed by some sort of opening inside the country. In view of the fact that the ending of the various sanctions regimes would also serve to leave the regime exposed to criticism as it could no longer cite international isolation as the cause of the country's many deep seated socio-economic ills, it was anticipated that Qadhafi would move to implement some structural changes that would bring Libya's anachronistic economy and polity into the modern era.

However, a few years down the line, very few concrete changes have been implemented. Although there have been some steps taken towards small scale economic reform, such as allowing some private businesses to be set up as well as the privatisation of a few companies, there has been no real attempt to tackle the chronic problems that continue to blight the country. Indeed, many Libyans ask why their country with its excellent geo-strategic location linking Africa, Europe and the Middle East, its huge natural resource base and its small population does not compare to Dubai or the other Emirates.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, despite the flooding in of foreign companies, mostly in the oil sector, from 1999 onwards, Libya continues to suffer from surprisingly high levels of poverty, pitiable infrastructure and a huge and

inefficient bureaucracy. This is well expressed by a popular Libyan joke that goes that when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) went to Libya they didn't find any weapons of mass destruction, but only mass destruction!

This article will explore why, despite Libya's ongoing rehabilitation into the international community, there has been little tangible change on the ground. By laying out the workings of the Libyan state, as well as the informal power brokers within it, this article will demonstrate that it is the very nature of the *Jamahiriyah* (State of the Masses)<sup>2</sup> system that is the key obstacle to reform. Due to the complexities of the Libyan state, it is difficult to isolate clear interest groups within the country as so much of the political agenda over the past three decades has been focused around the cult of personality of the Leader and his *Jamahiriyah*. This article therefore will attempt to unravel some of the complexities of the functioning of the Libyan system. It will also show that, despite the discourse of reform that has been adopted by the regime in recent years, there is no real political will to effect internal change. In fact, change in the discourse of the regime seems to be connected primarily with economic modernisation and transparency rather than with any opening of the highly centralised and authoritarian political system. Indeed, Colonel Qadhafi himself in a speech to the General People's Congress in January 2006 asserted that Libya should emulate Malaysia because it had opened its doors to foreign investment and become an advanced country whilst still retaining its Islamic identity.<sup>3</sup> However, as things currently stand, it seems that the Libyan regime is not even committed to introducing the reforms necessary to create a vibrant diversified economy and the changes that have been made appear to be largely cosmetic. As such, this article will show that Qadhafi's way of managing the new environment is to employ the same tactics he has always used; that is, to introduce small-scale changes that will serve to ensure that everything remains the same.

## **Impetus for Change**

During the 1990s the Libyan regime came under increasing pressures. This was due to a combination of the impact of sanctions, a fall in oil prices and the cumulative effects of years of economic mismanagement. Although the sanctions that were imposed in 1992 did not include oil exports and as such did not hit the mainstay of the country's economy, the embargo gradually eroded the energy sector as under measures introduced in 1993 imports of equipment that could be used for extracting oil and transporting it to export terminals, as well as for general maintenance and upkeep, were also banned. In addition, falling international oil prices meant that the State had less money in its coffers to service the welfare needs of its population, although this did not stop Qadhafi from building large and expensive showcase projects such as the Great Man Made River as a means of displaying defiance to the rest of the world. The country also experienced severe inflation that is estimated to have reached 42 per cent in 1993 and 50 per cent in 1994.<sup>4</sup> More importantly the strains that were placed on the economy were made worse by the general inefficiency and mismanagement of the non-oil sectors. As Tim Niblock has noted,

*Although the core economy clearly benefited from effective administration and good strategic planning, the rest of the economy suffered from lax administration, a weak legislative framework in which regulations are unclear and liable to sudden change, and inefficient use of resources.<sup>5</sup>*

All of these pressures served to limit the state's room for manoeuvre and to frustrate the population that was experiencing a fall in living standards.

It was also in the 1990s that the regime faced its most significant popular rebellion in the form of a militant Islamist opposition movement. Although a number of *jihadi* cells had begun to emerge in Libya in the 1980s the regime had believed that it had wiped most of them out in a mass sweep of arrests of suspected Islamist opponents in 1989. However, largely as a result of the Afghanistan experience where Libyans had gained valuable training in the war against the Soviets, a Libyan *jihadi* movement calling itself the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) was able to rise again in the 1990s. In 1995 the regime discovered the existence of the LIFG that had been building its numbers inside the country and in the highly conservative east in particular. As a result, Qadhafi launched a brutal and repressive campaign to liquidate its militant opponents as well as the more moderate strands of underground Islamist opposition that had also developed across the country. By 1998 the regime had succeeded in more or less wiping out the LIFG as well as other Islamist groups, but the emergence of such a force had clearly shaken the regime.

By the second half of the 1990s, some within the Libyan regime had come to the conclusion that in the face of these pressures, the country needed to rebuild its relations with the international community that would in turn enable Libya to regenerate itself and its economy. This was clearly a view that the leader himself also shared and Qadhafi sought a resolution to the Lockerbie crisis that would bring an end to sanctions and isolation. After the two Lockerbie suspects, Abdelbasset al-Meghrahi and Al Amin Khalifa Fimah, were finally handed over for trial in the Netherlands in 1999, Qadhafi then brought together a hand-picked team to negotiate the ensuing compensation deal. This team consisted of former Prime Minister and the then Ambassador to Italy, Abdel Ati al-Obeidi, the former Justice Minister and Ambassador to the UK, Mohamed Belqasim Zwai and Head of External Security, Musa Kusa. Foreign Minister Abdelrahman Shalgam was also involved. It was this group that came to be dubbed by the outside world as the 'reformist faction' and offered Qadhafi the opportunity to show a gentle more flexible face of what had gained a reputation for being a tough hard line regime. Indeed, as well as trying to restore Libya's relations with the international community, this group was keen to shed the image of the excesses of the past that had included the 'stray dog' campaign of the 1980s to liquidate Libyan dissidents residing abroad. Illustrative of this new image was the swiftness with which Ambassador Zwai sent the Cultural Secretary in the London People's Bureau back to Tripoli in disgrace after he had attacked a well-known Libyan dissident with a metal shelf after a conference in London's School of Oriental and African Studies in March 2001.

This 'reformist' group also believed that it was time for Libya to modernise its economy and some of its institutions in order not to get left behind in the new post-Cold War globalised world and importantly to find a role for the country's burgeoning and disenfranchised youth. Although their aspirations for a reformed Libya had not been articulated publicly at this point, Qadhafi was also using some of the same language and on one level appeared to favour the idea of reforming the economy. After the suspension of UN sanctions in 1999 the Colonel repeatedly declared that Libya needed to diversify away from its reliance on oil and to open up other sectors of its economy, including to foreign investors. In a speech to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution in 1999 Qadhafi told a group of foreign businessmen, 'If you want to invest in Libya, you are welcome. Legislation protecting foreign investment exists in Libya.'<sup>6</sup> He reiterated this call during an 'International Conference on Development and Investment in the Great *Jamahiriyah*' in 2000 where he noted,

*Libya wants to encourage foreign capital investment and partnership, not only for the benefit of this country but for the entire African continent to which Libya is the gateway for Europe ... We will create the right atmosphere for the investor.*<sup>7</sup>

One of the drivers behind the Leader's willingness to advocate such ideas was of course the need for Libya to restore its relations with the United States, as this would bring not only new business, but also technical know-how and international respectability. The regime clearly felt it was necessary to convince Washington that it was serious about reform and it appears to have been successful. Indeed, although this more progressive approach did not prevent Qadhafi from continuing to lambaste the West with anti-imperialist rhetoric, it raised expectations among many quarters that the regime had really turned a corner and had decided that its future lay in a reformed Libya.

### **Enter Saif al-Islam**

Those within the reformist camp may have had more progressive ideas about the future of Libya than other traditionalists within the regime who felt that their own privilege was tightly linked to maintaining the old socialist style *Jamahiriyah*. However, these reformists were still essentially part of the older generation and many had been well entrenched within the regime since the revolution of 1969. It was the coming to age of Qadhafi's eldest son by his second wife, Saif al-Islam, that brought new blood into the equation and that really added impetus to the calls for internal reform.

The fresh-faced Saif al-Islam was an enthusiastic proponent of free market economics having completed an MBA in Vienna in 2000. He emerged on the Libyan political scene in the late 1990s primarily through the establishment of his charity, the Qadhafi International Foundation for Charitable Associations.<sup>8</sup> This organisation was set up as an umbrella group for a range of charities ostensibly working to provide humanitarian assistance abroad as well as to carry out charitable work inside Libya. However, in reality this organisation has enabled Saif al-Islam to play a major political and economic role in the country whilst claiming that he is simply representing civil society. It was through the charity, for example, that Saif al-Islam was able to broker a deal in 2000 for the release of the western hostages being held by the Abu Sayaf group in the Philippines. Alongside the charity, Saif al-Islam also set up the One Nine Group – an investment group comprising a portfolio of companies.

As Saif al-Islam grew in confidence, his demands for a changed Libya became bolder. He repeatedly appeared on the international media talking about the need for reform and in 2002 asserted,

*I would like Libya to be strongly linked to the developed World and to be a safe oasis for foreign investment and democracy, respecting the human rights and the environment.*<sup>9</sup>

Whilst his calls for foreign investment in sectors such as tourism and services simply reiterated his father's assertion that the country needed to diversify, Saif al-Islam's talk about possible political change and issues such as human rights made him stand out as possibly offering a new vision for a country that at that time was still essentially steeped in old Cold War revolutionary rhetoric.

Saif al-Islam's major coup however, was in persuading his father to appoint his friend and ally, Shukri Ghanem as General Secretary of the General People's

Committee (Prime Minister). Ghanem who had held important posts in OPEC in Vienna before being made General Secretary for Trade and Economy in the Libyan cabinet was a westernised technocrat and fervent advocate of free market economics. In June 2003 he was appointed to head up the cabinet, despite strong opposition from the old guard within the regime who feared that this relative newcomer might threaten their positions. Qadhafi told the General People's Congress (Parliament) that Ghanem had been brought in specifically to sort out the country's economic difficulties and that he would be tasked with transforming the economy away from its reliance on the public sector. For Libya Ghanem's appointment was a major shift, not only because of the kinds of ideas he advocated, but also because he was a relative unknown in the Libyan political elite. On the surface, therefore, it appeared that the country's changed international role had indeed prompted the Libyan regime and Qadhafi himself to adopt a new more open approach to internal affairs.

## Enter Ghanem

Shukri Ghanem came to his new post full of ambitious plans to reform the economy. However, he inherited a chaotic state-centred system that had suffered from over thirty years of neglect and mismanagement. One of the main challenges the new General Secretary faced was the country's bloated public sector that employed over 800,000 Libyans out of a population totalling around six million.<sup>10</sup> Ghanem was clear that in order to modernise the economy and to encourage a private sector that could create jobs, he needed to pare down the number of those employed in public services. In an interview with the Libyan *al-Tijara* magazine in the month following his appointment he asserted,

*We have to apply the instructions of the leader of the Revolution to do away with the public sector and to move towards the private sector.*<sup>11</sup>

However to pare down the public sector would inevitably increase the numbers of unemployed in the country – another key challenge facing the new Prime Minister. Although official unemployment estimates stand at 13 per cent, unofficial approximations are much higher at between 35 to 40 per cent.

At the same time Ghanem was also faced with a population desperate for salary increases. State sector wages had been effectively frozen since the 1980s when Law No. 1 of 1981 was introduced prohibiting wage increases. For many Libyans the income from one public sector job that averaged around 150 Libyan dinars (US\$115) per month was insufficient and many professionals from doctors to teachers to school inspectors were forced to take on additional jobs in the existing but small private sector or in the informal economy in order to survive. The new General Secretary also had to deal with the problems of an unwieldy and inefficient bureaucracy as well as widespread corruption and illegal economic activity that is estimated to be as high as 30 to 40 per cent of GDP. As such Ghanem faced a challenge of an almost Sisyphean nature that if it were to work would require the backing of the highest echelons of the regime as well as the population who would be the first to suffer in any structural adjustment process.

Almost three years on from Ghanem's appointment however, there is little evidence of any far-reaching changes actually having been implemented. Although three years is clearly a limited time to judge, from his being appointed to his being removed from the post in the cabinet reshuffle of March 2006, Ghanem achieved little of what he was tasked to do. That is not to say that the General Secretary did not succeed at

all. Indeed, he made a number of valiant attempts at reform and scored some minor successes. He was able to secure the lifting of subsidies on some basic goods and foodstuffs for example and also managed to privatise a few state-owned companies. In addition, as part of his bid to increase transparency, Ghanem was able to set up a website for the General People's Committee through which he was prepared to engage in debates by responding to individual complaints. Perhaps the most important legacy of Ghanem's short rule however was that he made the language of reform common currency in Libya. For a country that for many years had been largely isolated from the outside world, Ghanem articulated what it meant to reform the economy and what kinds of benefits and sacrifices such changes would entail. However, he was ultimately unable to put his plans into practice.

Many outside observers, as well as Ghanem himself, have blamed this lack of advancement on the presence of hard line elements within the regime who oppose any sort of change that might move Libya away from the highly centralised *Jamahiriyah* system. Indeed, there are substantial elements, particularly members of the Revolutionary Committees Movement, who fear that the introduction of a private sector economy could seriously threaten their own interests and the highly developed patronage networks that underpin the existing political framework. These old guard elements include figures such as Ahmed Ibrahim, the Deputy Secretary of the General People's Congress and former cabinet members such as the Secretary for Youth, Ali Al-Shaari and Public Security Secretary Nasser al-Mabrouk. Whilst these individuals have clearly created obstacles to Ghanem's plans for change, the reasons for the lack of progress on this front run much deeper than the resistance by a group of hardliner revolutionaries. Indeed, the real roots lie in the *Jamahiriyah* system itself and despite rumours after the regime declared it was to abandon its WMD programmes that Libya's unique system of governance would be replaced by a more traditional Presidential Republic, the Leader continues to display complete devotion to his own creation.

### **The *Jamahiriyah***

The *Jamahiriyah* was established shortly after Qadhafi came to power primarily as a tool to ensure that no centralised body could challenge his own authority. Whilst in theory the 'State of the Masses' represents rule by the people, as every decision is debated at the lowest level among Basic People's Congresses and fed up through a hierarchy of congresses and committees to the General People's Congress (GPC), in reality, despite all the good intentions, this system has served to perpetuate the rule of an extremely narrow elite. Indeed, the highest body within the system, the General People's Committee, or cabinet, has been composed largely of a small group of individuals who have simply been reshuffled every few years. Libyan academic Dr. Mohamed Zahi Mogherbi has calculated that from the revolution of 1969 until 1999 Libya had a total of only 112 ministers in the General People's Committee.<sup>12</sup> This number becomes even more striking when one considers that some stayed in their posts for only one year or two.

These ministers are primarily a group of technocrats, mostly of a similar age to Qadhafi, who have been content to take on the various arbitrary positions they have been allocated over the years. Indeed, the skills of each minister are rarely matched to the post they have been allocated. Even the ministries themselves are subject to the same arbitrary approach. Ministries are created or dissolved at the whim of the leadership and this has resulted in periods where the country has had no education or health ministry for example. This arbitrariness has even extended to those sectors

that are crucial to Libya's economic survival. Indeed, in the reshuffle of 2000 Qadhafi dissolved the oil ministry, placing the running of the energy sector in the hands of the National Oil Corporation (NOC). Then in 2004 the oil ministry was reinstated, but an old style hardliner, Fathi Ben Shetwan was appointed as oil minister and soon clashed with the then head of the NOC, Abdullah al-Badri. Despite being popular with foreign oil companies, Al-Badri himself was replaced by Ghanem in the reshuffle of March 2006.

As a relative newcomer to the Libyan political scene Shukri Ghanem was therefore a notable exception to this enduring clique of technocrats. Although he was Minister for Trade and Economy from the end of 2001 before being appointed as General Secretary, he was widely regarded as a new face that had been effectively parachuted into the cabinet by Qadhafi. The fact that he was not an established figure within the ruling elite soon brought him the label of outsider and he was criticised for not understanding the system within which he was trying to effect change. Indeed, even the more reformist elements within the regime criticised him for trying to move too quickly and for not dealing with the established framework of the *Jamahiriyah* in the appropriate manner.

Part of Ghanem's impatience arose from his inability to accept the limited role of the Executive within the *Jamahiriyah* system. He became extremely frustrated by the fact that the cabinet is subservient to other bodies, namely the GPC (Parliament) and that key figures within the GPC Secretariat were able to block his reform efforts whilst claiming that they were doing so on behalf of 'the masses'. For example, in 2004 GPC Deputy Secretary Ahmed Ibrahim abolished Ghanem's resolution to privatise a marine transportation company. The frustration at repeatedly having his policies blocked prompted Ghanem to engage in a very public confrontation with Ahmed Ibrahim during a GPC meeting in January 2004. Ghanem complained of 'obstacles' and 'invisible forces' that were going against the policies of his government, making it effectively a powerless department. Ahmed Ibrahim however took great delight in reminding Ghanem that his cabinet was merely a 'technical committee' and that real power lay in the hands of the people.<sup>13</sup>

In addition the Secretariat of the General People's Congress also has power over key decisions related to issues such as personnel. As Ghanem complained in 2005,

*If you are the Secretary of the General People's Committee, whenever you want to appoint the head of a department or the head of an authority or a manager of an administrative department, you have to send that appointment to the Secretariat of the General People's Congress in order for consent to be given ... Sometimes we want to suspend a member of staff, but we can't. When you are unable to bring about the required changes in your workforce, these people feel that you are not their head and they don't respect you and they won't listen to you and when you take a decision they try to manoeuvre around it by going to different authorities.<sup>14</sup>*

Indeed, one of the unique elements of the *Jamahiriyah* system is its reliance on endless committees and congresses, as well as scores of regulatory and supervisory bodies which serve to ensure that no one institution can become too powerful. In fact this plethora of institutions enables Qadhafi to maintain a sense of orchestrated chaos in which he likes to be regarded as the voice of wisdom and calm. Despite Ghanem's repeated calls for the bureaucracy to be reduced, the Leader has shown a willingness to continue expanding the number of administrative bodies. In January 2006 for example Qadhafi announced that the number of Basic People's Congresses was to be increased to 30,000. Whilst these endless committees might serve to mop up some

of the public sector workforce and to strengthen Qadhafi's hand, they ultimately stand in the way of meaningful reform.

One of the problems associated with Ghanem not being able to choose his own cabinet is that he has had individuals foisted upon him who do not share his own vision. In March 2004 a number of old revolutionary figures were brought into the General People's Committee including Nasser al-Mabrouk as Public Security Secretary and Mehdi Emberish as Culture Secretary, effectively hemming Ghanem in. As a result, the Prime Minister remained a man without a willing staff. Furthermore, due to the arbitrary nature of the system, unlike former General Secretaries, Ghanem's role was confined largely to the economic and administrative spheres. He appeared to have no say in internal political affairs and was noticeably absent from the domestic political scene altogether. His involvement in the country's foreign policy was also largely limited to issues related to foreign investment. Indeed one of his early forays into the subject only served to prove his limited skill in the diplomatic arena when he told the BBC that Libya had 'bought peace' in the Lockerbie compensation deal. In fact some fellow reformers suggested that Ghanem should have been appointed as an economic advisor to the Leader rather than as Prime Minister.<sup>15</sup>

It seems therefore that Ghanem was ultimately unable to overcome the limitations of the post he had been given. The role of General Secretary in Libya has never carried real power and despite the unusual degree of outside interest in him, Ghanem was no exception to this rule. Indeed, it appears that he was little more than an experiment for Qadhafi who was flirting with the idea of opening the country up. Ghanem's real use was his ability to deal with Western powers and his apparently successful attempts to prove to the outside world that Libya was serious about embarking upon a new phase of transformation – something that was critical to Qadhafi's attempts to restore Libya's place in the international community.

## **Informal Power Networks**

Perhaps the most important key however to understanding Ghanem's failure is the fact that the cabinet itself, as well as the formal institutions of the *Jamahiriyah* are minor players in the Libyan political scene. Although the cabinet usually contains a few heavyweights, the majority of cabinet members are essentially technocrats whose primary use is to implement decisions made elsewhere. As such it appears that the hopes that were pinned on Ghanem by Western governments in particular after he first came to power were greatly misplaced. The real centre of power in Libya lies in the various informal networks that the Leader has nurtured since the start of his rule.

## **Brother Leader**

The most important player in this informal power structure is that of the Leader of the Revolution himself. Although Qadhafi does not have any formal or official role within the *Jamahiriyah*, his position as Guide of the Revolution or Brother Leader enables him to make key decisions without being held accountable. Indeed, one of Qadhafi's favoured methods of ensuring his wishes are carried out is simply to 'advise' and drop hints as to what policies should be implemented. For example in January 2006 the Leader gave a speech to the special budgetary session of the GPC and declared that every year's budget should be allocated to a specific sector in order to bring that sector up to standard and that the 2006 budget should be used to solve

the housing crisis.<sup>16</sup> Similarly in March 2005 the Leader suddenly announced that an additional 100,000-200,000 Libyans should be drafted into the security services and later in the year reportedly gave significant pay rises to security personnel. These policies were blatantly at odds with Ghanem's repeated assertions that the public sector should be pared down and wage increases prohibited. Having no formal role has also enabled Qadhafi to blame official institutions or the 'masses' for the problems facing the country. As one analyst has noted,

*As repeatedly happened throughout the 1980s ... economic or political setbacks could now be blamed on the popular institutions in charge of the Jamahiriyyah – and not on Libya's ruler, who, in principle, was no longer a part of Libya's formal structures.*<sup>17</sup>

This has continued and the Leader has even held the 'masses' responsible for the country's foreign policy. In his September 2004 anniversary of the Revolution speech for example, Qadhafi blamed the Libyan people for the confrontations the country had had with the outside world because they had 'failed to implement and exercise the people's authority properly.'<sup>18</sup>

Qadhafi has also ensured that there is only room for one personality in the *Jamahiriyyah*. Indeed, cabinet members are rarely referred to in the state media by name, but rather by title and are not allowed to develop any strong public persona. This concept even extends to football players who are not permitted to wear shirts with their names on but are only referred to by number! This is in line with the egalitarian and non-exploitative theoretical principles behind the *Jamahiriyyah*, but effectively ensures that no one can challenge the overpowering figure of its creator.

### **Informal Advisors**

Since coming to power Qadhafi has relied upon an informal network of advisors and trusted confidants, most important of whom are his own family and tribe. This informal network, sometimes referred to as *Rijal al-Khaimah* (the Men of the Tent)<sup>19</sup> consists of figures such as Qadhafi's cousin Ahmed Qadhaf al-Dam, the current Deputy Secretary of the GPC Ahmed Ibrahim (also a member of the Qadhadhfa clan), the General Inspector of the Armed Forces, General Khuwaylidi al-Humaydi and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, Abu Bakr Yunis Jabr, among others. Many of them are high-ranking military and security personnel and they also include some of the original members of the Revolutionary Command Council that took power with Qadhafi in 1969. Indeed, they have personal relationships with the Leader, most of which go back over many years. The reformist-minded Ambassador to the UK, Mohamed Belgasim Zwai for example attended the same secondary school as Qadhafi in Sebha and has remained a constant colleague ever since. These figures orbit around the figure of the leader and have been given various posts over the years, including in the cabinet, as ambassadors, as Prime Minister (in the case of Abdel Ati al-Obeidi for example) or in Qadhafi's personal office known as the Pen of the Leader. However, their personal connection to Qadhafi is always more important than any position they may have at any given time and they act as a kind of informal advisory committee.

One important change within this informal network in recent years has been the growing influence of Qadhafi's children. Saif al-Islam has clearly been the most important member of the family in this respect and has taken an increasing role in the country's political, economic and social sphere, prompting some to suggest that he is heir apparent. In fact, despite his apparent enthusiasm for free market

economics and increased transparency and accountability, Saif al-Islam looks to be imitating his father by claiming he has no formal position in the political establishment, whilst playing a major role in many different aspects of Libya's political and economic life. He has taken on a number of roles in recent years ranging from negotiating compensation deals such as in the La Belle nightclub bombing case to representing Libya at the World Economic Forum. Indeed, the leadership has been happy to use Saif al-Islam to represent the user-friendly face of the regime – a role in which he seems to revel.

Saif al-Islam's younger brother Saadi meanwhile was recently appointed to head up Libya's Special Forces and other sons, including Khamis and Moatassim have key roles within the armed forces. Qadhafi's daughter Aisha heads her own charity, *al-Wattasimu* that also provides her with a platform through which to play a role in various fields. Although their power in relation to day-to-day politics is not clear, Qadhafi's offspring have clearly been able to wield increasing influence, to the distaste of some within the inner circle.

### **Revolutionary Committees**

Alongside this group of confidants, the Revolutionary Committees Movement represents another important source of informal power. The movement was set up in the 1970s to 'safeguard' the revolution and continues to have a presence in all Libyan institutions. Committee members control the Basic People's Congresses as well as key sectors such as higher education. The main attributes of these revolutionaries are their total and absolute loyalty to the *Jamahiriyah* and a willingness to do the regime's dirty work. Indeed, they act as a kind of paramilitary security force and have been responsible for killing and eliminating potential opponents over the years. They have been handsomely rewarded for their services, many of them having been given farms or other perks such as being able to control state food distribution channels where there is ample opportunity for profiteering.

The reformists within the Libya regime have tried to give the impression that whilst the revolutionary committees were a necessary tool during the early years of the revolution, they developed into a monster that Qadhafi could no longer control. These reformists claimed that the new, transformed Libya would curb the power of this group. Even Saif al-Islam has spoken of the need for them to be reined in. In an interview with *Al-Jazeera* the leader's son stopped short of saying they should be abolished, but noted, 'The Revolutionary Committees have to develop, to become part of civil society, to get rid of the negative elements in them, and to reconsider their policies.'<sup>20</sup> Qadhafi himself also acknowledged that they had done some damage and, as Libya's rehabilitation progressed, these old style revolutionaries came to look like an anachronistic symbol of an era from which the regime wanted to distance itself. However, the Revolutionary Committees have always acted as a useful tool to bolster the regime in moments of weakness. They were brought to the fore during the 1980s when the regime wanted to eliminate dissidents, including those residing abroad, yet were pushed out of the limelight when the regime embarked on a short experiment in liberalisation in the late 1980s. They were again brought back in the 1990s to root out Islamist opponents through special purging committees. More recently, Revolutionary Committee members were brought back into the General People's Committee following the Benghazi riots in February 2006. It appears therefore that the leadership is likely to continue to rely on this informal force that ultimately carries more weight than the formal political establishment.

## Popular Social Leaderships

The Popular Social Leaderships also represent another informal power network that were set up in 1993 and tasked with spreading the revolution as well as 'countering corruption, deviation and attempts at treasonable conspiracy.'<sup>21</sup> The Leaderships consist of important tribal leaders who represent their own communities and localities within the movement. Each Leadership also has a general co-ordinator in the local *Shabiyat* (local municipalities) in order to better represent the interests of their own locality. In reality however the Popular Social Leaderships represent a means by which Qadhafi can better manipulate the country's tribal alliances and keep the more rebellious tribal groupings in line. Parallel to these social leaderships are the Social Youth Associations that have a similar role among the younger generation. In December 2005 Qadhafi moved to increase the role of these associations, displaying a renewed willingness to rely on tribal delineations as a means of keeping control. Indeed, the leader declared that the youth associations should be used to help resolve some of Libya's socio-economic problems such as homelessness and unemployment among the young and that every young person should join their Social Youth Association in order to access assistance and to feel a sense of belonging. However, Qadhafi appears to have given these associations power akin to that of an informal police force as he instructed:

*There mustn't be anyone in Tripoli or Benghazi without an organisation – you must search for them. You must ask anyone you find in the street and go and make him join an association.*

These associations therefore are yet another means by which the regime can manipulate the tribal system.

In the face of this combination of power brokers, all skilfully manipulated by the leader himself, the General Secretary and his cabinet clearly have a limited degree of influence. All the time that Qadhafi is willing to rely on these informal networks to prop up his regime, reform of the formal structures of government will remain largely meaningless.

## Cosmetic Change

In light of the increasing focus of attention by foreign governments and of the Bush administration in particular on pursuing reform in the Middle East, as well as the need for Libya's rehabilitation process to be completed fully, the regime has busied itself by implementing a number of changes to prove that it is enacting its reform agenda. Indeed, it has even taken to employing foreign consultants in showcase appointments to advise on the reform process, such as Harvard academic Peter Porter who was hired in 2005. However, most of the changes that have taken place so far appear to be largely cosmetic in nature.

One of the most important steps taken recently on the political front was the release of 131 political prisoners, the majority of whom were members of the Islamist group the Muslim Brotherhood, who were arrested in the late 1990s and convicted in 2002 of belonging to a banned organisation. Whilst this is clearly a major step for a regime that has long displayed a complete intolerance to Islamists of any hue, the releases cannot be considered as representing a shift in approach towards political pluralism. The prisoners were not cleared of their crime, having had their convictions upheld by the Supreme Court at the beginning of 2006, and were released, therefore, upon the clemency of the regime. Moreover the releases appear to

have been agreed on the condition that the members of the Brotherhood do not engage in any political activity outside of the framework of the *Jamahiriyah*.

However, the case has helped the regime to improve its human rights image – something that Saif al-Islam has been working towards over the past few years. For example, he set up Libya's Human Rights Association under the auspices of his charity and instigated a number of initiatives such as the anti-torture campaign that was introduced in 2003. The aim of this campaign was for victims of torture to register complaints about mistreatment by the regime. Many victims came forward, yet by May 2005, not one case had been followed up on and no one had been brought to justice.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, although the regime is now allowing the population to criticise the government in relation to socio-economic issues, such as poor service provision or corruption, the Qadhafi family and the *Jamahiriyah* remain off-limits. Indeed, those Libyans who have dared to speak out against the regime continue to risk arrest and imprisonment.

Genuine political reform remains firmly off the agenda. Even Saif al-Islam talks about extending People's Democracy rather than genuinely opening up the political system.<sup>23</sup> Even those of a more reformist bent have followed Qadhafi's example and indicated that they aspire for Libya to become another Malaysia, suggesting that they seek economic rather than political liberalisation. In this vein Saif al-Islam commented in an interview in February 2006 that his economic model for Libya was the United Arab Emirates and his political model was Morocco.<sup>24</sup>

Likewise reform of the security sector remains a taboo subject and the regime's reliance on the security services to suppress internal dissent continues to be a feature of the Libyan state. In fact, the War on Terror has greatly assisted the regime in its bid to increase its domestic security apparatus and enabled it to justify these moves in the name of fighting international terrorism. In April 2005 for example Qadhafi gave the police military powers in order to better tackle terrorist infiltrators. The regime has also been assisted in its bid to prevent a Libyan Islamist opposition from developing again by the willingness of western governments, namely the US and the UK, to designate the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) as a terrorist organisation and to open the way for suspected members of the organisation to be returned to Tripoli.

The new international environment also clearly gave a boost to the country's oil and gas sector and many American companies were able to return after most US unilateral sanctions were lifted in 2004. The new climate prompted the regime to try to introduce some reforms to the oil sector, most notable of which was the holding of a transparent bidding process for exploration blocks in the EPSA IV round of October 2005. Whilst foreign investors welcomed this move, the energy sector has always worked sufficiently well to ensure that foreign investment has been forthcoming despite the bureaucratic and administrative hurdles. Indeed Libya's high quality low sulphur oil will continue to attract foreign investment into the country. Such increased income flows, however, arguably serve to dampen the regime's appetite for reform in other sectors. Indeed one of the key objectives of the reformist strategy was to introduce a dynamic private sector, yet, as foreign energy companies have returned, the impetus for such reforms has dwindled. Aside from the brief failed flirtation with liberalisation in the 1980s in which Libyans were allowed to enter into *tasharukiyyat* (partnerships) with the state to co-own enterprises, since its inception the regime has sought to prevent large-scale private

sector activity, viewing it as a potential destabilising force. There was a slight shift in attitudes on this issue in the 1990s and in 1992 the GPC passed a law permitting the sale of state property to private interests and a number of private enterprises began to spring up.

However, when Ghanam took over the private sector was still almost non-existent. The General Secretary earmarked 360 companies for privatisation and under his supervision the privatisation board managed to oversee the transfer of 40 state-owned companies.<sup>25</sup> However, many of those companies were in fact small affairs and their privatisation had little impact. Indeed, former Head of the NOC, Abdullah Badri, who was on the privatisation board complained that many of the companies that Ghanem had planned to privatise were in fact already dead in the water.<sup>26</sup> Moreover there were complaints that the employees of some of these companies that had been privatised were literally thrown out on the street and not compensated for their loss.

There were also some advances made towards reforming the country's primitive banking sector. Although private banks had been allowed to operate since the 1990s, the Central Bank continued to maintain a 50 per cent share in the privatised banks and essentially was able to put a brake on any attempts by the private ventures to overstep the mark. In June 2005 however Saif al-Islam announced moves to restructure and privatise five state banks, promising that foreign banks would be able to buy shares in two of them. This followed the passing of a new banking law in March 2005 permitting foreign banks to open branches or offices in Libya, providing they have a minimum capital of US\$50 million. However, the former Governor of the Central Bank, Dr. Ahmed Menessi, admitted in 2005 that the country was not yet ready for this development. He noted,

*the new banking law approved this year allows foreign banks to operate in Libya but we need time to strengthen our banks and enable them to face competition.<sup>27</sup>*

The regime has also allowed some private businesses to be set up. These are mostly small-scale enterprises such as hotels, restaurants, internet cafes or retail businesses. However, it is ensured that those running these businesses are not able to expand their activities to any significant degree. For example some have found that the bureaucracy and red tape has repeatedly stood in the way of their being able to develop their own enterprises. This problem was noted by the IMF when it observed in 2005 that private sector activities are hindered by a 'complex regulatory regime, restrictive labour market practises and a legacy of policy reversals.'<sup>28</sup> Another problem that has hampered private sector activity has been the difficulty that ordinary Libyans have had in securing business loans. As part of the reform process Qadhafi introduced a new scheme in 2003 whereby any Libyan could apply for an interest-free loan from the state in order to set up a new business. This loan scheme also extended to buying property as a means of creating a private property market. However, the scheme soon became beset with problems, not only due to the endless bureaucracy involved in the application and approval process, but also because it became subject to corruption. Libyans complained that one needed to know the right people within the system in order to actually be granted a loan and that those who had such connections had managed to access multiple loans under different names. Qadhafi himself also linked the loan scheme to loyalty to the state as, for example when he gave the Social Youth Associations greater responsibility for the process.

However, those within the upper echelons of Libya's elite, appear to be able to bypass the various obstacles faced by the majority of the population. Indeed, the main beneficiaries of Libya's new opening to the international community have been the family of Qadhafi and those of other high-ranking members of the regime. Qadhafi's children, and the children of other notables have developed vibrant businesses that have made the most of the new international environment. Mohamed Qadhafi, for example, owns both Libya's mobile telephone companies, *Libyanna* and *Al-Madar*, as well as the General Post and Telecommunications Company. Saadi Qadhafi reportedly owns a construction company called *al-Wathiqoun* that has contracts for major construction projects across Libya. Hannibal Qadhafi has major interests in the marine transportation sector and according to the Libyan opposition owns the General National Maritime Transport Company.<sup>29</sup> Despite Saif al-Islam's assertion in February 2006 that he didn't want Libya to follow Russia's example and become a country of oligarchs, like his siblings he has a plethora of business interests, ranging from the media (One Nine Media Company), to the oil sector (One Nine Petroleum) and beyond. He also is believed to own the country's first private airline, *Al-Buraq* and is rumoured to be trying to set up another private airline company through One Nine Aviation. Likewise, other key figures in the regime have been able to make a profit from the new more liberalised environment. It is alleged, for example, by parts of the opposition outside of the country that some key figures have bought up land and property in anticipation of renewed interest in the Libyan market. Therefore despite the openings that have occurred, Libya's wealth remains firmly in the hands of its small elite.

Moreover, despite the regime's repeated assertion that it wants to rid the country of corruption, the lack of transparency that characterises the business dealings of those closest to the leadership is endemic throughout Libyan society. In its annual report of 2005, Transparency International rated Libya 117<sup>th</sup> out of 158 countries<sup>30</sup> and in 2003 the IMF criticised the regime for its use of extra budgetary expenditure, claiming, 'this expenditure has taken place on a discretionary basis outside the supervision and control of the budget.'<sup>31</sup> Since coming to power, Qadhafi has relied heavily on patronage as a means of securing loyalty. For example, top of the range cars are provided to members of the security services who in turn sell them on to others at a profit. These patronage networks have also created an environment whereby officials distribute money and favours, enabling them to develop their own personal 'fiefdoms'. These types of practices also extend to the cabinet and those within the reformist camp are not immune. Indeed, despite his anti-corruption drives questions have even been raised as to Shukri Ghanem's role in this respect.

In fact, corruption has become so commonplace that Libyans have got used to working outside of the official framework in order to get anything done. Tax payments, for example, appear to be arbitrary and people regularly pay bribes in order to get the authorities to agree to a sum of tax they are willing to pay.<sup>32</sup> The public sector is also victim to such corrupt practises. As Ghanem himself has complained, there are scores of 'ghost employees' who take a state salary yet who never turn up to work, as well as salaries having being paid for years to workers who don't even exist.<sup>33</sup> Indeed as Ghanem himself noted in March 2006, the population's reliance on the state provides an environment that is ripe for those who have the right connections to influence officials in order to get housing, farms and other privileges.<sup>34</sup> He rightly asserted that in order for real reform to be successful the mentality of the Libyan population needed to change. Just prior to the end of his Premiership, he observed,

*The first and the most important requirement of reform is to work strongly in order to change the thinking, the mentality and the culture of the people which could be summarised in their general feeling that the state is their father and it is their guarantor that has to pay everything for them and provide them with housing, treatment, work and everything else.<sup>35</sup>*

Perhaps this was a belated admission that the job of reforming Libya may be beyond the realm of the possible.

## Conclusion

Ultimately the reform process in Libya has been hindered by an absence of political will at the highest level. This absence stems from the regime's obsession with its own security that far outweighs any perceived need for change. The discourse of reform is largely aimed at creating the impression that real change is occurring, whilst in fact the underlying structures remain the same. Indeed, the comments made by Dirk Vandewalle in relation to the regime's brief experiment with reform in the 1980s still hold true. Vandewalle noted, 'Libya's 'corrective measures' taken after 1987 were largely a means for relieving popular grievances and safeguarding the political system. In this system, where symbolism and charismatic leadership have played an important role, the diplomatic campaign to polish the image of Libya's revolution both abroad and at home was intended to bring renewed lustre to a tarnished political experiment.'<sup>36</sup>

The result of this lack of will to reform is that Libyans are becoming increasingly frustrated at the anomaly of a state that has such significant oil income yet that is unable to service even the most basic needs of its population. In fact many perceive that despite the renewed inflows of foreign companies to the country social inequalities are increasing and in many cases their personal circumstances are deteriorating. For much of the population the words of the reformists appear to be little more than empty promises that have only rubbed salt into old wounds. It is these frustrations and failed expectations that ultimately led to the angry outbursts that occurred in Benghazi in February 2006.

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## Endnotes

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# State Welfare in Egypt Since Adjustment: Hegemonic Control with a Minimalist Role

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**This article argues that Egypt's implementation of an economic reform and structural adjustment programme since 1991 has not led to a reduction of its hegemony over certain welfare services. Yet its role in the provision of free health and educational services has been drastically curtailed. This is evident if the pre- and post adjustment situations are analysed in terms of the poor's access to education and health services. The introduction of cost recovery measures has negatively impacted on the poor and increased their vulnerability to exploitation by exposing them to a wide range of 'hidden' and informal fees. Further, the introduction of special policies designed to mitigate the rising costs of education and health care are not being implemented due to a set of institutional and political reasons. The consequences of the increasing privatisation of educational and health services on the poor are examined by looking at the detail of those living in the densely populated community of Bulaq el Dakroul in Cairo.**

Just as in the 1950s and 1960s Egypt was the first to champion the public sector as the driving force behind development, in the mid-1970s it became the first Arab country to embark upon an economic liberalisation policy (Ayubi, 1995:129). The adoption of an open door policy, commonly known as the *Infitâh*, was characterised by a geographical reorientation from promoting trade with the Eastern bloc to Western countries, as well as an attempt to attract capital from the Gulf oil states, lure western investment and technology and promote a greater role for the private sector (Richards and Waterbury, 1990:241). Egypt's increasingly chronic economic problems led the government to open negotiations with the IMF which culminated in a Stand-by Agreement in 1977. This agreement focused on devaluing the Egyptian pound, decreasing the budget deficit and most significantly, reducing subsidies (Momani, 2003:1). In the same year, the government sought to implement some of the conditions made by the IMF. The public announcement of the increase in basic consumer goods led to widespread uprisings – known as the bread riots. Many other North African countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Jordan experienced mass protests after the announcement of austerity measures associated with structural adjustment programmes (Lubeck, 1998:298). The impact of these adjustment programmes on poverty and social inequity have been documented extensively in previous editions of this journal (ROAPE, Vol. 21, No. 60 1994; Vol. 26, No.82, 1999).

The bread riots of 1977 led the Government of Egypt (GoE) to rescind its policy of reducing subsidies on bread and renegotiate the implementation of economic reform measures with the IMF. The GoE premise was that harsh, sweeping reforms would

only lead to chaos and violence as the bread riots testified and convinced the GoE to adopt a gradualist approach towards liberalisation in a bid to avoid social unrest. The resistance of the Egyptian government to implement IMF conditions on schedule no doubt influenced the length of the negotiations between the two parties. Another stand-by agreement was signed with the IMF in 1986 but was later abandoned. In the meantime, by the mid-1980s, the budget deficit had risen to 10 per cent of the GDP, inflation was high, and growth rates had plummeted from the previous decade. Negotiations continued between the Egyptian government and the IMF, with the latter insisting on an Egyptian commitment to the implementation of macro-economic reform. It was not until 1991 that Egypt signed an agreement with the IMF to embark upon the Economic Reform & Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP), and even then, the government insisted on pursuing a gradualist approach (Badran and Wahby, 1996; El Mahdi, 1997; ESCWA, 1998; Ibrahim, 1996). While the pace of economic reform has picked up since ERSAP, the official policy vis-à-vis welfare provision and subsidy support continues to be that the Egyptian government has no intention of introducing cutbacks that will impact adversely on the poor. There has been much debate on whether the implementation of ERSAP has actually led to the dismantling of the welfare state. Ayubi argued that 'the welfare functions of the state bureaucracy ... have not been significantly curtailed' (Ayubi, 1995:131). However, critics of SAP (Korayem, 1996; Zaytoun, 1998; El Laithy, 1999; Eissa, 1998) argue that it has led the state to relinquish many of its welfare responsibilities towards the poor.

Adopting a micro-approach I now compare the predicament of the poor prior to adjustment and afterwards. In so doing, I decipher how their access and use of welfare services (in the areas of education and health) have changed in the past thirty years. My case study is of the low income urban settlement in Cairo, Bulaq el Dakrour. The data are based on daily interaction with the poor as a participant observer living in the community for over a year. This was complemented with interviews with high level and locally-based officials in both the Ministries of Education and Health to gain an understanding of the dynamics influencing policy making.

### **Education & Health: the Pre-adjustment Years**

Until the early 1950s, Egypt did not have a government policy for universal provision of education and health services. They had been partly provided by the government, partly by the private sector and significantly by charities and associations established under the patronage of the aristocracy, missionaries and indigenous religious and secular organisations (Kandeel and Ben Nefissa, 1994; Badran, 1995:50; Sorial, 1981; Centre for Development Services, 1995). While there were several plans to expand education and introduce rural health units, they never materialised because they were of low priority.

In education, prospects for equity enhancement and upward mobility were restricted through the dual system: a free system, called elementary and another, called primary, for those who could afford to pay. It was only after the successful completion of primary school that students could go on to university and higher institutions of learning (Boktor, 1963:27). The system inherently undermined the principle of equity, since only those who could afford to enrol in primary school could further their education. It also rendered meaningless the 1924 decree which stipulated that primary education was compulsory for all, especially since there was

no budget allocated for the provision of affordable education for the poor (Cochran, 1986:23). Education remained highly skewed in favour of the rich until 1953.

Following the 1952 revolution, there were efforts at universalising education and, to a lesser extent, health. In education, a national strategy for making education accessible to all was instituted in 1953. There were high ambitions for the expansion of schools, increased intake of students and more teachers. In order to redress the inequities in the educational system, Law 214 was issued in 1953 exempting all pupils from payment of school fees. All levels of education were made free of charge (Boktor, 1963:38) and primary school was made into one single system for all. The earlier results were impressive, going beyond the increase in the overall population (Cochran, 1986:36; Boktor, 1963:6). For example, enrolment expanded from one million pupils in 1952 to three million a decade later (Boktor, 1963:204). There were continued increases in the budgetary allocation to education, reaching almost 48 per cent of the total budget by 1959 (Boktor, 1963:29).

Prior to the 1952 revolution, many hospitals and clinics were established as philanthropic initiatives under the patronage of aristocratic women. The most notable were the Mabarrat Muhammad 'Ali and the Red Crescent Society, both NGOs which played an important role in fighting the malaria and cholera epidemics that swept through the country in the 1940s (Gallagher, 1990). The new Nasserite government announced a change of policy. Medical care provision was to become the responsibility of the state and not of private charities. An ambitious plan was introduced to build rural health units and public hospitals around the country. Use of rural health units increased and in the 1960s, many of the earlier societies and associations were nationalised as well as 13 private hospitals (Gallagher, 1990:171). By 1962, 'public health had become an idiom in the national discourse' and the government promulgated its charter that stated:

*The first right of all citizens is health care – not the bare treatment and drugs like goods bought and sold, but rather the unconditional guarantee of this care to every citizen in every corner of the country under conditions of comfort and service* (Gallagher, 1990:175).

While the government fell short of achieving this goal, health indicators improved: the crude death rate dropped from 15 to 11 per thousand within a decade (Waterbury, 1983:219).

From 1960 to 1965, the emphasis was on technical and primary education (Cochran, 1986:49). The intention was to 'spread educational benefits to low income groups' (Abdel Fadil, 1982:366; Badran, 2003:207). Yet the gains in equity were slowed down in the late 1960s due to a number of factors: the huge proportion of the budget directed to rearming the military following the 1967 defeat in the war with Israel and the rapid population growth and the stagnation in the economy. The adoption of the *Infitâh* policies in the 1970s also meant that equity concerns were deprioritised. Sadat moved quickly away from Nasserism and its association with socialism as a state policy (Badran, 2003:247). Nevertheless government rhetoric was not accompanied by severe budget cuts:

*For all the talk about increased efficiency, benefit-cost criteria and belt-tightening and so forth, Sadat actually increased the flow of resources into welfare programmes that sustain[ed] high levels of consumption* (Waterbury, 1983:218).

Thus, the rights to free education and health care were not openly rescinded; however, in practice, there was an erosion of these entitlements.

*There was an official tolerance of policies of benign neglect of basic welfare programmes, and the acceptance of growing inequity in the distribution of income and in the quality of social services (Waterbury, 1983:223).*

The poor were no longer the target of the state's policies (Badran, 2003:248). The situation worsened after adjustment, when the introduction and deepening of cost recovery measures and the continued bias in the allocation of resources within these sectors made statements about constitutional rights to free education and health seem void.

## **Education & Health Services after ERSAP**

Structural adjustment and stabilisation packages can affect the poor by impacting on their primary and secondary incomes (Stewart, 1995:21). Meso-policies can affect the primary incomes of the poor through taxation or social spending. However, the main effect of meso-policies on the poor is through public expenditure on goods and services consumed by the poor, not taxation, i.e. on their secondary income (Stewart, 1995:51). Meso-policies after adjustment will be discussed through an assessment of the social spending policy vis-à-vis education and health. To decipher changes in the levels of government commitment to the poor during adjustment I examine the ratio of public expenditure to GDP and the social allocation ratio, the proportion of total government expenditure going to social sectors. I also look at the social priority ratio or the ratio of expenditures on the social sectors allocated to priority services which reach the poor (Stewart, 1995:51). Intra-sectoral breakdown of data is not publicly available in Egypt. The first two ratios, however, continued to improve for health and education even after adjustment.

The budget for social spending in 1999/2000 comprised 38.8 per cent of public expenditure, and rose slightly during 2000/2001 to 40 per cent (Hassanein, 2000).<sup>1</sup> The increase in social spending is not necessarily synonymous with a commitment to equity, especially if cost recovery measures are introduced. Proponents of cost recovery measures contend that in addition to reducing waste, cost recovery measures will enhance efficiency as the additional funds can be invested in improving services. Yet the assumption that the increased revenues accruing from fees will in fact be spent upon increased provision of services, rather than upon other budgetary heads is often misplaced (Colclough, 1997:19). In the case of Egypt, all the funding collected from user-charges goes directly to the Ministry of Finance which decides how the money will be allocated. My analysis of spending on education and health contests Galal's findings that 'public expenditure in Egypt has improved access to health care and education', and that the 'government is committed to the poor' (Galal, 2003:21).

## **Education**

The privatisation of education in Egypt is evidenced by the expansion of private tuition that has had a big impact on the poor. One of the World Bank and IMF's earlier prescriptions in the 1980s for reforming the educational system under adjustment was the introduction of cost recovery measures.<sup>2</sup> Some advocates argue that cost recovery measures can contribute to an improvement in the quality of

education, discouraging not-so-serious students from wasting precious resources and putting pressure on the educational administrators and teachers to improve the internal running of the educational system (World Bank, 1991). Yet many studies have indicated that the introduction of cost recovery measures have had a regressive impact on both equity and efficiency (Colclough, 1997; Tilak, 1997; Appleton, 2001:160). Since 1986 and in compliance with the World Bank, the GoE has increased fees four times (El-Laithy, 1999:19; ESCWA, 1998:25). Private expenditure on education, according to the Egypt Human Development Report (EHDR), has increased considerably over the period 1990-91 to 1996-97 with the poor bearing the greatest share of this increase (Institute of National Planning (INP), 1998). Education eats up 19.7 per cent of household total spending which the poor mentioned in surveys as a major financial burden on their budget (Institute of National Planning, 2000:37).

There is a general consensus that within the educational system the steady process of privatisation is continuing (Al-Laithy, 1999; Korayem, 1997; Eissa, 1997; Baradei, 1997). 'Unregulated privatisation' of this process may limit access of the poor to a presumably better quality education imparted through private lessons (Institute of National Planning, 1998:34). There is also evidence to suggest that the school system is being insidiously privatised from expenditure on private tutoring as well as donations and extra-curricular books which in turn puts increased pressure on household budgets;<sup>3</sup> private tutoring is perhaps the greatest burden on the poor.

### **The Parallel Education System in Bulaq el Dakrou**

The EHDR 1997-98 indicates that almost half of Egypt's poor students were taking private lessons compared with 60 per cent of the rich students (Institute of National Planning, 1998). Nonetheless, according to an INP survey (2000), private tutoring represents a higher percentage of the poor's total spending (59.96 per cent) on education than it does for the middle class (53.4 per cent) or the rich (55.9 per cent) (2000:34).

The reasons behind the rise and growth of the private lessons initiative are usually attributed to the *Infitâh*. Inflation in the 1970s stood at around 30 per cent while increases in salaries were negligible. This had an impact on teachers' pay and their ability to meet subsistence living standards. It also gave them a strong incentive to seek additional work in the form of private tuition (Cochran, 1986:59; Waterbury, 1983:236). On the supply side, the desperate struggle to do well in the highly competitive secondary school examination certificate gave birth to a parallel system of secondary education. Up until the 1980s, education was more or less restricted to the wealthy as the poor could not afford intensive one-to-one tutoring. Gradually, the informal, private tutoring educational system began to rapidly expand to the poorer schools as well, where over-crowding and the deteriorating quality of teaching in classrooms drove pupils to seek education elsewhere (Abdel Fadil, 1982:368; Al-Issawi, 1982:114; Badran, 2003:250). Anis (1995:43) and Abdel Fadil (1982:369) attribute the growth in private lessons to the increased weight of market values brought about by the *Infitâh*. As a result, Egypt's national educational services were 'denationalised' (Abdel Fadil, 1982:371).

From interviews and focus groups with parents in Bulaq el Dakrou, it became conspicuously evident that additional tutoring for their children was one of the greatest financial burdens on the household. 'Out of class' tutoring has become virtually obligatory for all students, rich and poor. Parents describe it as the 'ransom

payment' where they pay teachers in order to ensure that their children pass exams. Parents who were not paying for some form of extra school tutoring in Bulaq el Dakroul were rare. One middle-aged teacher at the *Khairiyya* Association attributed the rise of private lessons to the time when

*the price of everything went up, supervision on education was relaxed, and market values became predominant. Before that, teachers managed to live off their salaries; afterwards, it became virtually impossible.*

Another school teacher who teaches at the *Khairiyya* Association and also gives private lessons in his free time admitted that teachers pressure pupils all the time to take private lessons because no teacher can survive on their salary alone; they either give private lessons or take up another job after school hours like driving a taxi or working in a shop.

An analysis of perceptions of people in Bulaq el Dakroul suggests that the nature of private lessons and its nuances have changed. The objective of taking private lessons was initially to help improve the performance of weak pupils or those who wanted to excel in examinations. But from interviews with parents, students, school teachers and NGO workers it seems that whether the student is doing well or not, private lessons have become compulsory. In addition, pupils are forced to take lessons at a much earlier stage than before. Private lessons were usually taken in preparation for the general preparatory examination and the years following that in preparation for the general secondary examination. It is now the case 'From the day you enrol your child in first grade primary, you enrol him (sic) in extra tutoring'. There were indeed many cases where children in first and second primary school were enrolled in additional classes out of school hours. Parents also complained of a drastic rise in the price of private tuition, especially in subjects like English where there is a shortage of teachers.

Former Minister of Education (MoE) Hussein Bahaaeddin acknowledged that private lessons are a serious problem undermining the educational system, and vowed to deal ruthlessly with it (Bahaaeddin quoted in *Al-Ahram*, 25 October 2002). He called for its criminalisation by law (although this never materialised), and allowed for modest increases in teachers' fees. He also introduced the concept of *majmû'ât* (Al-Seiba'i, *Al-Ahram*, 27 January 2002). The *majmû'ât* were supposed to bring an end to informal education by offering extra-class tutorials at set prices under the supervision of the school. It was an attempt at institutionalising the practice, and thereby regulating it.

Muhammad al-Husseini, director of the Safiyya Zaghlul Public School in Bulaq el Dakroul explained that there are two types of primary *majmû'ât*: there is the 'distinguished' *majmû'ât* at a cost of LE12.40 a month, and the 'regular' *majmû'ât* at LE5.40 a month. At the preparatory and secondary stages, a regular *majmû'ât* is set at a monthly rate of LE7.40 and a distinguished *majmû'ât* is for LE12.40 a month. The distinguished *majmû'ât* is supposed to be held for a class of no more than 12 pupils, while the 'normal' is supposed to have no more than 20 pupils per class. Two places are supposed to be reserved in each class for orphans whose fees are waived. Yet parents, children and NGO workers noted common violations of this policy as prices were not adhered to. Neither was the maximum class size respected, nor exemptions made for orphans. In many cases in Bulaq el Dakroul pupils paid twice as much as the fixed rate (sometimes three times) and the *majmû'ât* were twice as

large as they should be. The policy of exempting orphans from payment of fees was not applied if there were more than two orphans in one class.

Attempts at fixing the prices for extra coaching through the institutionalisation of the *majmû'ât* have not solved the problem of equity. It has not put an end to the sweeping commercialisation of the practice. Moreover, it has not introduced greater efficiency in the educational system since the *majmû'ât*, often suffering from over-crowding, do not offer a significantly superior quality of education as compared to that offered during school hours. This is commensurate with findings on other developing countries that have introduced cost recovery measures (Tillak, 1991, 1997).

The *majmû'ât* are often no more than an official policy of income-generation for the teachers and others in the educational hierarchy. Al-Hussaini explained that according to the MoE's policy, the income generated from the *majmû'ât* is supposed to be distributed as follows: 85 per cent to the teacher and 15 per cent to the administration. The 15 per cent allocated to the administration is then divided as follows: 30 per cent to the school manager, 50 per cent to the administration and one per cent to the teachers' union. The outcome is that there are more incentives for the school administration and teachers to enforce a policy of expanding *majmû'ât* for all than to keep it strictly as an extra coaching class for pupils with weaker performance. Al-Husseini, a teacher working at a public school in the morning and giving group private lessons in the evening at an NGO was also sceptical about the system of *majmû'ât*:

*There is pressure on all pupils to take majmû'ât, even the clever ones. Everyone benefits from the majmû'ât, starting from the head of the district department, the headmaster, the teacher and the MOE officials.*

Thus, the *majmû'ât* have now become as essential a component of the educational system as private tuition at home.

In practice, teachers identify pupils who can afford to take private lessons and pressure them to do so; they then pressure the rest to join the *majmû'ât*. Al-Husseini blamed parents who are convinced that their children will not pass unless they take private lessons. Parents' deep-seated belief in the absolute necessity of extra coaching for their children to pass is very evident and it stems from pupils' experience with teachers. Almost every parent whom I met in Bulaq el Dakroun in focus groups or individual interviews mentioned exposure to pressure for not taking extra coaching classes. And teachers admitted it had become 'part of the system' to insist that pupils enrol in *majmû'ât* or private lessons. A wide range of tactics were cited by parents and pupils for enrolment in *majmû'ât* and private tuition classes. Students were subject to threats to force them to enrol in the additional course. They were also subjected to corporal punishment if they did not enrol in private lessons. Physical violence has always been part of the educational system in Egypt, and the increased privatisation of education has heightened pressure on pupils to attend private lessons. Pupils also cited threats from the teachers to fail them in examinations or throw them out of school. These threats are not pro forma: they are carried out. One informant, Amal Abdel Sayid, a widow who has six children and works as a cleaner in the local council, was particularly distressed that her daughter was forced to sit outside school after her mathematics teacher threw her out of class and told her not to return until she had paid the LE40 for the *majmû'ât*. She feared for her 11-year-old daughter's safety when she was obliged to sit outside the school.

Another pupil mentioned that a teacher threatened to mark her down as absent for 10 consecutive days (even if she was actually there), thus automatically disqualifying her from sitting for the end of year examination. Four other pupils mentioned being thrown out of class because they did not take any form of extra coaching with their school teachers.

Measures to pressure parents into enrolling and paying for the *majmû'ât* also include physical punishment of pupils, relegating students to the back of the (very crowded) classroom, the forced detention of pupils after school hours (i.e. refusing to let them depart until after they have attended the *majmû'ât*) so that the issue is presented to their parents as a *fait accompli*. Other measures include withholding pupils' examination seat numbers until they have paid any remaining school fees and private lessons money in full. Before the end of year examination, each pupil is given an examination seat number, without which pupils cannot enter examinations.

Many of the abuses cited here might not have occurred had it not been for the privatisation of education. Student vulnerability has increased to teachers' exploitation of the asymmetrical power relations existing between them in order to pressure pupils to take extra coaching. Moreover, there is a gap between government policies and their actual implementation. The former minister of education has repeatedly announced that enrolment and the disbursement of books should not be contingent upon a poor student's payment of fees at the beginning of the year. Parents should also be given the option of paying in instalments (*Al-Ahram*, 14 September 2002). Nonetheless, not only do headmasters sometimes refuse to distribute books until the money is paid in full, they also make payment of school registration fees a condition for access to medical insurance. Schools also demand other additional informal expenses. For example, parents pointed out that they are often required to provide for maintenance costs of the school, and teachers regularly collect money from pupils for the purchase of items such as chalk.

There are marked contrasts between the experience of parents who send their children to school within Bulaq el Dakroul and those who send to schools in higher income districts. Most parents who succeed in enrolling their children in schools outside the neighbourhood are sent to schools in the wealthy district of Mohandeseen and in the middle class district of El Haram. Although they pay for additional transport costs, they cost far less than the money paid in private tuition fees by those who educate children in Bulaq.

### **Privatisation of Education**

Parents in Bulaq el Dakroul deal with the rising cost of education in a number of different ways. Those who can pay do so. As long as they can afford it, they pay up to avoid the hassle, humiliation and risks to their children's education. To do so, they borrow, participate in *jam' iyyât* (informal rotating saving and credit schemes), sell household goods and seek assistance from welfare-providing NGOs. But the fact that parents in Bulaq el Dakroul are willing to pay does not necessarily reflect their purchasing capacity. As Colclough (1997:19; 1996:597) suggests: 'Even if poor people chose to pay the increased fees, it might be that they would be replacing their consumption of other goods which we would prefer them to retain.' In many cases, parents confided that they have had to sell household goods or take another member of the family out of school to be able to afford the 'fees'. Others have had to compromise on their expenditure on personal health (especially mothers).

Parents have adopted a variety of strategies in an attempt to ease the financial burden of paying for their children's education. These include bargaining with the teacher to reduce the set fee, restricting lessons to the month(s) immediately preceding examination time and engaging in open confrontation. Another coping strategy is to simply remove the child from school.

*Bargaining with the teacher:* Teachers often set unusually high rates for both private lessons and *majmû'ât* expecting that some will pay, while others will come to negotiate. Often parents bargain with the teachers to the point of getting the set fee cut sometimes as much as by half. Pleading desperation and inability to pay is one way of trying to claim entitlements. It is not articulated in a discourse of rights, but rather is an appeal to pity and compassion. Parents put their case before teachers and headmasters, hoping that there will be exemptions or compromises reached to make education more affordable. They know that employing the concept of rights and their violation will be unsuccessful as a strategy for achieving their goal. Teachers and headmasters are likely to be bemused and ignore statements such as 'what you are doing is against the law, you are violating my children's right to a free education'. This is because education is not free but also, there is no system of accountability.

Another strategy used by parents is to restrict extra coaching to the bare minimum. Many parents who cannot afford to give their children lessons from the beginning of the school year save up for the month before examinations are due and allow their children to attend regularly in the hope that this may somehow appease the teacher. There are three general examinations which are externally prepared, administered and marked by the Ministry of Education: they are at the end of the primary (five years), preparatory (three years) and secondary (three years) stages. Teachers at school have no power to pass or fail students in those years. However, for all the other school years, they administer and correct examinations and consequently, yield a lot of power over students. It is particularly in those years that parents try to appease teachers before examination time.

Some parents resort to confrontation with teachers and the school administration but they tend to be the exception rather than the rule. Most parents would resort to open confrontation if they felt that the bargaining power of the teacher was weak or that the teacher had gone beyond what was seen as being reasonable. This threshold varied from one parent to another.

Mona, for instance, is a mother of two; she went to speak to her daughter's fourth grade primary teacher about the fact that she could not afford to pay for private lessons and that she should stop harassing Mayada, her daughter. The teacher told her that Mayada was doing very poorly, and to prove it, she called her to the blackboard to solve a mathematics sum. The teacher told her that Mayada solved the sum incorrectly. Mona recounted the rest of the story with pride:

*She thought I was completely illiterate and could not read what is on the board. So I told her: 'No, she solved it correctly. How dare you do this? I am going to get you into a lot of trouble, I am going to take this matter to the headmaster and tell him you are not fit to be a teacher, and you don't deserve to be one, you butcher.' And that was the end of that, she never harassed my daughter again.*

Parents also chose to engage in confrontational situations if they believed that teachers/the school had crossed the line of asking for reasonable amounts of money.

The line represented more or less what they can realistically pay to keep their children at school. Hala, whose father is a civil servant, recounted the following incident relating to her sister:

*At the beginning of this year, the teacher demanded LE50 for private lessons and LE40 for the majmû'ât. My father was furious and went and had a fight with the teacher, because my sister was detained and forced to attend the majmû'ât. The teacher told my father she has to attend the majmû'ât because her standard is poor. She then agreed that he can pay LE20 instead of LE40 for the majmû'ât. My father told her 'you are not going to give me a bakshîsh [a tip]'. He went down to the headmaster and asked him how much does the majmû'ât cost and discovered they were actually for LE15.*

Hala believed the teacher was ready to bargain with her father because she was scared that he would make a fuss and other parents would rebel and refuse to pay. It made more sense, financially, to lose this client than to lose them all.

Confrontational strategies are mostly avoided by parents who are generally in weaker positions of power and fear the consequences for their children. The reasons for this are many, but the most salient is perhaps the lack of accountability on all levels of the school administration, and not just with teachers. Those who choose not to pay for extra coaching are faced with two highly undesirable outcomes. The first is succinctly put by Sukara:

*You can tell them it is your right and all that, and they will say, fine, your child doesn't have to take private lessons – but in class, they will make life so miserable for your child that he will hate school and not want to go there anymore. The second likely outcome is that they will have to pay afterwards anyway especially if they want their children to pass.*

In one focus group, participants spoke about a boy who failed all his classes because he had not taken any private lessons. His mother put together all she had and went and bribed the teachers who changed his grades and passed him. The moral of the story, as many participants put it, is that it is more economical to pay the teachers in 'instalments' than to pay a huge bulk sum at the end of the year when they fail and have to undergo a *mulhaq* (re-examination).<sup>4</sup> In many cases parents saw private lessons and *majmû'ât* as no more than an inevitable ransom to be paid to teachers.

*Removing the child from school:* One informant hinted at the possibility that many parents were being lured into pulling their children out of school because of the costs of private lessons and waiting until they reached the age of 13 to enrol them in literacy classes since the latter are free. The percentage of pupils dropping out of primary school at a very early stage do seem to be rising.<sup>5</sup> One estimate is that 51 per cent of the children who enrol drop out of school and are likely to count among the adult illiterates later on (Korayem, 1996:41, 47).

## Health

### Cost Recovery in MOHP

One of the recommendations of the World Bank for Egypt was the introduction of differential user fees for cost recovery purposes in the health sector. It suggested that 'to mobilise additional resources and increase equity in the curative health system, the government's programme to introduce gradually user fees for both outpatients

and in-patients in selected general and central hospitals should be strengthened' (World Bank, 1991:135). The same argument is made elsewhere:

*in poor countries, there may be potential benefits from user charges both in mobilising additional resources and in setting price signals to encourage more efficient behaviour by purchasers and providers* (Creese and Kutzin, 1997:40).

The premise of this argument, namely that user fees are a means of mobilising resources for the extension of health services to remote areas, is very weak. Revenue goes directly to the Ministry of Finance and not to the Ministry of Health. Svedberg also noted that in other developing countries,

*the few empirical observations that have been made so far indicate that the increased use of user fees has not led to any detectable extension of health care in rural Africa* (Svedberg, 2000:262).

The general impact of user fees has been to increase the burden of health care on the poor (Al-Laithy, 1999:23; Institute National Planning, 1998). One INP survey revealed that 83 per cent of the lower income group using government hospitals and 67 per cent of those using in-patient health services cited high cost as the greatest cause of dissatisfaction. Sixty-two per cent among poor respondents cited cost as the reason for not entering a hospital when they needed to. Cost is a considerable barrier to the poor accessing in-patient care (Institute of National Planning, 1998:60). Moreover, it has also led to greater inequality of access to health care resources, both when evaluated from the level of income levels, as well as by gender (Rannan-Eliya, Blanco-Vidal and Nandakumar, 1999).

The poor are paying more on health than they did prior to adjustment. For example, in urban areas, the share of health expenditure in total expenditure of low income groups rose from 1.8 per cent in 1981/82 to 3.3 per cent in 1990/91 and to 4.79 per cent in 1995/96. During this period, the same share increased from 1.8 per cent to 3.5 per cent in rural areas (Institute of National Planning, 1998:60). It is assumed that the poor who cannot afford to pay for private medical care continue to rely on public health services since they are cheaper than those provided by the private sector (Zaytoun, 1998:40). The outcome of policies which have been biased against the poor has been a marked deterioration in health service provision, while insufficient funds have meant that there is often a serious shortage of drugs and material essential for medical and surgical interventions (Institute of National Planning, 1998:62). The government seems to have deliberately allowed the deterioration of some health services in order to encourage the non-poor to go to the private sector and consequently have fewer clients to care for. The privatisation of health care has meant increased out-of-pocket expenditure, and that has affected the poor far more than the rich. This is because private spending, particularly out-of-pocket spending, tends to be related to income and wealthier households are able to spend more in absolute terms than poorer households, although as a proportion of household income, richer households may spend less than poorer ones (Rannan-Eliya, Blanco-Vidal and Nandakumar, 1999:24). While most people in Bulaq el Dakroul spoke about education being the greatest burden on their everyday lives, sickness can lead to a real crisis in terms of expenditure.

There are two principal government health providers in Bulaq el Dakroul: the Bulaq Public Hospital and the Urban Health Centre;<sup>6</sup> this is an outpatient health centre providing very basic services. Bulaq Public Hospital is the oldest and main service

provider. The people of Bulaq el Dakroun have a wide plethora of health service providers to choose from, given the central location of the neighbourhood. Bulaq is near the largest hospitals: Kasr el Aini Hospital can be reached in 10 minutes by public transport; Agouza in 15, Umm Al-Masriyyin Public Hospital in Giza in 15 minutes while the Fever Hospital can be reached in about 30 minutes. Not all public hospitals are the same in quality or cost; variations are dramatic. Other than public health services, there are services provided by NGOs, political parties, private clinics and private hospitals. For example, a woman from Bulaq el Dakroun might have her blood pressure taken in the nearby pharmacy; her glasses done at the *Wafd* Party Health Centre, her blood tests taken at a private clinic, dental care sought at a government teaching hospital while sending her daughter to the female doctor at a Muslim association (a registered service-providing NGO) for gynecological treatment. Despite the diversity in health providers, the government continues to be the main provider of services for a large section of the poorest of Bulaq el Dakroun, especially with respect to in-patient care and treatment of chronic diseases. The most common chronic diseases encountered in Bulaq el Dakroun were respiratory, kidney and liver diseases.

Bulaq Public Hospital is the closest venue in the neighbourhood, but because its reputed poor quality and high costs, patients often refuse to be treated there and instead try to use a *wâsta* (contact) to have them accepted at the Kasr el Aini Teaching Hospital – one of the most frequently used public hospitals, especially for in-patient care. Public hospitals are by no means free of charge, yet, they are called '*abu balâsh*' (with all its negative connotations associated with being 'free of charge'). The negative images that the free public health service conjures are not new. It was always assumed that fee-paying private health service is superior. Nevertheless, it was also recognised that public health services are there if you cannot afford to go anywhere else. This is no longer the case.

Limited access to the cheapest 'tickets' in the out-patient hospital clinics, purchase of medication externally from pharmacies, payment for X-rays, blood tests and other medical requirements and the failures of the exemption system from waiving the fees of the poor have all meant that treatment requires payment, sometimes in substantial amounts. This has had its implications on the propensity for the poor to use health services in times of sickness, and led to increased vulnerability in patron-client relationships in public facilities.

At Bulaq el Dakroun hospital, the 'economical' tickets are for LE1.25 and the 'higher quality' tickets are for LE3. The latter involve a shorter wait and are more readily available. The LE1.25 charge for the ticket is not considered expensive by the people of Bulaq el Dakroun; however, it is only available in limited numbers and for limited hours of the day. Sharbat pointed out a problem I experienced myself when I took Mona and her mother to Bulaq hospital: namely, that the LE1.25 tickets are only made available from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and in limited numbers. Once the ticket office has sold out, there is nothing to be done except buy the more expensive ticket.

Nonetheless, the price of the ticket is the least worrisome for the poor. The problem is the cost of medicine and other unpredictable medical expenses. Patients pay for the most basic of medical necessities. For example, a few years ago, Fawziyya had to take her son to hospital after he broke his leg. At Bulaq Public Hospital, the doctor told her to go buy three rolls of plaster and a roll of bandages so that he could plaster his leg. She bought them from an external pharmacy for a lot of money. She asked him for the remaining plaster, but he said the hospital would keep the rest.

There is often a shortage of medical supplies but often too, medicine is simply not disbursed to the poor, even when it is available. An informant in the hospital told me that it is often kept for relatives and friends. Laila went to the dispensary to collect the eye ointment prescribed to her by the doctor at Kasr el Aini Hospital. They told her they did not have it. She informed the doctor and only after he accompanied her was the medicine dispensed. Laila was lucky in that she was being treated by a sympathetic doctor. However, others often can do nothing when medicine is not dispensed to them. The majority of women in Bulaq el Dakrour revealed that they will pay the LE1.25 ticket at the hospital but if there are treatment charges they will not pursue it; they needed the cash for other life necessities and their health is the first thing they will compromise on.

## **The Commission System**

The World Bank contends that if a system of exempting the poor from the payment of fees were established, it would mitigate the effects of cost recovery measures in developing countries (Akin, 1985). However, Watkins observed that such targeting systems often miss out on helping those that are most in need (2000). In practice, the exemption system that was established recently has not succeeded in securing free of charge health care for the poor, for a multitude of reasons discussed below.

The Ministry of Health established a special 'Commission' in 2000 to grant waivers for payment of medicine and in-patient care for the poor. All applications for waiving health care expenses in public hospitals must go through the Commission. The first step is for the patient to request a report from the social worker stating their inability to pay and from the doctor at the local hospital stating the kind of treatment the patient needs. These documents together with a long list of other requirements are then taken by the patient to the Commission which determines the amount of money that will be allotted and the duration of the treatment. They then present these papers to the hospital in which they are being treated. Patients do not have the freedom to decide where they wish to be treated.

Once patients manage to acquire the necessary papers from the hospital to refer them to the Commission (which is not always easy or possible) they are then faced with the next obstacle: getting through the Commission. Samira went to the Commission located at the headquarters of the Ministry of Health in downtown Cairo. Samira suffers from diabetes and usually bought the required injections from the pharmacy for LE6.5 an ampoule. However, there was a shortage in insulin in pharmacies for a period extending over nine months and she could not afford the expensive alternative which cost LE30 per ampoule. She was told the cheaper kind is now only available through government hospitals. When she went to buy them, she was told she would have to first get a referral from the Commission. Once at the Commission, there were hundreds of people queuing in two lines with only two employees standing at the booths. They shouted, gave them the wrong information, never looked them in the face and were many bureaucratic delays.

There was also another problem: a large number of applicants were illiterate, and there were new papers to be filled out and no government employee to help with such a task. The majority of those at the Commission were overwhelmingly women. Access to medication is one of the main obstacles facing people on the Commission. Acquiring the referral for treatment at a hospital does not mean that patients will actually get the treatment required free of charge. Samira's problem in accessing the diabetic medicine was not settled. Although they gave her the medication the first

few times, they stopped on the pretext that they had run out. An alternative medicine was given that was unsuitable for her condition and she was forced to borrow from neighbours to buy the expensive alternative from pharmacies.

Those whose fees are waived for in-patient treatment through the Commission also find themselves paying a lot of money. Once free of charge, hospitalisation now means that patients pay roughly half the cost of treatment. For example, a patient is required to purchase bandages, injections, syringes, cotton and most medication in addition to tipping the nurses (and sometimes even paying for using the bed sheets). In many cases medicine is not disbursed, or only partially, on the premise that it is unavailable. In such circumstances patients have to pay from their own resources.

The fact that patients are *willing* to pay should not be confused with an ability to pay. The World Bank consistently highlights that out-of-pocket payments for health represent a willingness to pay. Yet as Watkins suggests from the examination of the negative impact on Zimbabwe's poor of introducing fees for health care, there 'is confusion between the concepts of *willingness to pay* and *ability to pay*' (2001:246). He explains that 'an individual may be willing to pay for something in principle but unable to do so in practice except under duress and at considerable cost to long-term welfare'. Some of the implications on household budgets in Bulaq el Dakrour have been disastrous. For example, Zainab was betrothed (*katb kitâb*) to a lorry driver. Three months before the date of their marriage, he was hit by a van and transferred to hospital. She was obliged to spend hundreds of pounds in medication for him. To pay for his medication, she had to sell off a small income-generating project which was her only source of income: selling make-up and cheap accessories. Thus, the payment of fees led to her deprivation of the only source of livelihood. This is essentially because the Commission only pays for a limited amount of medication, while the rest has to be bought on a fee-paying basis. Many women receiving treatment in Bulaq el Dakrour pointed out that under the Commission referral, only the inexpensive medication is dispensed, while the more costly types have to be bought externally from pharmacies.

The failure of the Commission exemption system has not only increased the financial burden on the household budget, but also affected the interaction between patients and health staff. Patron-client relationships between patients and doctors are not new to Egyptian public hospitals. If one has a *wâsta* in hospital, one's chances of receiving better treatment have always been higher. However, the privatisation of the health services has exposed the poor and marginalised to increased vulnerability to those in positions of power in the medical institutions. This is because the change in the dominant paradigm to a market-oriented economy has not just led to changes in policies, but also in group behaviour (Stewart, 2002:49). Group behaviour changes on the local level have been affected by the dominant paradigm's emphasis on monetary incentives (Mackintosh and Gilson, 2002:266).

For example, eligibility for applying to the Commission for exemption of fees requires the doctor's signature, thus giving him enormous power over poor patients' treatment. Amal, an informant, was in a state of crisis the last time I met her. Her son, a house painter, fell down while on the job and broke his leg. They transferred him (through a *wâsta*) to Kasr el Aini Teaching Hospital. He was told he needed an operation which would cost LE1,600. Given that she is a widow with six children and a monthly income of LE255, she certainly did not have the money. A social worker at the hospital interviewed her and said the government could pay for the

operation (through the Commission system), but that she would have to get the signature of the orthopedic doctor who diagnosed his case. She tried to track the doctor down but they always told her that he was very busy and if she wanted to see him, she should go to his private clinic. A visit to his private clinic costs LE120. This was still beyond her budget, given that she was already paying for her son's pain relief injections, which each cost LE15. She went to see the general manager there and she told him that this was a hospital for the *ghallâba* (the poor and marginalised) and that her son must be treated for free. She explained that he told her that they didn't have the money, and that if they didn't like it, she should take her son out and go complain to the health minister.

Doctors working in public hospitals in Egypt are also allowed to simultaneously run private clinics. Doctors' encouragement of patients to visit them in their private clinics is a practice that predates economic reform. Nevertheless, given that exemptions now require the doctor's signature for the Commission transfer, there is increased pressure on patients to pay at private clinics. Amal did not know the doctor's name, she was given the directions to his clinic, and that is what she has learnt by heart. Were it not for the fact that having the doctor's signature was a prerequisite for applying for a waiving of fees from the Commission for operations, Amal would not have been exposed to an indirect form of extortion at the hands of the doctor treating her son.

The exemption system also makes the poor vulnerable to abuse at the hands of others in the hospital hierarchy. Social connections facilitating the avoidance of exposure to exploitation and excessive payment become increasingly important in the context of the marketisation of health services. Unfortunately, this can sometimes work as a means of excluding the very poorest who do not have such social capital. It means that they have to resort to strategies of winning the pity and sympathy of the public health providers instead.

## **Conclusion**

While the government continues to be the main provider of welfare services, especially with respect to education and in-patient health care, such services are no longer free. The manifestations of privatisation are many: a parallel education system based on a fee-paying policy institutionalised in school through the *majmû'ât* system and practised on a more informal basis in the form of private tuition, the increased payment on medicine, basic medical supplies in public hospitals. The consequences of the privatisation of these services has had its toll on the poor people of Bulaq el Dakrou, reducing access to and use of affordable care, and affecting equity. These findings are commensurate with studies conducted elsewhere in many other countries where adjustment policies have been implemented.

*Studies have shown that a market-based approach has resulted in lower utilisation of social services, worsened equity, and reduced human capital formation in many low income countries* (Mwabu, Hjerppe, Ugaz and White, 2001:3).

Moreover, if cost recovery measures are promoted on the basis of greater efficiency in services, the contrary has occurred. In more than one instance, I met adolescents who were holders of third preparatory degrees and yet were completely illiterate. The importance of merit and fairness had been undermined, as there is an unspoken agreement between parents and teachers that in return for the charges made for private lessons and *majmû'ât*, their children would pass.

Similarly, in health, people believe that the quality of services in Bulaq Public Hospital and the old Kasr el Aini Hospital have deteriorated so much that those requiring in-patient care would rather die at home than be admitted for in-patient care. Moreover, the exemption policies devised to mitigate the impact of cost recovery measures have failed. There is a conflict of incentives when the dominant ideology and its ensuing practices are based on market values, while exemptions are supposed to be driven by equity considerations. This is evident in schools where the poor are still obliged to pay for the *majmû'ât* and for full fees at the beginning of the school year, and in hospitals, where those whose fees are officially waived often find they have to pay up to half the costs of treatment.

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## Endnotes

1. Social spending is identified by the Ministry of Finance to include health, education, subsidies, social security and other social services.
2. Although the World Bank has since retracted from its position of the importance of cost recovery measures on the primary school level, fees continue to be charged at primary and secondary levels and remain in place in many countries of the South (Tilak, 1997:70); Egypt is no exception.
3. In addition to the extra coaching, pupils also have to pay for the *malzamat* – condensed summary notes of the syllabi that the teacher distributes before examinations. These notes are distributed shortly before examinations and it is assumed that some of the exam questions will be taken from there. In Bulaq el Dakrou, there are of course the presents to be given to teachers for mother's day etc. The funniest requirement of all is one teacher demanding that parents bring in a packet of toffee for her every fortnight. Ironically, a mother of three girls in Bulaq el Dakrou explained that they are each charged LE33 for the desk they sit at – in addition to the school fees for books etc.
4. Pupils who fail in the end of year examination are given a second chance to go through examinations in the summer (*mulhaq*). If they pass, they are then allowed to move on to the next year with their peers.
5. Although other variables may also be responsible, such as the impoverishment of the family or the diminishing returns of formal education. Estimates of school dropouts vary. According to the EHDR, 1997/98, the dropout rate at the end of primary school is 27 per cent. In 1998 the percentage of literacy in Egypt was estimated at 53.7 per cent (EHDR, 2000).
6. This is the name for an outpatient clinic providing very basic health services.

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# Autonomy & *Intifadah*: New Horizons in Western Saharan Nationalism

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Jacob Mundy

**The Western Sahara conflict entered its thirtieth year last November. Celebrated by Moroccans and lamented by Sahrawi nationalists, the anniversary went largely unnoticed by the international community. Though it has been on the Security Council's agenda since 1988, Western Sahara has defied resolution by three successive Secretaries General and Kofi Annan's former personal envoy, former US Secretary of State James Baker. It is likely that a fourth Secretary General will take over management of the conflict next year.**

The attitudes of the main protagonists remain unchanged. Morocco still wants the Territory incorporated into its own but has not yet received the international imprimatur. The independence front, Polisario, and its supporters living under Moroccan control, still call for the Territory's independence. Algeria still supports Polisario; France and the United States still support Morocco, mostly out of fear that 'losing' Western Sahara would destabilise Morocco and perhaps bring down the centuries old Alawi monarchy.

Little has changed in the Western Sahara conflict except the discourse. For almost twenty years, starting in 1981, the point of consensus was *self-determination*. The Moroccan government, Western Saharan nationalists and the United Nations agreed that a referendum on self-determination – a vote between independence and integration – was the way out of the military and diplomatic stalemate of the 1980s. Nationalists saw a self-determination vote as the easiest way to achieve independence. Morocco saw self-determination as the best way to legitimate its claim and its hold on Western Sahara. The International Community saw it as a fair and agreed way to settle the conflict.

That consensus broke down in 2000 for a variety of reasons. In the time since, especially after Baker's departure in June 2004, the terms of debate in Western Sahara have diverged and become antagonistic. For Morocco and its supporters, Western Sahara is now a matter of *autonomy*, not self-determination. For nationalists, it is now a matter of national *Intifadah*, a non-violent struggle to 'shake off' the Moroccan 'occupation'.<sup>1</sup>

Understanding these trends towards autonomy and *Intifadah* requires an understanding of their genesis and evolution. One part of this is historical, seeing the conditions of their possibility. The second part is analysing these trends. This article aims to answer two questions: Why is autonomy being proposed? And, why are Western Saharan nationalists now using non-violent resistance against Morocco? It is difficult to be optimistic about prospects for a swift and peaceful resolution of the conflict.

## Genesis of a Stalemate

### The War

The Western Sahara conflict dates back to November 1975, when Morocco's King Hassan II pressured Madrid out of its desert colony, Spanish Sahara. Morocco had raised a claim on Spanish Sahara in 1956, which was challenged by a Mauritanian counter-claim in 1960. In 1974, Rabat and Nouakchott joined forces to oppose Madrid's plans to hold a referendum on independence. The International Court of Justice, however, rejected their claims to historical title in October 1975. In the summer of 1975, Spain opened discussions with a two-year old native insurgency fighting for independence, Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y Río de Oro (Polisario). Madrid started transferring control to Polisario in October 1975, but this was cut short by King Hassan's 350,000 civilian-strong 'invasion' of Spanish Sahara known as the Green March. Rather than risk a colonial war with Morocco, the Spanish government – under pressure from the United States and leaderless with General Franco in a coma – unilaterally passed its colony over to Rabat and Nouakchott without consulting the wishes of the Western Saharans (Mundy, 2006).

From late 1975 to early 1976, nearly half the native population fled into exile. Polisario soon received strong military and diplomatic backing from Algeria in its fight against Morocco and Mauritania. Polisario established its headquarters and four camps for refugees near Tindouf in Algeria. By 1979, Mauritania had withdrawn from Western Sahara and Polisario had driven Morocco into three isolated pockets. Calling on its allies, France, United States and Saudi Arabia for help, Rabat pushed back Polisario's fighters by constructing a large defensive barrier that now bisects Western Sahara from north to south. Yet with Polisario and the refugees safely housed in Algeria, Morocco could not destroy the nationalist movement, not without invading Algeria. Polisario, however, could not drive Morocco out of the Territory without a massive increase in conventional arms from Algeria (e.g., tanks and heavy artillery). The military situation had reached a stalemate, and it was in this context that both sides accepted the United Nations' offer for mediation.

### Internationalisation

In 1988 both Morocco and Polisario accepted a UN settlement proposal, yet this plan only built on previous African mediation efforts. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) led peacemaking efforts from 1976 to 1984. In 1979 the continental body proposed a ceasefire followed by a referendum on independence or integration with Morocco. Convinced that native Western Saharans favoured independence, Polisario has always accepted the idea of a referendum to resolve the conflict. King Hassan agreed in 1981, but would not work towards its implementation. With no other means of pressure, the OAU decided in 1984 to recognise the Polisario-led Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as the legitimate government of Western Sahara. Deeply offended, Morocco left the organisation and a boycott of the OAU's successor organisation, the AU continues.

Using the OAU plan as an outline, the UN Secretary General took up the Western Sahara conflict in 1986. After several years of shuttle diplomacy, the Security Council approved a concrete proposal in 1991. It called for a ceasefire; a reduction and confinement of troops; a repatriation of the refugees; and finally a vote between

independence and integration. While it seemed that peace was at hand, Polisario and Morocco did not actually agree on many of the plan's points, especially the all important question of who was qualified to vote in the referendum. The ceasefire took effect in September 1991 with the rest of the plan in dispute.

The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) spent the first half of the 1990s negotiating a set of criteria for identifying potential voters; it then spent the second half of the decade vetting nearly 233,000 applications, most of them individually and in person (Seddon, 1992, 1996, 1999 and 2000; Jensen 2004). The process broke down in 1996 but was revived by former US Secretary of State James Baker, when he agreed to become Kofi Annan's Personal Envoy to Western Sahara in 1997. Once MINURSO had processed all the applicants, it arrived at a figure of 86,386 qualified voters in early 2000, a number that closely corresponded to Spain's 1974 census. The vast majority of Moroccan-sponsored applicants failed, which was a massive embarrassment for Rabat.

However, rather than hold the referendum, the Security Council abandoned it. For France and the United States, the political situation in Morocco was too dangerous for a referendum. Several months beforehand, in July 1999, King Hassan died and was replaced by his son, Mohammed VI. The young and inexperienced ruler was far less inclined to hold a vote than his father, especially one that was obviously pointing towards independence. The Security Council was also apprehensive given the August 1999 referendum in East Timor, which had shown all the ways in which a plebiscite could go wrong. Furthermore, as the Secretary General noted in February 2000,

*... even assuming that a referendum were held pursuant to the settlement plan and agreements of the parties, if the result were not to be recognised and accepted by one party, it is worth noting that no enforcement mechanism is envisioned by the settlement plan, nor is one likely to be proposed, calling for the use of military means to effect enforcement (UN Security Council, 2000 paragraph 36).*

Observers keen enough to read between the lines noted that the United Nations had finally admitted that the Security Council, even after nine years of pretensions, was not willing to force Morocco to accept the outcome of a vote for independence. Rabat was spared the embarrassment of having to suffer a vote for independence, which would have forever legitimated Polisario's claims and de-legitimated Morocco's presence. That was the context that engendered calls for a 'third way' in Western Sahara, a solution between absolute independence and total integration into Morocco.

### **Baker & the 'Third Way'**

Throughout the referendum process, all three Secretaries General had secretly favoured a negotiated political settlement over the winner-take-all referendum. The obvious compromise has been some form of autonomy for Western Sahara, whereby Morocco would devolve its authority to a locally elected government while retaining control over key duties like foreign policy and national defence. Another compromise option would be the division of the Territory into a Moroccan sector and a mini-Saharan state. As recently as 2002, Algeria suggested dividing the Territory, yet Morocco rejected it and the Security Council was worried about the precedent it would set.

Baker's quest for a negotiated compromise did not get far in 2000. Each successive meeting of Morocco and Polisario only served to increase their mutual animosity. Though Rabat had declared its willingness to consider alternatives to the 1991 Settlement Plan, it would not provide Baker with any specific proposal. Baker released his own 'draft Framework Agreement' in 2001. It proposed a four-year period of significant autonomy for the Territory followed by an ambiguous 'final status' referendum. In Morocco, the Framework Agreement was approved as high as King Mohammed, yet Polisario, clinging to the 1991 Settlement Plan, rejected it. Baker demanded a clear way forward from the Security Council but only received words of encouragement.

Baker made one more initiative. It took the form of his 'Peace Plan for the Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara' to Morocco, Polisario and Algeria in early 2003. The Peace Plan reintroduced the idea of an independence-or-integration referendum following a similar four-year period of even greater autonomy. Baker hoped to get around Rabat's aversions to the question of independence by allowing Moroccan settlers the vote: they outnumber native Western Saharans by as much as two-to-one. Polisario's initial reactions were predictably negative yet they surprised almost all observers by accepting the Peace Plan in July 2003. Morocco had not formally rejected the plan, but did so when it became clear that Baker wanted it imposed by the Security Council.

As in 2000, the political situation in Morocco mid-2003 made it impossible for the Security Council to press King Mohammed too hard. That May, there had been the largest terrorist attack in Moroccan history in Casablanca. In the following months, just as the Security Council was considering Baker's Peace Plan, Rabat fought its own self-described 'war on terror'. The discovery of a large number of Moroccans involved in transnational Jihadist organisations in the years after 11 September 2001 was already of concern, amplified after the Madrid bombings of March 2004. As always, the French government saw itself as the last guarantor of stability in Morocco, and the summer of 2003 was an especially sensitive time for King Mohammed. France led the effort to keep the Baker Plan from being imposed on Morocco. For the United States, Morocco was one of the few Muslim countries supporting its occupation of Iraq which was just starting to go sour. Even if Baker was backed by the State Department, and is close to the George W. Bush administration, his influence on Western Sahara obviously had its limits, and could not trump larger political and security concerns in the Middle East.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than 'endorse' the Peace Plan as the only way forward, the Security Council 'strongly' supported it as an 'optimal' solution in its July 2003 resolution. Though Baker had threatened to quit without a stronger mandate, he stayed on for another year. In that period, he worked with the Moroccan government to address their concerns with the Peace Plan. While Rabat took issue with the broad autonomy it offered, especially the local control over security, their major problem was the fact that it offered Polisario a shot – albeit a long one – at independence. Between the summers of 2003 and 2004, when Baker resigned, Morocco presented three secret counter proposals as 'non-papers'. Baker, however, could not take them seriously as all three failed to offer a realistic autonomy and a clear act of self-determination. Indeed, the third Moroccan proposal was identical to the second, which convinced Baker that Morocco was not serious about working with him. Claiming that he had done all he could, Baker resigned in June 2004. Polisario knew that they had lost an honest broker; Morocco's foreign minister, Mohammed Benaissa, felt that 'it was the outcome of the tenacity of Moroccan diplomacy'.

## Peace Process Meltdown

In the year and a half since Baker's departure, the Western Sahara peace process has come undone. Alvaro De Soto, head of MINURSO starting in 2004, assumed Baker's responsibilities as lead negotiator, but Polisario and Algeria would not even meet with him. Their attitude was that the only thing De Soto needed to do was force Morocco to accept the Baker Plan. Rabat, on the other hand, has said that it was willing to accept autonomy for the Western Sahara so long as Morocco's 'territorial integrity' was respected.

On the question of self-determination, the Moroccan position against an independence option continued to present the greatest obstacle to peace. As the Secretary General noted in 2003:

*It is difficult to envision a political solution that, as required by Security Council resolution 1429 (2002), provides for self-determination but that nevertheless precludes the possibility of independence as one of several ballot options' (UN Security Council, 2003, paragraph 52). Resolution 1429 expressed [the Security Council's] readiness to consider any approach which provides for self-determination.*

Yet the Security Council has also consistently called for a consensual approach and, as the Secretary General made clear in February 2000, is unwilling to impose a solution. Thus, by demanding self-determination and yet ruling out both passive (shame) and active (sanctions or military intervention) coercion, the UN has painted itself into a corner in Western Sahara.

To make matters worse, the Secretary General has reported increased tension between the two sides along Morocco's defensive wall. It is not clear if either side is gearing up for war or if MINURSO is exaggerating the tension to justify its continued presence in the face of growing pressure to withdraw. When it first arrived in 1991, MINURSO was treated with suspicion by the Moroccans and warmly welcomed by Western Saharan nationalists. Many nationalists now feel that MINURSO serves to protect Moroccan control. Its limited mandate bars it from reporting on even the most obvious acts of Moroccan repression inside the Territory.

While Polisario's rank-and-file have pressed for a resumption of the armed conflict since the original referendum was abandoned in 2000, its long-time leader cooperated with Baker. Now Baker has gone Polisario is having a harder time justifying a non-violent approach to its constituents, especially the refugees. A ceasefire made all the more difficult for Polisario to support given Moroccan repression inside the Territory. The UN's military peacekeepers feel that even a small incident – perhaps just one mortar fired by a disgruntled Polisario fighter – could spark all out war.

It is no surprise that France, on Morocco's behalf, now supports renewing MINURSO's mandate for the sake of peacekeeping, sans peacemaking. Though the UN mission in Western Sahara exists to hold a referendum Morocco now rejects, Paris thinks that MINURSO's presence helps keep the situation from erupting into violence. Opposing this view is the new US representative at the United Nations, John Bolton. He has placed MINURSO on a 'hit list' of UN missions he wants evaluated. Though Bolton claims that his is a principled stance against ineffective UN missions, he is also a close associate of Baker. Bolton has told every mission at the United Nations that Western Sahara is a priority for him. If the Security Council wants to move the parties, the only means of pressure left is the mission itself, which

seems to mean more to Morocco than Polisario. However, it is not clear if Bolton wants to press Morocco to accept the Baker Plan or just to get the parties talking on a set timetable. Though the latter would be a breakthrough in itself.

As a deputy of the State Department, Bolton will face the same problem that Baker faced namely Morocco's strategic value to the United States. The US government would like to resolve the Western Sahara dispute, but not if it means jeopardising its relations with Morocco. Rabat has been emboldened by reinvigorated relations with the United States in the past two years. Following the tense Security Council deliberations on the Baker Plan in 2003, President Bush personally told King Mohammed that a Western Sahara solution would not be imposed on Morocco. To show solidarity with Rabat in its 'war on terror', Washington declared Morocco a 'major non-NATO ally', a symbolic, non-obligatory defence promise also given to states like Israel. In late 2005, then Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage told Al-Jazeera that the United States 'supports the territorial integrity of Morocco' when it comes to Western Sahara.<sup>3</sup> Morocco also won a bilateral Free Trade Agreement with the United States, though Polisario's supporters in Congress made sure that Western Sahara was excluded. Yet the US government has not commented on offshore petroleum exploration contracts between Morocco and the Oklahoma based Kerr-McGee Corporation for waters off Western Sahara. Should Kerr-McGee's geological survey's reveal significant quantities of oil or gas, Rabat will have another reason not to budge on the status of Western Sahara. Across the board, US aid to Morocco is increasing, both military and economic (US Dept., of State, 2006:456).

Reinforcing Morocco's intransigence is King Mohammed's personal support from the French President, Jacques Chirac, as well as the Spanish government's unwillingness to press Rabat. Under the previous conservative government of the Popular Party, Hispano-Moroccan relations were tense, the result of diplomatic clashes over Spanish fishing rights, illegal migration across the Gibraltar straight, the Spanish enclaves in Morocco and the ubiquitous pro-Western Saharan independence sympathies in Spain. The new Socialist government of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, ushered in following the Madrid bombings in March 2004, made relations with Morocco a priority. Fighting terrorism and controlling illegal African migration meant readjusting Madrid's slightly pro-Polisario position on Western Sahara. It took a year for Spain to find a happy medium, as Polisario's grassroots support and Algerian influence forced the Socialist government to correct its aim on several occasions. Pro-Moroccan rhetoric also elicited attacks from the opposition, which claimed that Zapatero had two positions on Western Sahara, one for Rabat and one for Algiers.

Spain even attempted to play a role in mediating the conflict in the summer of 2005, following De Soto's happy reassignment to Jerusalem and amidst the growing anti-Moroccan demonstrations inside the Territory. This effort floundered when Madrid offered to arrange bilateral Moroccan-Algerian talks on the issue. Though Rabat has long favoured direct negotiations with Algeria, bypassing Polisario, Algiers has consistently rejected any attempt to 'bilateralise' the conflict. The United States also failed to make any headway using a bilateral approach in the summer of 2005. Under the auspices of the White House, the US government arranged for the release of the last four hundred prisoners of war held by Polisario. Out of sensitivity to Rabat, US intermediaries were careful never to mention the word Polisario in any of their statements, which carefully framed the conflict in Moroccan-Algerian terms.

While the Moroccan press saw it as a coup for their position, Rabat failed to reciprocate in any way. This led US policy makers to the conclusion that even when they play by Morocco's rules, it is not really worth the effort.

Baker's replacement, Peter Van Walsum, a former Dutch diplomat, was finally named in July 2005, followed by the naming of a new mission head, UN officer Francesco Bastagli from Italy. From 1998 to 2004, Americans backed by the State Department held these positions. Now Washington refuses to put forward US soldiers as MINURSO peacekeepers. Washington has clearly put Western Sahara on a back burner. Van Walsum's first assessment of the situation in October 2005 was that the positions of the parties were 'quasi-irreconcilable'. When he briefed the Security Council in January 2006, he warned that a solution is a year away at least.<sup>4</sup>

## **Recent Evolution of the Conflict**

### **Autonomy**

As noted, the question of autonomy for Western Sahara is an old idea, though it has been the favoured compromise solution of the key Western powers and the UN elite since at least the late 1980s. After supporting an independence/integration referendum from 1981 to 2000, it now seems that Morocco favours autonomy as well. As a tool for peacemaking, autonomy or shared-sovereignty has become more prevalent in recent years.<sup>5</sup> Steven Krasner, has argued that semi-sovereignty, not absolute sovereignty, is the dominant arrangement in world affairs (Krasner, 1997). There is perhaps some irony in the fact that East Timor – Asia's Western Sahara – won its independence by rejecting a negotiated autonomy proposal, the same kind of proposal Morocco supports and Polisario vehemently rejects. Driving discussions of autonomy for Western Sahara are not abstract discussions, however, about the nature of the Westphalian state, but discrete Western pressure on Morocco to offer a rejoinder to the peace process.

From 2000 to 2003, Morocco was in a fairly comfortable position. The Security Council had taken the 1991 Settlement Plan off the table, and Baker's 2001 Framework Agreement was equivocal about the 'final status' of Western Sahara after four years of autonomy. Rabat was unhappy with the enhanced level of autonomy the Framework Agreement offered the Territory, but Polisario's extreme frustration with the abandonment of the Settlement Plan helped reassure the Moroccan government that things were going its way.

Polisario's surprise acceptance of the 2003 Peace Plan, after months of studying Morocco's cold reaction to it, and with some nudging from Algiers, was a diplomatic coup for the liberation front. For three years Polisario had been on the defensive, but former guerrillas turned the tables on Morocco to stunning effect. This meant that they now had much more sympathy from the US government vis-à-vis Baker. Morocco's stern refusal to even consider the 2003 Baker Plan, which allowed all Moroccan settlers in Western Sahara to vote in the final status referendum, caused great confusion. The only logical conclusion was that Rabat did not trust its own citizens, they might actually vote for independence with Polisario.

With French support, Morocco successfully weathered the diplomatic storm in the summer of 2003, and then used every card it had to undermine the US government's support for Baker. As mentioned above, Morocco worked with Baker during his final

year as Personal Envoy, but Rabat's counter-proposals indicated to Baker that Morocco was not serious about autonomy, self-determination or even working with him in good faith. Though Baker has yet to specifically point his finger at Rabat for sabotaging his efforts, his relative silence on the issue since resigning in 2004 could be read as one final 'diplomatic' move not to jinx future resolution efforts. The fact that the US government never criticised Morocco's Foreign Ministry for celebrating Baker's departure is just another sign of how important the small Kingdom is to Washington.

Rabat's backing of autonomy, much more in principle than in practice, stemmed from an awareness that it is the one party holding up the peace process. Though the Baker Plan will never be imposed on Morocco, it is tepidly supported by the Security Council, and is now the position of Polisario and Algeria. Thus the onus is on Morocco to come up with a counter-offer, which Rabat claims it will do it April 2006.

It is difficult to gauge the level of autonomy that Morocco is willing to accept at this point, and how the question of self-determination will be tackled. After rejecting the 2003 Peace Plan, Morocco claimed that it favoured the 2001 Framework Agreement as a basis for negotiations. Moroccan officials claim that everything is up for grabs so long as Polisario takes independence off the table. Morocco has long claimed that it is undergoing a process of decentralisation or regionalisation, to devolve the central authority of the Monarchy and his apparatus of clients (*Makhzan*) to the local level. Late in his rule, King Hassan even considered transforming Morocco into a federal state, so as to solve the Western Sahara issue and pre-empt any Berberist claims for autonomy. The problem with both these approaches, regionalisation and federalisation, is that they are internal to Morocco, and ignore the fact that Western Sahara is an external, internationalised problem.

The principle of autonomy is that the central government cannot abolish or alter the locally elected autonomous government. This principle alone is enough to give the Moroccan government pause as it would pose a significant challenge to the absolute rule the Alawi monarchs have enjoyed since independence in 1956. If the Polisario accepted autonomy, and proved that it could rule justly, transparently and democratically, it might fuel claims for autonomy in other regions where fifty years of unjust, opaque monarchical rule has cultivated layer upon layer of discontent. Indeed, Rabat's 2003 rejection of the Baker Plan is undoubtedly rooted in the 'fear of a good example'; so much so that the Moroccan government is worried that its own citizens would rather join Polisario in independence than spend one more day under the *Makhzan*.

The other major problems that substantial autonomy poses for Rabat are the issue of Moroccan settlers, the Moroccan military and self-determination. Since 1976, Morocco has transplanted large numbers of its own citizens, ethnic Berbers, Arabs and Sahrawis<sup>6</sup> into the Territory. Their existence has been heavily subsidised by the state, with government salaries double in Western Sahara. Estimates of the total population in the Moroccan controlled Western Sahara range from 300,000 to 400,000. Given the results of the UN voter-identification effort, the number of ethnic Sahrawis native to Western Sahara is roughly 160,000. Thus Moroccans could easily dominate an autonomous Western Saharan government if it were democratically elected. Without a reduction of its settlers by as much as fifty to sixty per cent, it is unlikely that Western Saharan nationalists would consider autonomy. Such a reduction is not only necessary for Sahrawi self-rule, but it would be necessary to create economic space for the refugees. Morocco, however, has never signalled a

willingness to consider a reduction in settlers, nor is it likely that this state-supported population would want to return to Morocco without some conflict.

The Moroccan military is also heavily entrenched in Western Sahara, not just physically but economically as well. At the level of the foot soldier, there is money to be made in petty smuggling operations between Mauritania and even Sahrawis on Polisario's side of the defensive wall. At the level of Morocco's commanding officers, who have controlling stakes in several legal enterprises, there are millions of dollars to be made in the rich fishing offshore. For autonomy to work, not only would Morocco have to reduce the number of its soldiers in the Territory, estimated between 100,000 to 150,000, but it would have to hand over control of all economic sectors to the autonomous government. No one has yet answered the question: would Morocco's generals willingly quit Western Sahara to make peace?

The question of self-determination is the most vexing. The Moroccan position seems to shift depending on whom one is talking to. Some Moroccan officials claim that elections for the local autonomous government will satisfy self-determination. Others welcome a yes/no referendum on a specific autonomy proposal. Unlike East Timor, a 'no' vote would not mean independence (or integration); but what would happen after such a vote?

The problem with this latter approach is that it might reopen the question of who has a right to vote. Again, Moroccan opinions vary, as some seem willing to accept a vote from only Sahrawis. Others think that Moroccan settlers should be involved. The genius of the Baker's 2003 Peace Plan was that it overcame the issue of 'who votes?' by simply including Moroccan settlers with the UN list of native Western Saharans. For Polisario, it was hard enough to accept the idea, and then to convince the refugees, that Moroccans could vote in their referendum. If such a yes/no vote was limited to native Western Saharans, Polisario might be coaxed to the table, but that ignores the fact that it would imply that the Front had given up independence. While this concession could lead to peace, it would first lead to Polisario's overthrow by the refugees.

## *Intifadah*

For all intents and purposes, yet unknown to most of the world, the war for Western Sahara resumed in May 2005. This time, however, Western Saharan nationalists began using non-violent strategies to drive Morocco out of the Territory. This movement is now called the *Intifadah al-Istiqlal*, struggle of independence. This development signals a shift in the locus of Western Saharan nationalism. As observed in journalist Toby Shelley's prescient and timely book, nationalist Sahrawis living in 'occupied' Western Sahara, rather than the camps, are now leading the cause for independence (Shelley, 2004:204-205).

Not only is this a geographical shift, but it is also a generational one. The leaders of the *Intifadah* are both first generation nationalists and Sahrawis who have grown up under Moroccan rule. Most surprisingly of all, some of the movement's leaders are ethnic Sahrawis indigenous to southern Morocco.

The ongoing *Intifadah* erupted during the current nadir of the peace process in May 2005, and just after the thirty-second anniversary of Polisario's first military conflict. Morocco unwittingly triggered the events when it dispersed a small demonstration against the transfer of a Sahrawi prisoner from Al-'Ayun, Western Sahara, to just

outside of Agadir in southern Morocco. Sahrawi activists returned in larger numbers and again met with a heavy-handed response from the Moroccan police. The situation then erupted into the largest displays of pro-independence sentiment ever seen in the Moroccan controlled Western Sahara. Moroccan authorities arrested over a hundred demonstrators, reportedly tortured several activists and later tried the *Intifadah's* leadership for inciting violence. Smaller demonstrations and nightly confrontations continued throughout the summer and into the holy month of Ramadan. The situation reached a low point when Moroccan police beat a Sahrawi youth to death in the streets of Al-'Ayun at the end of October. His funeral, held in January 2006, featured the flags of Polisario, including one draped over the coffin. Several days later, Aminatou Haidar, a female nationalist activist, was released from jail, gaunt after fifty days of hunger strike. She was also received with Polisario flags and slogans celebrating the life of '*shahid* (martyr) Lembarki', the youth buried days before.

This is not the first time Sahrawi nationalists have called their struggle an *Intifadah* or directly confronted Moroccan administration with civil disobedience. In fact, some Sahrawis refer to pro-independence demonstration against Spanish rule in 1970 as their first *Intifadah*. Since the beginning of the Moroccan conquest, there have been three notable periods of disturbance. Twice, in 1987 and 1995, the Moroccan police quickly suppressed attempts to demonstrate in front of visiting UN missions in the Territory. Then, in 1999, Sahrawi students in Al-'Ayun engaged in a multi-day sit-in calling for more rights, though without using pro-independence slogans. This was a test of the new regime of King Mohammed. When the protest grew in scope, it was dispersed roughly. Larger protests ensued that became overtly nationalist, and later earned the name *Intifadah*.

Political, social and economic discontent is driving the demonstrations and protests. Opposition is wrapped in the language of nationalism. Rather than engage native Sahrawis as a whole, the Moroccan administration rules Western Sahara using the same methods it uses elsewhere; a system of handpicked clients that are handsomely rewarded for their obedience to the crown. These are typically tribal elders (*Shaykhs*), Sahrawi notables and high profile Polisario defectors. As in the rest of Morocco, the *Makhzan* system keeps the locally elected officials in check.

The Moroccan government claims that it has invested millions of dollars into Western Sahara to win the hearts and minds of the native Sahrawis, yet most of those funds go to support the large population of settlers. And even with this massive development scheme, the economy in Western Sahara is the worst in Morocco according to its own figures, especially unemployment (Shelley, 2005). Nationalists complain bitterly of economic marginalisation and of being treated as second-class citizens. They also feel that their traditional culture is being eroded by the 'Moroccanisation' of Western Sahara.

The *Intifadah* is motivated by the very real concerns of the general Sahrawi population, yet nationalist activists are also motivated by the fact that Polisario has become ineffective. This is not to say that there are visible divisions among the Polisario leadership in exile and the nationalists inside the Territory. Both share a common goal and a common enemy, and because of advances in technology (e.g., cell phones and email) there is constant communication between the two. Polisario's leader, Mohammed Abdelaziz, sees the *Intifadah* as the second prong in their 'national strategy', international political pressure being the other.

Activists working inside Western Sahara believe that Polisario has been unable to achieve independence because of international politics. The war effort failed because of Morocco's aid from Western powers like France and the United States, as well as Saudi Arabia. The referendum effort failed, they argue, for the same reason, because of the international community's unwillingness to press Morocco. Even when Polisario agreed to allow Moroccan settlers to vote, the United Nations would not force Morocco to hold a referendum. Under these conditions, nationalist activists felt that the only means left to them, short of terrorism, was a non-violent 'people power' strategy, like movements in the Philippines and South Africa, and more recently in Serbia, Ukraine and Lebanon. The advantages of this strategy are obvious. Not only does it have the potential to draw more international criticism to Morocco, but that shame then rubs off on Morocco's main supporters, France and the United States. The more embarrassing the Moroccan 'occupation' becomes, and the more embarrassing supporting it becomes, the more likely the West might force Morocco to quit Western Sahara.

Nationalist activists realise that the danger of this strategy is that, despite their efforts, the international community will continue to treat Western Sahara as a marginal issue in global affairs. Unless these Sahrawis are able to draw more attention, and successfully frame their struggle in such a way as to elicit sympathetic international support and active solidarity, Western Saharan nationalism could continue to be brutally repressed without so much as the bat of an eye from the international community.

## **Conclusion**

For the time being, autonomy and *Intifadah* seem irreconcilable. This does not have to be the case, but the very fact that the Moroccan regime blesses autonomy makes it a non-starter for many nationalists. And the overt displays of pro-Polisario sentiment in the *Intifadah* make it ideologically impossible for the Moroccan government to consider any rational or constructive engagement. While this shift in the discourse of the Western Sahara conflict is a new and interesting development, it also stems from the lack of imagination with which the international community has treated the conflict for so long. International complaints of a 'winner-take-all mentality' should be tempered by the fact that the United Nations has so far only presented winner-take-all solutions.

Autonomy and *Intifadah* could meet in that middle space that has eluded all previous efforts to resolve the conflict. A genuine self-rule that allows for the flourishing of Western Saharan nationalism within the Kingdom of Morocco would allow North Africa to finally settle its post-colonial differences and become the regional power it could be. On the face of it, Morocco's willingness to discuss autonomy seems like an opening for peace. Yet Rabat's behaviour indicates that its attitude is far from reconciliatory. The *Intifadah* draws its strength from history as much as from a hard earned knowledge that the highly centralised and clientelist authoritarian Moroccan regime is not yet willing to accommodate a democratically run, Catalonia-like region for the Sahrawis.

The main reason for the Saharan deadlock cited by officials of the UN and the governments of France, Spain and the US, is the 'unwillingness' of Morocco, Polisario and Algeria to make the compromises necessary for peace. Yet nowhere does it register that the Security Council is just as unwilling to twist anyone's arm,

especially Morocco. The international community agrees that the Western Sahara conflict is deteriorating and that it might slip back into armed conflict without resolution. The Security Council and the UN secretariat, however, are now totally reliant upon the goodwill of the parties to achieve a resolution, having abandoned any pretence of having either sticks or carrots to motivate them. With the parties' goodwill visibly deteriorating day-by-day, the need for the UN to evaluate this attitude becomes more and more warranted.

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## Endnotes

1. Nationalist Western Saharans and international sympathizers often refer to the Moroccan controlled Western Sahara as 'occupied', though the Geneva Conventions have not been formally applied. Morocco's legal status is that of a de facto administering power – a coloniser.
2. Though the mastermind of the first Gulf War coalition, Baker – a classical conservative – was somewhat at odds with the Neoconservatives driving the White House to war in Iraq. Thus there is some question as to the extent of his influence at that time. On this point see Goldberg. The author thanks Spanish journalist Maria Carrión for pointing out this article and making this connection.
3. The State Department never clarified whether or not Armitage meant to say that the United States recognises Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. See Mundy (2005). Former US diplomats close to Morocco claim that the Bush administration and Rabat have a secret understanding on Western Sahara, whereby the United States will not support any solution that involves the option of independence. Whether or not this is the case, one cynical official at the European Union felt that the United States is now in a poor position to push Morocco given its alleged role as a torture 'sub-contractor' for Washington.
4. According to a high level official in UN Department of Political Affairs, Van Walsum's pessimism stems from the fact that he was not fully briefed before he accepted the assignment. He realised this after his first tour of the region and meetings with France, Spain, United States and Baker.
5. See Hooper and Williams.
6. Many observers of the conflict, and even some nationalists, equate the terms Sahrawi (the Arabic adjective for Saharan) with Western Saharan. This is not accurate since many self-identifying Sahrawis are indigenous to southern Morocco, western Algeria and northern Mauritania. While all native Western Saharans are Sahrawis, not all ethnic Sahrawis are Western Saharan, though all Sahrawi 'tribes' are those whose traditional ranges included the former Spanish Sahara.

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# Security & Insecurity in North Africa

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*Jeremy H. Keenan*

**The article analyses the North African security situation over the last 15 or so years, but especially since the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, which provided the pre-emptive basis for the launch of Washington's global 'War on Terror'. The article explains how and why the US, in collaboration with its lead ally in the region, Algeria, and with the cognisance of France and other European powers, duplicitously fabricated a new front in the 'war on terror' across the Sahara and Sahel, bringing an entirely new dimension to the nature and meaning of 'terrorism' in North Africa. Far from furthering political stability, security and democracy, as the Bush administration has proclaimed, Washington's attempt to establish itself as the elite power in the region has taken North Africa and most of the Sahel into a dangerous spiral of increased authoritarianism and repression, increased regional instability and insecurity, increased popular resentment of both Washington and the regimes of the region and the increased threat of militant extremism. The article shows how the US has not been able to get its own way willy-nilly in the region, but has instead found itself running up against a whole raft of pressures and conflicts, many of its own making, which reflect both existing and new forms of political opposition and organisation. In focusing on labour and resource issues, especially those connected with oil and gas production, the article highlights the links between abundant oil, rents and the aggrandizement of the authoritarian state at the expense of autonomous civil society. The article concludes by suggesting that the US is unable to maintain its power and position in North Africa as a result of what is turning into a classic case of imperial over-reach.**

'Security' is an essentially contested concept,<sup>1</sup> which defies easy definition and analysis.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, much of the debate about security revolves around two critical questions; namely, whose security and security from whom or what?<sup>3</sup>

The more traditional 'realist' approach to 'security studies' focused primarily on the security of the 'State', with the main threats to it coming from other states. While realism or neo-realism is still the dominant theoretical approach to international or global security studies, 'security studies' are becoming increasingly less state-centric, directing their attention both 'upwards' and 'downwards' from the national level. At the international level, and especially in the wake of the 11 September 2001 (9/11) attacks on New York and Washington, security studies are focusing increasingly on global issues such as terrorism and organised crime. Other system issues, such as climatic change and pandemics are also rising higher on agenda. At the other end of the scale, more attention is being focused on social elements below the level of the State, such as nations, communities and increasingly the individual.

In this article, I look at North Africa's security at all three of these levels – global, national and individual – over a period of time. The time-span is a little arbitrary, but roughly from the late 1980s and early 1990s to the present. The reason for taking this specific period is that its beginning, albeit over the span of a few years, marks the beginning of the closure of much of North Africa and the Sahel to the outside world and a clear deterioration in the overall level of security throughout much of the region. In Algeria, civil disturbances which began in 1988 led ultimately to the emergence of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) as the country's dominant political party and the military's annulment of the second and final round of the elections in January 1992 that would have brought to power the first ever democratically elected Islamist government. This in turn led to the onset of several years of prolonged violence between what was generally regarded as an array of armed Islamic groups, now referred to as 'terrorists', and the country's security forces.

In Libya, the early 1990s saw the effective isolation of the country from the rest of the world as both the UN and EU added their own sanctions to those of the USA. The stalemate in the Western Saharan dispute made much of that region, including parts of southern Morocco and northern Mauritania, a 'no-go' area, while the onset of Tuareg rebellions in both Niger and Mali, and Tubu rebellions in Chad and Niger turned much of the Sahel into a conflict zone.

Although these particular issues and conflicts were marginal to the remaining three North African states, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, they nevertheless had implications for their authoritarian regimes and their security. The net result of these various 'security situations' was that much of North Africa and the Sahel became effectively isolated from the outside world for much of the 1990s.

The first question that any reappraisal of North Africa's security might be expected to ask is whether its overall security situation has improved or deteriorated since the 1990s. Given the contested nature of what we mean by 'security' and how it might be measured, that it is as much a product of psychology as geo-politics and that it is fraught with subjectivity, my views, based largely on the age-old anthropological practice of participant observation, probably have only marginally more methodological merit than the US Department of Homeland Security's 'intelligence-based' colour-coded security advisory system!<sup>4</sup> To say that the security threat has gone from 'blue' to 'green' or from 'red' to 'orange' tells us nothing about the nature of the security threat, the intelligence on which it is based, or how it has been measured. Nevertheless and notwithstanding the methodological shortcomings, I could have made a case for saying that North Africa's overall security situation had improved if I had had to answer that question between the end of 1999 and the end of 2002. By that time, the level of violence in Algeria's crisis (civil war), although not resolved, had fallen from an estimated 200,000 killings in the 1990s to around 200 per month; foreign tourism, which had plummeted to zero, was trickling back, while the country's new president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, seemed to be talking seriously about an amnesty and national conciliation. Libya was also beginning to open up; in Mali, the 1996 Timbuktu Peace Accord appeared to have taken root, while in Niger the last Tuareg rebels had thrown their arms onto a 'Fire of Peace' in Agades in 2000. There were even signs of movement in the Western Sahara.

In spite of those indisputable 'improvements', one can no longer proffer such an optimistic answer. Even though the number of killings in Algeria has declined substantially from the frenetic butchery of the mid-1990s, a detailed analysis of developments across the whole of North Africa over the course of the last decade

suggests that the region's overall security situation has revolved in that time through almost 360 degrees and that the signs of 'desecuritisation' in the period 1999-2002 were nothing more than a blip. In the oft-quoted words of Frantz Fanon, who was horribly familiar with the torture and other sufferings of pre-independent Algeria, the conclusion of such an analysis is very much a case of *plus ça change*.

This article reveals and explains why it is that the security situation throughout North Africa has, after the blip mentioned above, reverted to type. All North African states are characterised by the lack of any meaningful democracy, authoritarianism and strong security establishments. 'Power', as John Entelis recently remarked with specific reference to the Maghreb, 'is in the hands of the unaccountable few governing the unrepresented many.'<sup>5</sup> These 'few' are effectively those who control the security establishment, the *mukhabarat* as it is known in Arabic. In this article, I show how America's post 9/11 involvement in North Africa, notably its 'War on Terror', is having the precise opposite effect to the Bush administration's stated objective of bringing democracy to the region.<sup>6</sup> Washington's military support<sup>7</sup> for the regimes of the region, especially its lead-ally, Algeria, combined with the huge surge in oil and gas revenues, has had the counterproductive effect of 'making the *mukhabarat* State more robust and thus less inclined to accede to societal demands for greater democracy'.<sup>8</sup>

The Bush administration's duplicitous post-9/11 intervention in North Africa has further polarised this balance of political forces in such a way as to both heighten and sharpen the lines of this fundamental cleavage between the ruling elites, protected by their security establishments, and the 'unrepresented many'. It has also tended to have exacerbated and become beset by the many and varied conflicts within and from outside the region. Indeed, the complexity of this array of political forces and local-regional conflicts – in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Sudan – is such that the US has not been able entirely to get its own way across the region. On the contrary, by strengthening, at least initially, the elites and their security establishments behind which they shelter, the US intervention has injected the existing lines of cleavage and conflicts with a new dynamic between the international level, represented predominantly by the US, the national elites and their security structures and the local level where a complex array of social movements – civic associations, Islamists, trade unions and other worker organisations, ethnic-tribal organisations, women's organisations and others – are prepared increasingly, so it seems, to challenge the existing balance of political forces – and perhaps in even more extremist ways.

Thus, far from furthering political stability, security and democracy, Washington's ill-conceived policy has taken North Africa and much of the Sahel – a region which is considerably larger than the entire USA – into a dangerous spiral of increased authoritarianism and repression, increased regional instability and insecurity, increased popular resentment of both Washington (anti-Americanism) and their own regimes and the increased threat of militant extremism.

## Levels of Security

In terms of the three levels of security mentioned above – the 'global', the 'national' and the 'individual' – my main interest, possibly because of my anthropological bent, but also because of the light that it throws on the post 9/11 global security situation, is in exploring the links and interstices between the 'global' and the 'individual'. It is also because 'global security', as much as North African – or any

other – regional security, is essentially about perceptions and competing ‘truths’. And, by circumventing, as it were, the national level, whose agencies are the primary source of ‘disinformation’, we get closest to those ‘other truths’ through which the US administration’s ‘War on Terror’, as this essay indicates, is most advantageously explored and hence understood.

A conventional realist or neo-realist analysis of the ‘middle’ or ‘national’ level indicates that the lines of potential national cleavage in North Africa, namely those between Algeria and Morocco, Egypt and Israel and Libya and Chad, have changed only little over the last decade or two, and that their analysis throws little illumination on the overall state of regional security. Developments in the Western Sahara dispute are unlikely to throw more than a small spanner in the works, while any future developments in sub-imperial competition between Libya and Algeria, North Africa’s two main oil producing states, are more likely to be better understood within the overall context of US imperialism than any historical lines of cleavage between the two states.

The deterioration in North Africa’s security situation, or what I have described as its ‘reversion to type’, over the course of the last 3-4 years is seen most conspicuously in the complex way in which the global issues of ‘terrorism’, or what are now generally subsumed within the broad ambit of the ‘War on Terror’, itself fast becoming a euphemism for US imperialism, while precipitating certain ‘national’ responses, have impregnated almost all social levels below that of the state. This is felt most acutely at the level of the individual who, at almost every social level and in almost every community, is now conscious of the more overt, arrogant and even more authoritarian repression of the security establishment.

While militant Islamic extremism and the repressive excesses of the security establishment have long been part of North African life, especially in Algeria, the global ‘War on Terror’, as prosecuted by the US in the wake of 9/11, has brought an entirely new dimension to the nature and meaning of ‘terrorism’ in North Africa (and elsewhere in the world), whether practiced by armed Islamic groups, the State or other third parties.

This new international intervention in the region, led and directed by Washington, also raises the question of the role that France, the former colonial and the ‘sub-imperial’ power in much of the region, has played in these proceedings.

### **Fabricating North Africa’s ‘War on Terror’<sup>9</sup>**

There are a number of clear incidents and dates which, in the perceptions of most people in the region, especially in those regions of the Sahara-Sahel most affected by the launch of America’s ‘War on Terror’ in North Africa, mark the launch and progress of this ‘war’.

The landmark incident was the hostage-taking of 32 European tourists in the Algerian Sahara in February-March 2003 by some 60 members of the *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSPC), Algeria’s most active ‘terrorist’ organisation at that time, under the leadership of a certain *El Para*. The name *El Para* was merely the most popular of some dozen pseudonyms of an individual whose identity is still not absolutely certain. There are many ‘truths’ about *El Para*. The version promulgated by Washington and its Algerian allies, is that *El Para* was second-in-command or, as claimed on occasion by Algeria’s intelligence services, even leader of the GSPC. He

was al-Qaeda's representative – bin Laden's man – in the Sahel, charged, amongst other things, with establishing al-Qaeda bases throughout the Sahel and turning the Tibesti mountains of Chad into what certain US military commanders have described, in their over-hyping of the situation, as the Sahara's Tora Bora. Not surprisingly, he was high on Washington's list of the world's most-wanted terrorists, being declared a 'Specially Designated Global Terrorist', a classification shared by bin Laden and his senior commanders.

The 'War on Terror' across the Sahara is associated with this hostage-taking and its long and complex aftermath through 2003-05, during which time *El Para's* men established themselves in Mali, where they were reportedly involved in several engagements with Algerian and Malian forces before being driven by what has been presented to the world at large as a combined military operation involving the armed forces of Algeria, Mali, Niger and Chad, with US military communications and aerial surveillance support, across Niger and into Chad. There, thanks to US aerial and satellite surveillance, they were attacked and largely wiped out by Chad's regular forces. *El Para*, however, reportedly escaped the carnage only to fall into the hands of the small rebel *Mouvement pour La Democratie et la Justice au Tchad* (MDJT), who held him captive before handing him over to the Algerian authorities under mysterious circumstances seven months later (October 2004). In May 2005, he was tried in an Algerian court *in absentia*, in spite of allegedly being in the hands of Algeria's military authorities, and gaoled for life.

Such terrorism in North Africa was not new. Nor was it particularly grotesque in the context of the atrocities that had been committed by both Islamic extremists and the state during Algeria's 'Dirty War' of the 1990s, the actions of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and its two offshoots, Jamaat al-Islamiyya and Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and more recent incidents such as the bombing of the synagogue in Tunisia in 2002 and the suicide bombings in Casablanca in 2003. In terms of loss of civilian life, *El Para's* campaign across the Sahara and Sahel during 2003-04 was almost insignificant in comparison.

The singularity of *El Para's* campaign, however, was that it was completely out of all known or anticipated contexts. First, it was most untimely: terrorism in Algeria had been on the wane since about 1998. Indeed, the reasons why the Bush administration had been able to prevaricate and delay over its promised supply of military assistance to Algeria throughout most of 2001 and 2002 was because Algeria appeared to be in no great need of such assistance. For the first time since the outbreak of violence some ten years earlier, the Algerian military appeared to be on top of the situation, having effectively eliminated the *Group(s) Islamique(s) Armé(s)* (GIA) and largely confined the GSPC to their mountainous retreats in the northeast of the country. Indeed, from around the time of Bouteflika's election as President in 1999 until the time of *El Para's* arrival on the scene in early 2003, there had been an increasing air of optimism, not only in Algeria, but also in many other parts of North Africa and especially its Saharan and Sahelian regions. Second, the Sahara and Sahel had been effectively 'terrorist-free' zones, being politically, socially and geographically unsuited to such terrorism.<sup>10</sup> Finally, *El Para's* modus operandi was not in keeping with any of the 'terrorist' groups thought to be operative in the region at that time.<sup>11</sup>

For many reasons, therefore, the hostage-taking and *El Para's* subsequent escapade across the Sahara and Sahel came as a surprise, especially to the region's local populations, 'Sahara-watchers' and those few security analysts who actually had

some familiarity with the region. Indeed, amongst many of these people there were suspicions from the outset as to who was behind the hostage-taking and its sequel of GSPC activities across the Sahel.

Detailed and continuous investigations over the course of the last three years have revealed an increasing amount of evidence to indicate that the hostage-taking and the subsequent GSPC activity across the Sahel was not in fact the work of the GSPC, but was orchestrated by Algerian and US military intelligence services, and that *El Para* himself was not merely an agent of Algeria's secret military intelligence service, the *Direction des Renseignements et de la Sécurité (DRS)*, but may even have been trained in the 1990s as a Green Beret by the US Special Forces at Fort Bragg in North Carolina.<sup>12</sup>

The stark conclusion reached by these findings is not merely that this 'new front in the war on terrorism'<sup>13</sup> was based on a mixture of bad intelligence, dissemblance, imagination and disinformation, but that almost every alleged 'terrorist' incident in the Sahara and Sahel regions since the launch of this front in 2002-03 was either a fiction, in that it did not happen, or, that it was fabricated by the US-Algerian intelligence services.<sup>14</sup>

## Understanding US Duplicity

The launch in 2002-3 of America's new front in the 'War on Terror' across the Sahelian counties of Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad, under the auspices of Washington's Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), later renamed and upgraded to the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) to include Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Nigeria and Senegal, was a monumental deception. It was designed primarily to create the ideological conditions for Washington's 'invasion' of Africa, its militarisation and the securing of US strategic national resources, notably, but not exclusively, oil.

This 'invasion' of Africa, as many local people refer to it, was to be legitimised through what I have referred to elsewhere as Washington's 'banana theory' of global terrorism.<sup>15</sup> In the wake of the US invasion of Afghanistan, Washington's 'philosophers' began to formulate seriously their 'banana' theory of world terrorism – especially as it impacted on, or might be used ideologically in, both Africa and Europe. Washington 'groupthink' was that as terrorists were supposedly uprooted by the US military from Afghanistan and neighbouring Central Asia and Middle Eastern regions, they dispersed into the Horn of Africa, from where they spread across the Sudan and Sahel to the western Saharan regions of Mauritania and the countries of the Maghreb. The Sahel was perceived as the key zone of conduit – the major part of the bend in a banana-shaped curve from Afghanistan and Central Asia to the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of the Maghreb – through which 'terrorists' dislodged from Central Asia and the Middle East would move westwards before fanning out northwards into the Maghreb and hence Europe and southwards into the strategic oil producing countries of West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. It was not lost on US intelligence services that oil-rich Nigeria, with its 60 per cent Muslim population, might become a theatre of al-Qaeda operations, as bin Laden had allegedly threatened. Typical of this 'groupthink' was the statement of EUCOM's Maj. Gen. Jeff Kohler:

*As terrorist cells were uprooted from Afghanistan and elsewhere by US Central Command,... they shifted to ... the wide-open, relatively desolate areas of Africa,... an easy back door into Europe through Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.<sup>16</sup>*

As one of his colleagues elaborated:

*If you squeeze the terrorists in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and other places, they will find new places to operate, and one of those places is the Sahel/Maghreb.<sup>17</sup>*

Although there was minimal intelligence to support this view,<sup>18</sup> it was beginning to be seen in Washington as the ideological lynchpin both for justifying the militarisation and securitisation of much of Africa and also for keeping Europe 'under threat' and thus 'on board' in America's contentious global 'War on Terror'.

During the course of 2002, and in the wake of its invasion of Afghanistan, the US began to give serious attention to the Sahel, a region of the world in which it had hitherto shown little interest and, from the intelligence point of view, had comparatively little knowledge. By the end of the year, State Department officials had already briefed the Sahelian governments on Washington's proposed PSI, while the CIA, working on highly questionable intelligence, had undertaken a deep helicopter reconnaissance mission into the Saharan regions of Northern Mali in the belief that it was in that desolate region that 'terrorists' might establish their bases.

For their part, Algeria's military intelligence services were fully aware of both US interests and activities in the Sahel, and its 'banana theory'. They were also aware that there was a gap of some two thousand kilometres in terms of any proven terrorist links between the Sahel and the Maghreb. In fact, the problem, from a US perspective was even worse than that: not only were there no proven links across the Sahara between either Islamic organisations (*salafistes*) or traffickers operating in the Sahel and terrorist organisations in the Maghreb, but there had been no acts of terrorism, in the conventional sense of the term, in the Sahel.

If this 'banana' notion of world terrorism was to gain any credence, it needed concrete, tangible evidence of active terrorist links not only east-west across the Sahel but, more importantly, north-south across the Sahara. Thus, having conjured up the 'theory', it was merely a matter of finding or fabricating enough 'facts' to make it stick. And, as Algeria's intelligence services were fully aware, this meant seizing on almost any story that supported Washington's construction of the Sahelian Sahara as a 'terror zone'. As we now know, *El Para* provided the missing link. He was the living proof that al-Qaeda had not only spread across the Sahel, as the Americans believed, but now spanned the Sahara. The banana was in place. As US-EUCOMs top commanders were quick to point out,

*al-Qaeda, through the actions of the GSPC, threatened to turn Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia into 'another Afghanistan'.<sup>19</sup>*

## Understanding Algeria's Complicity

Whether the hostage-taking was initiated by the Algerians or the US, or as a joint initiative, will probably never be known. What is known, however, is that the two countries' intelligence services were in high-level meetings in Algiers immediately before the commencement of the operation and that they worked increasingly closely together during the course of *El Para's* escapade across the Sahara and through the Sahel.<sup>20</sup>

Algeria's motives for its post-9/11 alliance with the US and in helping the US fabricate a new Saharan-Sahelian front in the 'War on Terror' are rooted in its own 'Dirty War' of the 1990s. As the violence of Algeria's 'civil war' intensified and the role of Algeria's army and its various militia groups in civilian massacres and other atrocities became more evident, so western countries kept their distance, with both the US and EU countries being reluctant to sell arms to Algeria for fear of Islamist reprisals and criticism from human rights groups. A consequence of this pariah status was that Algeria's army became progressively under-equipped. Therefore, and especially as the war de-escalated, Algeria's army became increasingly preoccupied with acquiring modern, high-tec weapon systems, notably night vision devices, sophisticated radar systems, an integrated surveillance system, tactical communications equipment and certain lethal weapon systems.

The Clinton administration distanced itself from Algeria.<sup>21</sup> However, US Vice President Dick Cheney, while president of Halliburton, had developed close relations with Bouteflika and in July 2001, only two months after the publication of the Cheney Report,<sup>22</sup> President Bouteflika was invited to Washington, where he told President Bush that his country was seeking specific equipment that would enable it to maintain peace, security and stability.<sup>23</sup> This visit was followed almost immediately by a visit by Algerian army chief of staff, General Lamari, to US military HQ Stuttgart at which he sought further support for the army's modernisation effort.

The 9/11 attacks heralded a new era in US-Algerian military relations. Bouteflika made two more visits to Washington in relatively quick succession at which he stressed that Algeria's struggle against Islamic militants was comparable to America's own war against al-Qaeda, hoping that such emphasis on their two countries' common predicament would make the US administration more inclined to sell lethal weaponry to Algeria. However, even though 2002 did see a marked increase in military collaboration between the two countries, with the US announcing that it was planning to expand military and security aid to Algeria through the transfer of equipment, including the sale of much-needed night vision military systems, and accelerated training, the assistance remained mostly symbolic in the form of frequent visits to Algiers by senior US officials,<sup>24</sup> regular visits by US naval ships and a doubling of the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET).<sup>25</sup>

And so, by the end of 2002, around the same time as US State Department officials were promoting the PSI to the Sahelian governments and the US intelligence services were reconnoitring deep inside the Malian Sahara,<sup>26</sup> US-Algerian relations became a little tetchy, with Algeria publicly admonishing the US for its failure to actually deliver the promised military equipment. The reasons for the US prevarication over this delivery was its reluctance to further provoke the human rights lobby by providing such equipment to the Algerian regime and the fear of inciting Islamist reactions. Perhaps more significantly, Washington's political caution was finding justification in the fact that Algeria's military now appeared to have got well on top of the country's 'terrorist' problem, effectively limiting their much-reduced activity to remote regions in the north-east of the country. Cautious US politicians were consequently able to argue that Algeria was no longer in need of such sophisticated equipment.

Thus, from Algeria's perspective, the hostage-taking and *El Para's* subsequent activities in the Sahel were stark proof that 'terrorism' was not only far from eradicated in Algeria, but that militant Islamists ('terrorists') had now established

themselves in the hitherto tranquil Sahara and Sahel. And, even though US military intelligence knew it to be untrue, Algeria made much ado, for the benefit of politicians in Washington, that the long time spent in finding and securing the release of the hostages was because its army lacked the sophisticated equipment that it had been seeking from the Americans. *El Para's* 'terrorist' escapades across the Sahara and Sahel were thus mutually beneficial to both countries. From an Algerian perspective they eased Washington's political reticence on the transfer of military equipment to Algeria, while Algeria's closer alliance with the US has done much to help it overcome its pariah status and re-establish the country's position and reputation in international affairs, especially in relation to NATO, the EU and the rest of the African continent.

For the US, *El Para* provided the missing link in its 'banana' worldview of terrorism. In so doing, he gave new impetus to the Bush administration's attempts to demonstrate the global threat of terrorism, especially at a time when it was trying to justify its invasion of Iraq in terms of Saddam Hussein's (as yet unproven) links to al-Qaeda and associated terrorist networks, and to legitimise the 'globalisation' of its 'War on Terror'. Particularly important in this regard was that Washington could now take its 'War on Terror' into Africa. This 'proof' of al-Qaeda in the Sahara justified the PSI and the TSCTI and gave US-EUCOM's commander, General James Jones, all the legitimacy he required to pursue his mission of acquiring basing rights and establishing what he referred to as a 'family of bases' across the continent.<sup>27</sup> General Jones was now able to talk with confidence of 'threats to the southern rim of the Mediterranean', from

*large uncontrolled, ungoverned areas across Africa (vast swathes of the Sahara, from Mauritania ... to Sudan) that are clearly the routes of narco-trafficking, terrorist training and hotbeds of instability, and which are going to be potential havens for that kind of activity.*<sup>28</sup>

As for its concerns for the securitisation of Africa's oil resources, the US has succeeded, through the TSCTI, in linking the two oil-rich states of Algeria and Nigeria, the two sides of the Sahara, in a complex of security arrangements whose architecture is American.<sup>29</sup>

## France's Hidden Hand

One of the mysteries of the US 'War on Terror' across North Africa and the Sahel is how the Americans appear to have been able to trample more or less all over the region, with the blessing of the regimes involved, but without an apparent 'beep' from France, which was not only the former colonial power across much of North and West Africa but has retained considerable 'sub-imperial' influence across the region.

At the time of the hostage-taking in 2003, some surprise was expressed by those directly associated with the drama, including officials in the foreign services of some of the countries involved, at France's reticence on the incident. France's continued 'silence' on both the hostage-taking and subsequent events in the region, as well as France's apparent acceptance of America's intervention in the region, has been explained by three reasons. The first is that France would be reluctant to involve itself in any way that might provoke or incite extremist reprisal actions from the 5 million or more Muslims, mostly Algerians, amongst its domestic population. The second is that the relative weakness of France's economy is that it is unable to provide the economic support and investments that it might like to provide to

Algeria and its other former colonial territories in the region and has no choice but to play second fiddle to America's far greater economic might. The third reason is that France, in keeping with its public portrayal of acrimony towards the US over the latter's invasion of Iraq, has remained detached from and uncommitted to America's North African 'invasion' – as some locals have called it – on the assumption that it will end in tears and that France will be able to step in eventually and pick up the pieces.

None of these reasons is entirely convincing. Indeed, there have been increasing suspicions about France's role in this entire affair since its outset. France's deafening silence over the hostage affair was almost as if it had something to hide. Equally suspicious were the occasional, albeit unverified, reports of field assistance being afforded to the Algerian and US intelligence services by French agents, as, for example, in clearing inquisitive Libyan agents out of Mali prior to the hostages' transfer there.<sup>30</sup> Further suspicions were raised by both France's failure to intervene in the Tuareg-Niger amnesty negotiations of 2005<sup>31</sup> and by allegations of France's involvement in the Bush administration's 'extraordinary rendition' programme.

The mystery of France's silence was solved in 2005 by the *Washington Post* (WP), which published a detailed report on US-Franco intelligence relations.<sup>32</sup> The WP revealed that the US and France had set up a top secret intelligence centre in Paris, code-named *Alliance Base* (the 'Base'), in 2002 (at the time of the PSI planning and shortly before the hostage-taking) that was largely funded by the CIA's Counterterrorist Center, but headed by a French general assigned from the *Direction Generale de la Sécurité Exterieur* (DGSE). The WP revealed that the 'Base' is multinational, having case officers from Britain, France, Germany, Canada, Australia and the USA and that it actually plans operations (such as extraordinary renditions?) rather than simply sharing information.

France's main contribution to the 'Base' is that it 'brings its harsh laws, surveillance of radical Muslim groups and their networks in Arab states, and its intelligence links to its former colonies.'<sup>33</sup> This includes France's very close relationship with Algeria's military intelligence services, notably the *DRS*, headed by General Mohamed Mediène and General Smaïn Lamari, head of its Counter-insurgency Unit. Not only does this relationship go back a long way, but there is now an increasing amount of evidence to indicate that the Algerian and French secret intelligence services collaborated in a number of 'dirty tricks' during Algeria's 'Dirty War'. For example, in 1993, in an attempt to make the French government and its public more supportive of the Algerian military's war (the 'eradication') against Islamist opposition, the *DRS* leadership in collaboration with Jean-Charles Marchiana, advisor to France's right-wing interior minister, Charles Pasqua, arranged the suspicious kidnapping of three officials from the French embassy in Algiers. Algerian secret services successfully mounted a phoney operation to convince public opinion they had freed the French hostages from 'Islamist terrorists'.<sup>34</sup> Several other 'terrorist incidents' directed against France are now thought to have been conducted by the *DRS* as part of the Algerian regime's attempt to discredit the Islamists in the eyes of French and world opinion.<sup>35</sup> It is inconceivable that the *DGSE* was unaware of this involvement. The same intelligence officers who were behind the *DRS*'s involvement in these incidents in the 'Dirty War' are still at the helm of Algeria's *DRS* and were responsible for the management and orchestration of the 'El Para affair'.

The *Washington Post's* exposé of the *Alliance Base* almost certainly confirms what this and other research has indicated; namely, that the relationship between the US and Algerian intelligence services is not a simple one-on-one relationship, but part of a triangle which includes France's *DGSE*. Indeed, given the WP's reported timing of the launch of the 'Base' (2002), it is almost impossible to believe that French intelligence services were not fully aware of the 'El Para affair' and the subsequent phases of the US 'War on Terror' across the region, especially in Algeria, Mauritania and the rest of the Sahel. Thus, given the pivotal role that the *DGSE* may well have played in this entire operation – if only through its knowledge of what was taking place between the US and Algerian intelligence services, France's reverberating silence is quite understandable. In addition, the existence of 'the Base' and its inevitable involvement in the US 'War on Terror' across North Africa and the Sahel raises serious questions about the complicity of the Base's other 'partners', especially Britain and Germany, who have also both been remarkably reticent on this subject.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Outcomes & Implications of America's North African Policy**

US support for the regimes of North Africa and the Sahel, with the possible exception of Libya, both militarily and through various economic relations, most notably investment in the hydrocarbons and mining sectors, has had profound impacts on and implications for the region's overall security. The US would like to argue that its presence in the region, notably through its war against terrorism, has brought security, stability and democracy to the region, in line with its 'Broader Middle East Initiative'. These are laudable aims. Unfortunately, on all three of these counts, the opposite is true.

In terms of security, and with questionable semantics, this has only been increased to the extent that the security establishments of most of the states in the region have been strengthened. That, however, has merely further prolonged, and perhaps even entrenched, the power and authoritarianism of fundamentally undemocratic regimes at the expense of weakening, or delaying, both the development of an autonomous civil society and the security of the individual. Indeed, in all the countries in which the US presence and its 'War on Terror' have been prevalent over the last 3-4 years, the level of State repression has increased. In that sense, North Africa, after a brief sense of optimism that its retarded democratic transitions might no longer be entirely imaginary, which prevailed across much of the region – especially Algeria – around the turn of the millennium, has reverted to type.

The 'War on Terror' has been used, without exception, by every regime in the region to repress and silence legitimate political opposition by labelling it or linking it with 'terrorism', 'putative terrorism' (to use a favourite Americanism for smearing such organisations) or 'incipient' terrorism, to use another fairly meaningless colloquialism, 'Islamic extremists' (a euphemism for 'terrorists') and the suchlike. Even Cold War rhetoric has found its way back into the offensive with elements of America's religious right referring to the present-day Polisario as 'Communists'! The most extreme example of North Africa's authoritarian regimes taking advantage of the 'War on Terror' to eliminate popular opposition has been in Mauritania where the dictatorial President, Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, used his strong support from the US and his role as a 'frontline' ally in the War on Terror to crack down and gaoil an ever increasing number of Islamists and a widening and legitimate popular opposition on the basis that they were either members of or linked in some way to the

'terrorist' Algerian GSPC. Such actions, when reported quite uncritically in the US and world media, merely confirmed the appropriateness of America's support for the 'War on Terror' in the region. However, as we now know, not only is the GSPC heavily infiltrated by Algeria's counter-terrorism services, but many of the incidents attributed to it are either fictitious or have been orchestrated by the US and Algerian intelligence services. Indeed, the popular perception of the GSPC across much of North Africa, especially in its Saharan-Sahelian regions, is that its maintenance by the DRS is essential in that it provides the main justification for the US involvement in the region. It was not surprising that Ould Taya was finally ousted in a coup mounted by his own security forces in August 2005. Nor, with other Sahelian and North African states currying favour from the US by using the 'war on terror' as a pretext to crack down on legitimate opposition, will it be surprising if this remains the only regime to experience this fate.

The 'War on Terror' has also been useful to states such as Libya, which have not been so closely allied to the US as, say, Algeria or Mauritania. Alison Pargeter has described how a Libyan *jihadist* movement calling itself the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), which first emerged in Libya in the 1980s and was more or less wiped out during the Libyan regime's mass arrests of suspected Islamist opponents in 1989, re-emerged again in the 1990s, largely as a result of the experience gained by those Libyans who had fought the Soviets in Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> On discovering the existence of the LIFG in 1995,

*Qadhafi launched a brutal and repressive campaign to liquidate his militant opponents as well as the more moderate strands of underground Islamist opposition that had also developed across the country. By 1998 the regime had succeeded in more-or-less wiping out the LIFG as well as other Islamist groups.*<sup>38</sup>

As in all other North African countries, the 'War on Terror' has enabled the Libyan regime to increase its domestic security apparatus and to justify crackdowns on internal opposition in the name of fighting international terrorism.<sup>39</sup> As Pargeter has noted, the Libyan regime has been assisted in its bid to prevent a Libyan Islamist opposition from re-emerging by the willingness of western governments, namely the US and the UK, to designate the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) as a terrorist organisation and to open the way for suspected members of the organisation to be returned to Tripoli.<sup>40</sup>

In the Sahel, where there was no terrorism<sup>41</sup> in the conventional meaning of the term prior to *El Para's* arrival, the brunt of the attempts to turn the region into a 'terror zone', other than for the fabricated incidents associated with *El Para's* insertion into the region, has fallen largely on the already marginalised minority populations, notably the Tuareg. While there have been incidents of 'ethnic provocation' in all the Sahelian states, these have been most serious in Niger, generally recognised as the world's poorest country, the PSI country most in need of American largesse and the Sahelian country that has been least able to excite the Americans with any significant increase in Islamist activity.<sup>42</sup>

The Niger government's attempt to provoke the Tuareg into actions which could be portrayed to the Americans as 'former rebels turning to terrorism', began in February 2004 when Rhissa ag Boula, the Minister of Tourism and Crafts and the former leader of the rebel *Front de Libération de l'Azawak et de l'Air (FLAA)* and its signatory to the 1955 Peace Accord that marked the formal end of the Tuareg rebellion in Niger, was arrested and taken into detention in connection with the murder of a young

party worker in the President's Nassara party. It is widely believed that the move was designed to provoke the Tuareg into taking up arms so that the government could secure more military and financial aid from the US administration, which had launched its PSI less than a month previously. The move succeeded in increasing the political tension in the northern mountains of Air, a traditional Tuareg stronghold, and escalating banditry, for which Rhissa's brother, Mohamed ag Boula, reportedly claimed responsibility. In September (2004), the Niger government sent some 150 troops into Air in a move that many thought would ignite a new Tuareg rebellion. However, the troops, recently trained by the US as part of its PSI, were ambushed by the Tuareg, with at least one soldier killed, four wounded and four taken hostage. RFI (*Radio France Internationale*) subsequently carried an interview in which Rhissa's brother said he was leading a 200-strong group which was fighting to defend the rights of the Tuareg, Tubu and Semori nomadic populations of northern Niger, and that he was personally responsible for the attack.

Rhissa was finally released from gaol in March 2005 without any charges being brought against him. He immediately sought to negotiate an amnesty for those Tuareg who had taken up arms. However, much to the surprise of the negotiators, the talks became blocked as a result of the intervention of what the negotiators referred to as 'American advisors' whom, they believed, were angling for a further show of force against the rebels to validate the TSCTI and to prove to the outside world that the region really was a 'terrorist zone'. The amnesty was finally negotiated in mid-summer thanks to the intervention of Colonel Ghadafi's good offices. It was noticeable that the French, who had hitherto always assisted the Tuareg in such negotiations, played no part in the proceedings. The Tuareg negotiators believe that this was because France was becoming increasingly anxious about the public exposure and labour unrest associated with the activities of two of its biggest companies, namely COGEMA (*Compagnie générale des matières nucléaires*) of the AREVA group, and Veolia Environment, formerly known as Vivendi Environment, the world's largest water company. These companies might well come to appreciate Niger's increased militarisation resulting from the PSI and TSCTI, which is currently seeing a 150 per cent expansion of its army from 4,000 to 10,000 soldiers and a 100 per cent expansion of its paramilitary police force from 2,000 to 4,000.<sup>43</sup>

## Algeria & Democratisation

The North African regime that has made most effort over the last 3-4 years in trying to convince both its domestic and international audiences that it is moving towards democratisation is Algeria. This is for two interrelated reasons. First, Algeria is trying to overcome its international pariah status in the wake of its military's annulment of the 1992 elections and its subsequent 'Dirty War'. Second, as Washington's key ally in launching the North African front in its 'War on Terror', it is in Algeria's interests to help Washington try and salvage something from its failing 'Broader Middle East Initiative' by showing that US intervention in the region, and Algeria especially, is leading to a greater liberalisation and democratisation. Indeed, up until the visit of the US Secretary of Defence to Algiers in February 2006, where he (Donald Rumsfeld) gave a memorable (but thoroughly honest) appraisal of US regional interests to the assembled media by confirming the region's role in Washington's security-terrorist agenda, but with absolutely no reference to his administration's hitherto alleged concerns for such things as the furtherance of democracy, improved governance and the betterment of civil society, such an image

had been portrayed with a reasonable level of success to the international community. In spite of Rumsfeld's highly pertinent but typically undiplomatic 'clarification' of US interests in the region, it is fair to say that most of the international community is still under the illusion that Algeria has made progress towards greater liberalisation and democratisation in the last few years. This image, however, has been based almost entirely on a massive PR exercise of propaganda and disinformation, most notably what Lahouari Addi has described as the country's 'fictitious multipartyism'.<sup>44</sup>

The reality of Algeria is that civil society – its trade unions, political parties, associations, newspapers, other media, etc., have been subjected over the last 3-4 years to an ever more stringent supervision by the security services – the *mukhabarat*, which, as I shall explain below, is directly related to the country's *rentier* economy, its increased level of oil and gas flows and revenues (which have played a pivotal role in strengthening the interests of the ruling elites and encouraging the procrastination of much-needed economic reforms),<sup>45</sup> and the security establishment's close alliance with the US military and intelligence services.

While both the Americans (apart from Rumsfeld who forgot to mention it!) and the Algerian government are happy to talk about a new level of democratisation in the country, the truth is very different. Even in the most remote corners of the country, far from the eyes and ears of the news media, grassroots expressions of democracy have been quite brazenly crushed. For example, civil unrest has been put down in almost every major Saharan town at some time or another over the last two years. The most recent, in Tamanrasset in July 2005, was actually egged on by the state's *agents provocateurs*. Evidence of the state's involvement in the riots was eventually brought before the court and some sixty 'rioters', mostly Tuareg youths, were freed. Others were not so lucky: members of the *Mouvement des citoyens du Sud pour la Justice*, for example, have been gaoled, while another citizens' association, Tamanrasset's *Association de Quartiers* has been crushed by court edict with its organisers, who could not be found to have broken any laws, being subject to more or less continual state harassment.

A notable feature of Algeria's security establishment over the last few years has been its increased brazenness and public visibility. Local citizens say that the increased confidence, arrogance and bullying of civilians by the security establishment comes from the support and strength given to it by the American presence. For example, in February 2005, an Algerian academic, seconded officially to a French university, was assaulted by security police in broad daylight in the middle of Tamanrasset's high street. Dozens of onlookers watched aghast as he was grabbed and assaulted in the street by three men, bundled under a tarpaulin and stowed into the boot of a police Toyota. He was taken to a 'house' on the edge of town and interrogated for two days before being released without charge. The comment made by many of the onlookers was that 'the security police would never have dared to act so publicly before the Americans came'.<sup>45</sup>

A few citizens have tried to use the much-publicised multiparty system to 'change the system from within'. Their strategy has been to stand for election to parliament as independent candidates. In all known cases, however, the state has managed to block this tactic by raising the number of signatures required to register as a candidate, and, where that has failed, to use false character references, even down to driving licence offences, to block the candidate's registration. Citizens who have

attempted this strategy have also been subjected to severe harassment and intimidation by the security forces.

The determination of Algeria's ruling elites to prevent the development of an autonomous civil society has even extended to the establishment of a massive NGO (technically an intergovernmental organisation) to meet the requirements of the World Bank and UN agencies, in this case the UNDP, that recipient/partner countries meet their requirements of good governance and that local communities and civil society participate in all stages of projects that they fund. In Algeria's case, the World Bank, through its Global Environmental Fund (GEF), and UNDP have been involved in the financing of Algeria's US\$22.3 million Biodiversity Plan for the Algerian Sahara. In order to prevent the consultation and participation of local communities and organisations in the project, and to divert the funds into projects for which they were not intended, Algeria's Minister of the Environment created the *Fondation Deserts du Monde – World Deserts Foundation (WDF)*. While claiming to the World Bank and UNDP that the WDF enabled the peoples of the desert 'to speak with one voice', the WDF ensured that the four civil society organisations that represented those peoples most directly affected by the project were excluded from the consultations with the UNDP.

In this particular instance, Algeria was not unlike a number of Third World countries that were determined not to miss out on the new GEF revenue stream. Algeria's WDF was not unlike many other such governmental NGOs in Third World countries that were established to serve as conduits for the receipt of international funds that are not meant to be received by public institutions. And, in the implementation phase of development projects, they provide a well organised and articulate civil society partner that saves international organisations, in this case the World Bank and UNDP, from having to look for other such partners. They are, in fact, the mechanisms which government elites use to block civil society participation.<sup>47</sup>

### **Threats to Morocco's Stability**<sup>48</sup>

Morocco's political stability and internal security is being threatened by two parallel, and perhaps merging, strands of discontent. One is associated with the country's 'Islamist problem'; the other comes from the growing upsurge of discontent associated with Saharawi nationalism and stalled progress in resolving the Western Sahara situation.<sup>49</sup>

It is difficult to assess precisely the extent of Morocco's Islamist problem and the sort of threat that it poses to the country, as it tends to be exaggerated or played down by different interests groups. Moroccan terrorism hit the headlines in May 2003 when the *Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group* was thought to be behind five bombings in Casablanca (12 suicide bombers) that killed 33 people. Moroccans were also found responsible for the bombings at Madrid's Atocha Station on 11 March 2004, which left 191 dead and 1,500 wounded. Since then at least 13 Moroccans have been arrested in France as alleged members of Islamic terrorists, while most terror suspects apprehended in Belgium and the Netherlands, including the murderers of the Dutch filmmaker, Theo van Gogh, have been Moroccans.

The Moroccan government's response to the realisation that it was perhaps facing an extremist onslaught was to crack down swiftly on suspected militants and to

accelerate political reforms and other measures to eradicate the country's grinding poverty. The official view is that 'all extremist groups have been dismantled' and that fears of a terrorist onslaught have passed. That may be the case, or it may be that the country is experiencing a lull, for it is debatable whether any of these moves have been successful. Analysts believe that Morocco's poverty, its lack of full democracy, and the lure of Islamist ideas, still provide a combustible mix.

Morocco suffers from serious underdevelopment. Urban unemployment is well over 20 per cent, with one-third of the burgeoning population of young men jobless. For many, their only hope is to make it to Europe. While government attempts to ease poverty are laudable, it is debatable whether they are doing more than 'playing catch-up'. These attempts are also being complicated by a marked revival in the Islamic faith, especially its more conservative strands, which is running hand-in-hand with a sense of alienation that is found amongst many Maghrebians, whether living at home or in Europe. Modernity, fuelled in Morocco by attempts to modernise the economy and especially its tourism industry, is increasingly visible and yet, for many, increasingly unattainable. The same is true for most Moroccans who have made it to Europe.

Signs of conservative Islamic values, such as the use of the veil, calls for *sharia* (Islamic law) and other fundamentalist values, are growing, with more 'fundamentalist-oriented' groups, such as *Justice and Spirituality* becoming increasingly connected with the poor by providing material help and support where the government has been ineffective in doing so. And it is amongst the more poverty-ridden and alienated members of Morocco's fragmented society that extremist ideas are most likely to take root.

A key feature of this increased support for Islamist groups, not merely in Morocco but across most of the region, which the Bush administration prefers to ignore, is that it is not merely a response by a significant portion of the population to the frustration at their lack of meaningful citizenship, alienation and exclusion from established political institutions and parties, but it is also a response to US imperialism. In a sense, therefore, we can talk about this increased support for the various strands of fundamentalist Islam as a nationalist response without the elites, with its more extremist elements being fuelled by the most extreme manifestation of US imperialism, namely its 'War on Terror' itself. The perceived duplicity of the Americans in fabricating this 'War on Terror' across the Sahara and Sahel has led to widespread resentment and anger. It is already leading to 'blowback', as US strategists call it. In Morocco, this 'blowback' may be more extreme: many of the people who have been picked up in the post-Casablanca (2003) Islamist crackdown, gaoled and tortured (officially denied), are innocent. Their release may well lead to a dangerous backlash. In addition, the continuous news reports of US behaviour in Iraq, Guantanamo and elsewhere have fermented a growing anger towards the US and, by association, the Moroccan regime's alliance with it.

If that were not enough, Moroccan society now also has to contend with the upsurge of discontent associated with growing sympathy and support for the Saharawi situation. The new *intifadah* of the Western Sahara's Saharawi population in May-June (2005) was not only well organised but also explicitly political and has severely embarrassed Morocco. This is for a number of reasons. First, the demonstrations and the reactions of the Moroccans were closely monitored by Saharawi Civil Society, whose reaction to and management of the situation was constrained and carefully managed for political purposes. In contrast, the reaction of the Moroccan authorities

was a heavy-handed knee-jerk, which backfired totally by attracting journalists into the region. They, in turn, saw what was happening and reported the 'truth', which simply generated even more pro-Polisario demonstrations.

Second, Saharawi discontent and politicisation is not confined to the occupied territory of the Western Sahara, but is now being experienced throughout southern Morocco itself, especially in the region between the Atlas and the Western Sahara border which contains a large Saharawi population. The town of Assa (Ait Oussa), for example, has traditionally been aligned with Morocco. However, its younger generation, as throughout much of the region, has become much more radical and supportive of the Saharawis. This spread of unrest from the Western Sahara into Morocco has now become widespread, with demonstrations in many southern Moroccan towns being characterised by Moroccans themselves waving Polisario flags and daubing pro-Polisario and pro-Saharawi slogans. Violent pro-Saharawi demonstrations have even been held in the main cities of Casablanca, Rabat and Agadir University.

The spread of Saharawi unrest into Morocco is a serious challenge to the country's 'internal' borders and its whole social-political fabric, as it is generating another strand of discontent. At present, there do not seem to be strong links between the emergence of Saharawi nationalism and Morocco's Islamist dissidents. However, that may be small comfort to the Moroccan authorities for whom the possibility of merger between these two strands of discontent is self-evident.

## **Political Opposition & Organisation in North Africa**

North Africa can be likened to a pressure cooker. The problem for the security analyst is trying to ascertain which part(s) of a rotting seal will burst first. The most obvious starting point in such an exercise is Algeria – the largest, richest, most repressive, least capable of reform<sup>50</sup> and the North African state in which the US has the greatest political investment. Algeria probably holds the key to much of the rest of the region's future security.

However, while Algeria is potentially the most cataclysmic state in the region in terms of both potential political opposition and unrest, any analysis of the region must also take cognisance of the fact that US policy towards North Africa and the Sahel, at least at the ideological level, has seen a noticeable shift since late 2005. The most obvious sign of this shift is in the Pentagon's new emphasis on societal development as distinct from a more purely militaristic approach to counter-terrorism. Related to this is that senior US commanders in the field are now downplaying the threat of terrorism, at least in terms of their public pronouncements and media relations.

There are three main reasons for this shift in US policy. The first, as I have already explained, is because Washington fabricated and grossly exaggerated the terrorist threat in the region in order to legitimise the launch, for ideological reasons, of a new, African front in the 'War on Terror'. In short, much of the information coming from US military sources was nothing more than disinformation, as epitomised in the hyperbolic language of US military commanders in relation to the whole range of incidents and narratives surrounding *El Para* and the launch of the 'War on Terror' across the region. One difficulty for the US military is that it is now literally 'tripping over its own disinformation'. In short, as much of this narrative was fiction, there never was such a great need for military intervention in the region as Washington

and its military commanders in the field first proclaimed. That is why the US has actually expended comparatively little on serious military training and development in the region.

The second reason is Washington's attempt at 'damage limitation': the US is aware of the massive unpopularity generated by its intervention in the region and its actions elsewhere. In September 2005, for example, a Congressionally mandated advisory panel, citing polling that found that large majorities in Egypt, Morocco and Saudi Arabia 'view George W. Bush as a greater threat to the world order than Osama bin Laden', warned the State Department that 'America's image and reputation abroad could hardly be worse.'<sup>51</sup> The Pentagon's current inclusion of education and other such societal developments in its TSCTI, although showing little manifestation on the ground, is an attempt to 'soften both the American presence and image'. It also falls within the populist 'Bush-Blair' line on Africa that terrorism has its roots in poverty, although without quite managing to explain why poverty has not hitherto given rise to terrorism, or, for that matter, that there is remarkably little evidence to show that people living in poverty turn to terrorism. But that is another matter.

Washington's slightly less militaristic and abrasive tone over the last few months also reflects the third reason, namely a shift in international concerns that are now beginning to view narco- and people trafficking as North Africa's main threats to EU security in particular. The US is therefore placing more emphasis on controlling these activities, which it dubs, with a remarkable lack of understanding of what is actually happening on the ground, as 'putative terrorism'.

### **North Africa's Trafficking Businesses**

Without going into the details of the various trans-Saharan trafficking businesses, two aspects of them should be noted. The first is that much of this trafficking – people, cigarettes, hard drugs and arms – is not run by 'putative terrorists' as US intelligence services are inclined to believe, but in most of these countries, notably Algeria, by agents of the state. The 'mafia-bosses', as they are generally known, tend to work in close protective relationships with the top, corrupted echelons of the security establishment – military, intelligence services, police, customs, etc., who in turn benefit substantially from a business estimated at some \$1 billion a year. One consequence of this relationship is that much of the data on trafficking, as for example on 'illegal' migrants, and on which European countries base much of their analyses and policies, is highly suspect.<sup>52</sup> For example, the expulsions/repatriations of illegal migrants through Tamanrasset, one of the main gateways across the Sahara, have been systematically over-invoiced by the regional governor (*wali*) as merely one dimension of the widespread, systematic embezzlement of state funds by state officials. More importantly, as far as the region's security is concerned, is that a significant proportion of the narco- and arms trafficking that is attributed by the security services to the *GSPC* appears, in fact, to be run by agents of the *DRS*. This conforms closely to the widespread perception of many local people that the *GSPC* is not only heavily infiltrated by the *DRS*, but also that one of the *DRS*'s objectives is to ensure a certain ongoing level of *GSPC* activity, as the functioning of the *GSPC* as a 'terrorist organisation' provides the US administration with its sole justification for its involvement in the region.

The second important aspect of the trafficking businesses is that they provide livelihoods to an increasing proportion of the region's population, especially in the

Sahara where America's 'War on Terror' has decimated the labour-intensive tourism industry, at least for the time being, and where the massive development of the oil and gas industry, and other forms of mineral extraction, provide relatively few or largely disliked (e.g. uranium mining) labour opportunities.

These newly perceived security threats – narco-trafficking and migration – are, I believe, both exaggerated and misunderstood and are more reflective of a Eurocentric than internal security perspective. More important from an internal regional security perspective, and especially as far as individuals within the region are concerned, are the causes of and the ways in which political opposition and organisation is developing within the region. This is best understood from at least five different but closely related levels of analysis.

The first, as I have already mentioned, is the extremely dangerous spiral of increased authoritarianism and repression, increased regional instability and insecurity, increased popular resentment of both Washington (anti-Americanism) and their own regimes and the increased threat of militant extremism, that has been set in motion by Washington's post-9/11 involvement in the region. This, in turn, is related to the link between oil, repression and the lack of democracy, which, opens up for analysis four specific dimensions of oil-based *rentier* states: namely, the link between oil and gas rents, control and repression; between the *rentier* state and unemployment; between the *rentier* state and corruption; and finally, between resource exploitation, the environment and indigenous rights. All four dimensions are the sites of political opposition and organisation.

### **Hydrocarbons, Control & Repression**

The major resource exploitation in the region is hydrocarbons (oil and gas). Global energy shortages, combined with the high price of both oil and gas, have galvanised a frenetic surge in the exploration for and exploitation of oil and gas throughout almost all of North Africa and the Sahel, as in almost every other country on the Continent. In Libya, for example, over 60 foreign oil and gas companies won concession bids in 2005, while in Algeria, where the industry is more consolidated, some two dozen major foreign oil and gas companies are now operating.<sup>53</sup> Mauritania became an oil producer in February 2006, while all the other Sahelian countries (Mali, Niger, Chad and Sudan) now have several foreign oil companies operating in them.

A particularly important aspect of this expansion of the hydrocarbons sector in these countries, along with the accompanying high price of oil and gas, is that it has not only increased the level of security required in ring fencing and securitising what are effectively 'offshore' zones, but the marked increase in foreign exchange earnings, especially in Algeria, as in so many oil-based states, along with Washington's increased military assistance, has enabled a substantial aggrandizement of the security establishment and its systems of control and repression.

### **Hydrocarbons, Labour & Unemployment**

A key feature of the hydrocarbons industry is that it is highly labour intensive requiring comparatively little local labour to supplement a small, predominantly expatriot and highly skilled labour force. Indeed, it is this particular feature of the labour requirements of the oil industry that explains the compatibility between

foreign oil production and repressive dictatorships, there being no necessity to ensure the reproduction and well-being of a local labour force.

Dependency on the hydrocarbons sector impacts negatively on the economy in other ways. Not only does it contribute only marginally to employment creation, comprising something around 5 per cent or perhaps even less of Algeria's employment, but a characteristic of oil-dependent *rentier* states is that there is little economic necessity or other motivation to promote alternative sources of foreign exchange, such as tourism, or to diversify into and develop other domestic economic activities, such as import-substituting manufacturing, agriculture and agricultural processing, tourism etc., all of which are more labour intensive than the hydrocarbons sector. In Algeria, for example (unlike Morocco and Tunisia which have few oil resources, but have instead developed big tourism industries and more efficient agricultural sectors), a neglected agricultural sector has made the country heavily dependent on imported foodstuffs. As for its almost non-existent tourism sector, Algeria's 'Dirty War' and subsequent 'War on Terror' have been convenient excuses for an influential section of *le pouvoir*, which for cultural-ideological reasons (and the fear of private sector initiatives that it cannot so easily control) does not want to see the development of a tourism industry, to block initiatives in that direction. Indeed, in the southern Saharan regions, where tourism is the main 'industry' of the indigenous Tuareg population, the government's blockage of local tourism initiatives has done much to fuel local political opposition. It is therefore not entirely surprising that Algeria, the richest oil state in the Mediterranean region, has its highest rate of unemployment.<sup>54</sup>

Although official statistics on unemployment in Algeria are suspect, unemployment is probably higher in its Saharan regions (excluding the securitised oil-gas zones). This is not simply because the state has made little effort to diversify the economy, but because unemployment is 'exported' into the south from the northern regions. This is done by *walis* (regional governors) in the Saharan regions ensuring that public works contracts are given to employers (and their workforces) from the north. For example, local contractors in Tamanrasset, the regional capital of the extreme south, are frequently prevented physically from submitting tenders for public works contracts, which are given instead to contractors from the north. Such practices lead to massive political resentment and unrest. However, the regime remains confident that unrest in the desert towns can be more easily contained than in the populous and more politically sensitive northern regions. So far its calculations have proven correct: an almost continuous series of riots in almost every major desert town over the last 2-3 years has been contained by a seemingly ever-expanding security apparatus. Indeed, in some of these instances, such as the Tamanrasset riots in July 2005 (see above), the confidence of the state in being able to suppress civil unrest is such that state security agents have actually acted as agents provocateurs. Their reason for doing so in Tamanrasset was to direct the rioters to attack and burn down certain government offices, which contained archival evidence of much of the administration's embezzlement of central government funds, prior to an inspection from the procurator-fiscal's office!

Algeria's chronic unemployment problem, which is an outcome of the country's narrow, capital intensive economic base, is a reflection of and is compounded by the narrow class interests of the country's political and military elites who, as Lahouari has remarked, use and perpetuate the worst features of their *rentier* economy, as they have used violence, to maintain themselves in power.<sup>55</sup>

## Hydrocarbons & Corruption

While Algeria's high unemployment is an outcome of its dependency on the hydrocarbons sector, it is not actually the cause of that unemployment. It does not necessarily follow that because a country earns much of its foreign exchange from such rents it should suffer high unemployment. The link between oil and unemployment is not that oil is labour intensive, but that its exploitation has been used by the country's political and military elites for their narrow self-interests. To blame oil *per se* is to present a distorted perspective of Algeria's ills and one that is not shared by the majority of its citizens. On the contrary, from almost 50 years experience of oil exploration and production in the country's Saharan regions, Algerians know only too well that oil and gas production are capital intensive industries that create revenue streams rather than employment.

The question asked by most Algerians is why so many of them live in such relative poverty while the country, in terms of its foreign exchange earnings and reserves, is comparatively wealthy. In the Saharan regions of the country, the same question has a more localised twist in that it asks why oil revenues are not benefiting the regions from which the oil/gas has been extracted. This is not such an issue in Libya where oil revenues are seen to be funding such massive national infrastructural schemes as the Man-Made River and, since 2005, public housing. In Algeria, however, where corruption is so endemic as to be a major impediment to the country's future economic development, the question is usually put in an even less nuanced manner. Quite simply: where have the revenues gone?

Algeria's economy is almost totally dependent on its hydrocarbons industry: it provides more than 35 per cent of the country's GNP and 98 per cent of its incoming revenue. With the oil price in excess of \$60 a barrel, the country's financial surplus in 2005 was estimated at \$61.01 billion,<sup>56</sup> making it one of the world's richest countries in terms of foreign exchange surpluses. Although the regime talks much about 'economic reform' and a \$50 billion programme of public infrastructure to 'relaunch the economy', there are few overt signs of expenditure beyond the obvious strengthening of the country's military and security forces upon whom the ruling elites – the hidden forces (*le pouvoir*) – base themselves. There are few signs of expenditure on much-needed economic reforms, other than contracts given largely to foreign firms involved in some of the 'stop-start' infrastructural projects.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, many of these appear to be 'on hold' as the regime prefers to squander the country's financial resources on what Lahouari describes as non-wealth creating consumption and a sprinkling of largesse designed to patch up and hide the deprivations of the population as a whole.<sup>58</sup> While the government boasts colossal foreign exchange reserves, the masses simply ask how much is being siphoned off by the 'hidden forces' of the regime – the political and military elites – into their own pockets and the proverbial Swiss bank accounts.

How much longer such political discontent can be contained is debatable. Much will depend on the future price of oil. At present, buoyant oil and gas prices are enabling the state to fund a massively increased security establishment. If and when international oil and gas prices retrace to much lower levels, Algeria could face an even more acute re-run of the crisis that overwhelmed the country in the late 1980s.

## Resource Exploitation, the Environment & Indigenous Rights

Two other fronts of emerging political opposition in relation to resource exploitation concern the increasing awareness of environmental degradation and fraud and the abuse of indigenous rights. The environmental factor should not be underestimated, especially where oil producing areas overrun what are perceived as traditional 'indigenous' lands – notably those of the Tuareg, but also other Saharan-dwellers. Amongst a small, but seemingly rapidly growing proportion of these people, political resentment and opposition is being directed, largely through lack of alternative channels, towards the consideration of 'indigenous rights', especially those relating to the exploitation of the land and labour and the degradation of environmental resources.

Such an avenue of political protest is problematic in that none of the many international agreements and conventions on indigenous rights is recognised or has been ratified by any of these states. This provides foreign oil, mining and water companies with a certain legal freedom of abuse. But emerging local political organisations are likely in the near future to appeal over the heads of their own governments to international organisations, such as the UN, and the governments of the foreign companies concerned in an attempt to achieve compliance with both internationally recognised conventions and the relevant laws and standards operative in the countries in which these companies are head-quartered.

Alongside a growing awareness of international 'indigenous rights' conventions and legislation, local populations – thanks largely to satellite TV and the internet – are becoming far better informed about national struggles, the struggles of labour in neighbouring states and also the importance of challenging corporations in their own countries. For example, workers in Niger have recently begun to organise against the appalling working conditions of the uranium mines, which are controlled by *COGEMA* (*Compagnie générale des matières nucléaires*), a subsidiary of France's huge *AREVA* group, while many more of the country's citizens have demonstrated against the huge hikes in water costs that have stemmed from the actions of another French company, *Veolia Environment*, formerly known as *Vivendi Environment*, the world's largest water company, which has taken a 51 per cent stake in a 100 per cent privatisation of the country's water supply. There is also a small but growing awareness and fear that such multinational companies, having seen the success of Libya's Man-Made River, may have designs on acquiring and exporting the hundreds of thousands of cubic kilometres of 'fossilised' water contained in the Sahara's deep aquifers.

Yet the region's greatest potential environmental threat from such resource exploitation is almost certainly in Chad-Cameroon. There site plans indicate that ExxonMobil has failed to insert the internationally required safety valves into the 1,100 km pipeline that takes Chad's oil to the Atlantic coast. While this may have provided a cost-saving of up to US\$500 million to the ExxonMobil-led oil consortium,<sup>59</sup> the discovery of this fraud, currently veiled by President Déby's revocation of his government's agreement with the World Bank and the latter's dereliction of its oversight duties, is likely to lead to a further escalation of the political instability, increased repression and violence that has already spilled over from Chad into the Darfur region of Sudan and which is now threatening to engulf Chad itself as 'rebels' seek to disrupt an already tainted electoral process designed to grant Déby a third term of office and thus become what is, in effect, 'president for life'.

## Can the US Maintain its Power & Position in North Africa?

Far from furthering the democratisation of North Africa, the US, through its post-9/11 intervention in the region, has presided over its stalled transition. Moreover, the disinformation that has surrounded this intervention has been so disingenuous and so pervasive that any designation of future policy for the region is beset by two related but gigantic problems. The first is that it is now extremely difficult for policy makers to know what is true and what is false. Even the US military and senior members of the administration are tripping over their own lies, as they have to contend increasingly with no longer knowing what is true and what is not. Secondly, impartial analyses of the region, often written by respected academics, are based unwittingly on so many of these untruths that they read more like *Alice in Wonderland*.<sup>60</sup> To give some measure of the scale of this problem, the half dozen or so articles listed here (Note 7), plus a small number of articles – notably in *Le Monde Diplomatique* – and a handful of radio broadcasts, are counterbalanced by an estimated 3,000 or so articles and broadcasts that are based or draw heavily on disinformation emanating from Washington and/or Algiers.

While we may deplore such mendacity, it has been, in terms of its objective, a stunning success. In creating and then overcoming terror in a region in which terror did not exist, the Bush administration succeeded in creating the ideological conditions for its militarisation and securitisation of much of the African continent. While that is no mean feat, it does raise as many questions about the media and academe as about Washington's disinformation services.

As far as events in North Africa are concerned, Washington is beginning to be embarrassed by the increasingly obvious failure of its stated policies in the region. Its support for the authoritarian regimes of the region and, through them, its launch of a duplicitous 'War on Terror' – for reasons that had more to do with US imperial designs and the militarisation and securitisation of other parts of the continent than the security and well-being of the region and its peoples – have done nothing to further security and democratisation in North Africa. And, lest we forget that America's militarisation of Africa is as much about resources as 'terrorism', 'the connection between abundant oil, rents and the aggrandizement of the authoritarian state, at the expense of an autonomous civil society,' as John Entelis commented, 'cannot be overemphasised'.<sup>61</sup> Rather, the US has unleashed and has found itself running up against a whole raft of pressures and conflicts, ranging from increasing hatred for Washington and its imperial presence to the forms of opposition and organisation outlined above. There is also reason to believe that Washington is becoming increasingly anxious about the implications of its sponsorship of state terrorism in the region, as has been revealed through this journal's regular reports on the launch, progress and implications of its 'War on Terror' in the region.<sup>62</sup>

However, the US intervention in North Africa over the past four years or so cannot be seen in isolation from events elsewhere in the world, notably the failure of US policy in Afghanistan, in Iraq especially, in other countries of the Middle East and in its attempts elsewhere to globalise its 'War on Terror'. It is the changing dynamics of US policy towards and intervention in these regions, as well as increasing tensions and conflicts within the US administration itself, exacerbated by likely changes in the balance and alignment of political forces within the US, as much as events and pressure from within the North African-Saharan region, that are currently leading to a perceptible change in US rhetoric on the region.

Washington's rhetoric on North Africa, in the face of a fast-failing, lame duck presidency (and an embattled Secretary of Defence), is noticeably less vociferous than it was a year or more ago. The threat of terrorism and the need for military intervention, perhaps not surprisingly in the light of what has now been revealed about North Africa's 'terrorism', is no longer being trumpeted so loudly. However, whether the US can maintain its elite power in the region and its position there now seems increasingly unlikely. In spite of the increasingly recognised foreign policy failures of the Bush-Cheney regime, Washington does not appear either prepared or able to make the sort of policy changes necessary to avoid what looks like becoming a classic case of imperial over-reach.

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## Endnotes

1. Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed., Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991, p. 7. Buzan draws upon W. B. Gallie's 'Essentially Contested Concepts', in Max Black (ed.), *The Importance of Language*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1962, pp. 121-46.

2. Patrick M. Morgan, 'Safeguarding Security Studies', *Arms Control*, 13 (3), December 1992, p. 466.

3. T. Terriff, S. Croft, L. James & P.M. Morgan, *Security Studies Today* (see Introduction), Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1999.

4. Green (low), blue (guarded), yellow (elevated), orange (high), red (severe).

5. John P. Entelis, 'The Democratic Imperative vs. the Authoritarian Impulse: The Maghreb State between Transition and Terrorism', Note 2, in *Strategic Insights*, Vol. IV, Issue 6 (June 2005). (available online at: <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/Jun/entelisJun05.asp>).

6. This aim, which also covers the remainder of the Arab world, is contained in Washington's Broader Middle East Initiative.

7. Military assistance takes several forms. Algeria, as America's lead regional ally in the 'war on terror' has received a dramatic increase in funding for US-based training of its military officers under the IMET (International Military Education and Training) program, with almost \$600,000 being provided in 2003 compared to only \$30,000 in 2002 (Note 5). In addition, Algeria's military has also benefited considerably from the PSI-TSCTI initiative, the construction of a huge new military air base at Tamanrasset and the provision of essential high-tec military needs as night-vision, surveillance and communications equipment, etc. In addition, as a classic rentier state, the high oil and gas prices over the last couple of years have enabled a massive reinforcement of the state's coercive structures.

8. Note 5.

9. The details of this 'War on Terror', as it has unfolded, have been published in a number of articles: Mustafa Barth, 'Sand-castles in the Sahara: US military basing in Algeria', *ROAPE* Vol. 30, No. 98, 2003, pp. 679-685; J. Keenan, 'Americans & "Bad People" in the Sahara-Sahel', *ROAPE* Vol. 31, No. 99, 2004, pp. 130-139; J. Keenan, 'Terror in the Sahara: the Implications of US imperialism for North and West Africa', *ROAPE* Vol. 31, No. 101, 2004, pp. 475-496; J. Keenan, 'Political Destabilisation and "Blowback" in the Sahel', *ROAPE* Vol. 31, No. 102, December 2004, pp. 691-698; J. Keenan, 'Waging war on terror: the implications of America's 'New Imperialism' for Saharan peoples.' *Journal of North African Studies*, Special Issue. The Sahara: Past, Present and Future, Vol. 10, Nos. 3-4 (Autumn-Winter) 2005, pp. 610-638. The full details of the US 'War on Terror' in North Africa, based on six years continuous 'field research' into North African, Saharan and

Sahelian security are to be published in Jeremy Keenan, *Alice in the Sahara: Moving Mirrors and the USA's War on Terror in the Sahara*, forthcoming, Pluto Press 2007.

10. An ICG report confirmed that the Sahel, contrary to US government assertions, was 'not a hotbed of terrorist activity'; see *Islamic Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?* International Crisis Group, Africa Report No. 92, 31 March 2005. Further evidence in support of the ICG Report and the reasons why southern Algeria was so politically, socially and geographically unsuited to this sort of terrorism are detailed in J. Keenan, *Alice in the Sahara ...* (Note 9).

11. For details of these modus operandi, etc., see *Alice in the Sahara ...* (Note 9).

12. Note 9, especially *Alice in the Sahara ...*

13. This was how the US military referred increasingly to their presence and activities in the Sahara-Sahel (see ICG report, Note 10).

14 This conclusion excludes the specific actions of certain Egyptian and Maghreb-based terrorist groups, the bombing of the synagogue in Tunisia in 2002 and the suicide bombings in Casablanca in 2003. It also excludes the related actions by Morocco's shadowy Islamic Combatant Group, their likely involvement in the bombings of Madrid's Atocha Station in 2004, and the continuing 'low-level' actions of the GSPC in Algeria and further afield. An example of the later, although more likely a 'vendetta' between certain trafficking groups and the Algerian customs services, was possibly the killing of 13 customs agents and the wounding of eight others by gunmen near Ghardaia on 8 April 2006.

15. J. Keenan, 'Waging war on terror: the implications of America's 'New Imperialism' for Saharan peoples.' *Journal of North African Studies*, Special Issue, The Sahara: Past, Present and Future. Vol. 10, Nos. 3-4 (Autumn-Winter) 2005, pp. 610-638.

16. *Stars and Stripes*, 15 January 2004 (European edition, 12 January 2004).

17. Jim Fisher-Thompson, 'US-African partnership helps counter terrorists in Sahel region', Washington File, US Department of State Information Service (undated. believed to be 24. March 2004).

18. Details of this intelligence or, more appropriately, the lack of it are analysed in *Alice in the Sahara ...* (Note 9).

19. See Note 16.

20. Details of these meetings are given in *Alice in the Sahara ...*(see Note 9). It is not clear whether the Americans were aware that there had been an earlier attempt to take four European tourists hostage in the Algerian Sahara some four months earlier. The attempt was botched. In a classic 'right hand left hand' operation, the *gendarmierie nationale* succeeded in tracking and capturing the 'terrorists', only for higher military authority to order their release! Further evidence of Algeria's planning and orchestration of *El Para's* hostage-taking was that within a few weeks of the Arak incident, local nomads notified the military authorities at Illizi that they had sold meat to and observed a group of heavily armed, bearded strangers, preparing hideouts in the gorges of the Tamelrik mountains. The military authorities, not surprisingly, took no action then or later to investigate the nomads' report. These were the hideouts that would be used only a few weeks later by *El Para's* men to hold 15 of the 32 European hostages captive for some three months before they were taken to Mali.

21. Military relations were not cut altogether. In 1997 the US delivered 6 Gulf Stream carriers to Algeria. In 1998 America's Vice-Admiral Joseph Lopez, second-in-command of NATO's southern European flank, visited Algiers. A visit to Algiers in February 1999 by US Admirals Abbot (deputy commander US forces in Europe) and Daniel Murphy (US Sixth Fleet) preceded joint naval manoeuvres in 2000 between the small Algerian navy and warships and aircraft from the US Sixth Fleet. Moreover, according to the MAOL (*Mouvement Algerien des Officiers Libres*), a CIA agent (named) worked closely with Algerian military intelligence throughout this period. Other such ties are also now coming to light.

22. Dick Cheney was Chairman of the National Energy Policy Group whose report entitled *National Energy Policy*, was published in May 2001, four months before 9/11 (electronic version at <http://>

www.whitehouse.gov). The report highlighted America's energy shortages and focused attention on the importance of Africa as a future source of US oil supplies.

23. *World Tribune*, 16 July 2001.

24. Notably EUCOM's Supreme Allied Commander, General Ralston (General Jones's predecessor).

25. This was from a modest \$121,000 in 2001 to \$200,000 in 2002 (and to \$550,000 in 2003).

26. Information on US intelligence service activity in the region provided by local informants in Bamako, Gao and the Tessalit and Taoudeni regions.

27. See Mustafa Barth (Note 9) for discussion of US military basing in Algeria, and Jeremy Keenan, 'Americans and "Bad People" ...' (Note 9) for clarification of America's new concept of basing rights in Africa.

28. *World Tribune*, 6 May 2003; *New York Times*, 4 July 2003.

29. Stephen Ellis, 'The Pan-Sahel Initiative', *African Affairs*, Vol. 103, No. 412, pp. 459-464.

30. Further suspicion has been aroused by US references to assistance from French intelligence agents in specific field locations when there were no French, but only DRS agents, in the locations cited. This data is from my own field research in the areas specified.

31. The negotiators believed that this was at the request of the US, which is believed to have wanted a military showdown (personal communication from the negotiators).

32. Dana Priest, 'Help from France Key in Covert Operations', *Washington Post*, 3 July 2005.

33. Ibid. There is now emerging evidence of French troops stationed in its former Sahelian colonies serving as a proxy army for US interests. For example, it now appears that French troops in Chad played a far greater role than initially reported in thwarting the attack on the Chad capital of N'Djamena in April 2006 by rebels trying to overthrow President Déby. The US has been supportive of the Déby regime through its PSI and in supporting ExxonMobil's lead role in developing the country's oil resources. While the French state that their military presence and intervention was purely to protect French citizens and interests, reports from N'Djamena now indicate that the US encouraged France to assist Déby's forces.

34. See: Lounis Aggoun & Jean-Baptiste Rivoire, *Françalgérie, crimes et mensonges d'Etats (France-Algeria, state crimes and lies)*, *La Découverte*, Paris, 2004; Salima Mellah & Jean-Baptiste Rivoire, 'Who Staged the tourist kidnappings?' *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 2005.

35. These include the hijacking of an Air France Airbus in 1994, the bombings of Paris's public transport in 1995 and the kidnapping and murder of the Tibhirine monks in 1996.

36. The death of a German subject while in *El Para's* hands raises legal questions which, under the circumstances, the German state might prefer not to have to consider. In this context it should be noted that the German authorities have placed considerable pressure on the former hostages to remain silent.

37. Alison Pargeter, 'Libya: Reforming the Impossible', *ROAPE*, Vol. 33, No. 108, 2006.

38. Ibid.

39. 'In April 2005, for example, Qadhafi gave the police military powers in order to better tackle terrorist infiltrators' (Note 37).

40. Note 37.

41. There are many definitions of terrorism. By 'conventional', I mean that terrorism is the threatened or employed use of violence against civilian targets for political objectives. Jonathan Barker, paraphrasing Boaz Ganor, elaborates, saying: 'This applies to governments (and their agencies and proxies) as well as to non-governmental groups and individuals. It excludes non-violent political actions such as protests, strikes, demonstrations, tax revolts and civil disobedience. It also excludes violent actions against military and police forces'; Jonathan Barker, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Terrorism*, Between the Lines, Canada & New Internationalist Publications, Oxford, 2003; Boaz Ganor, 'Defining Terrorism: Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter?' *The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism*, 23 September 1998 (<http://www.ict.org.il/>). 'Terrorism' does not include such fairly

normal Saharan pursuits as smuggling (now termed trafficking), acts of political rebellion (often referred to by the governments concerned as banditry and criminality) or the many forms of resistance of civil society towards the corrupt and authoritarian regimes which hold sway over most of this part of Africa.

42. There has been some increase in *salafiste* activity in parts of the Sahel in recent years. The most widely publicised has been that of the *Tablighi Jama'at* movement in Mali, especially around Kidal.

43. The expansion of the security forces was planned in 2004 and is due to be complete by 2008. On 6th April 2006, the government announced the creation of two new army battalions, one to fight terrorism and the other to work on ECOWAS missions.

44. Lahouari Addi, 'The Political Contradictions of the Algerian Economic Reforms', *ROAPE*, Vol. 33, No. 108, 2006.

45. *Ibid.*

46. The author was in Tamanrasset at the time and interviewed onlookers.

47. There is a particular irony in this case in that the funds appear, at least in part, to have been diverted to the financing of *El Para's* 'terrorist' activities in the region. We therefore have the ironic situation of the World Bank's new President, Paul Wolfowitz, a key architect of the Iraq war, making much ado about stamping out corruption, when his institute, albeit before his term of office, was almost certainly part-financing US-orchestrated state terrorism in the Sahara!

48. See Thomas Omestad, 'The Casbah Connection', *US News*, 9 May 2005.

49. See Jacob Mundy, 'Autonomy and *Intifadah*: New Horizons in Western Saharan Nationalism', *ROAPE*, Vol. 33, No. 108, 2006.

50. See Lahouari Addi. Note 44.

51. Glenn Kessler and Robin Wright, 'U.S. Image in Bad Shape', *Washington Post*, 24 September 2005.

52. For details of North Africa's migration, see Martin Baldwin-Edwards, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: North Africa as a region of emigration, immigration and transit migration.' *ROAPE* Vol. 33, No. 108, 2006.

53. A number of sources have recently reported that Algeria is purchasing a massive \$7.5 billion arms package from Russia, on top of a \$4.7 billion outstanding debt on previous Russian arms sales. Algeria will account for 20 per cent of Russian arm sales. Reports indicate that Algeria will pay for these arms by giving Russian companies access to oil and gas rich regions. Russia is the number one gas exporter to Europe, with about 26 per cent of the market. By coordinating its export policies in a 'Kasparov-like' move with number three exporter Algeria (about 10 per cent of the European market), 'Russia may be able to increase its leverage within Europe, complicate the EU's efforts to diversify its sources of supply, and leverage that improved position into greater participation in and influence over Europe's pipeline projects' (*Defense Industry Daily*, 15 March 2006).

54. The official rate in 2005 was 22.5 per cent. However, the 'real' rate is generally considered to be in excess of 30 per cent, while youth unemployment (age 20-26) is around 40 per cent in several regions.

55. Note 44.

56. Note 44.

57. These include an east-west motorway, railways redevelopment, urban transport, social housing, water distribution, etc. (see Note 44).

58. *Ibid.*

59. Jeremy Keenan, 'Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline: World Bank and ExxonMobil in Last Chance Saloon', *ROAPE*, Vol. 32, No. 104/5, June-September 2005, pp. 395-405.

60. It would be unfair to single out any one article by way of illustration as they run into hundreds.

61. Note 5.

62. Note 9.

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'New Imperialism' for Saharan peoples', *Journal of North African Studies*, Special Issue: The Sahara: Past, Present and Future, Vol. 10, Nos. 3-4 (Autumn-Winter), pp. 610-638; (2005), 'Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline: World Bank & Exxon Mobil in Last Chance Saloon', *ROAPE*, Vol. 32, No. 104/5, June-September, pp. 395-405; (forthcoming/2007), *Alice in the Sahara: Moving Mirrors and the USA's War on Terror in the Sahara*, London: Pluto Press.

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**STOP PRESS****Tuareg Take Up Arms in Mali**

Dozens, possibly hundreds of Tuareg, took up arms and overran two army bases at Kidal and Menaka in NE Mali on 23 May. Summary details of the attack, its background and implications for wider Saharan unrest are given in a Briefing, page 267.

# America, China & the Scramble for Africa's Oil

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*Michael Klare & Daniel Volman*

**After decades of Cold War, when Africa was simply viewed as a convenient pawn on the global chessboard, and a further decade of benign neglect in the 1990s, the African continent has now become a vital arena of strategic and geopolitical competition for not only the United States, but also for China, India, and other new emerging powers. The main reason for this is quite simple: Africa is the final frontier as far as the world's supplies of energy are concerned with global competition for both oil and natural gas (particularly the latter) becoming just as intense – if not even more so – than the former.**

**The factors behind the growing attention to African energy supplies are well known; so we will only summarise them here.<sup>1</sup> World oil production is only just meeting world demand and old fields are being drained faster than new production can be brought on line. Supplies will be tight for the foreseeable future, so any new source of supply is significant. Most importers are also trying to reduce their dependence on Middle Eastern oil. In the next 10-15 years, most of the new oil entering the world market is going to be coming from African fields because it is only in Africa – and to a lesser extent in the volatile Central Asia region – that substantial new fields have been found and brought into production.**

## **The United States & the Militarisation of African Oil Production**

Historically, Africa – especially sub-Saharan Africa – has been a low-priority area for the US Department of Defense (DoD). During the Cold War, of course, the DoD sought to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining a foothold in the area, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) conducted covert operations aimed at undermining the pro-Soviet regime in Angola. For the most part, however, the US defense establishment devoted relatively meager resources to Africa – in comparison, say, to US military expenditures geared to Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> But now, as a result of growing US reliance on African oil and the uncertain security climate in the region, the DoD is paying closer attention to Africa, and there is a noticeable increase in US military activities in the region. These may still be modest when compared to similar activities elsewhere, but they are growing, and are sure to acquire even greater significance in the years ahead as Africa gains in importance as a source of energy for the United States.<sup>3</sup>

Although the relationship between military power and American reliance on foreign oil is a relatively new phenomenon in the African setting, it has long been a conspicuous factor in the US relationship with the Persian Gulf region. It was

President Franklin D. Roosevelt who first perceived a US national security interest in Persian Gulf oil, during World War Two, and it was Roosevelt who established a security-for-oil relationship with Saudi Arabia. As part of this relationship, the United States helped arm and train Saudi military forces and managed their logistical services. The relationship between US security and Middle Eastern oil was further strengthened in 1980, when President Carter designated the free flow of Persian Gulf oil as a 'vital interest' of the United States and declared that this country would use 'any means necessary, including military force,' to defend that interest. To implement this policy, widely known as the 'Carter Doctrine', the DoD established the US Central Command (CENTCOM) to oversee US military operations in the Gulf area and built up a substantial military basing infrastructure in the region. This infrastructure was subsequently used to support US combat operations during the Gulf War of 1991, the 2001 war in Afghanistan, and the 2003 invasion of Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

This trajectory of ever-expanding US military involvement is now evident in the Caspian Sea region, another promising source of new oil. As exhibited in the Gulf, this trajectory begins with the assertion of a 'national security' interest in the unimpeded flow of oil and is followed, in turn, by the provision of arms and military assistance, the establishment of military bases, and ultimately the deployment of US combat forces. American access to Caspian Sea oil was first couched in national security terms by President Clinton during a 1997 visit to Washington by Heydar Aliyev, then the president of Azerbaijan. 'In a world of growing energy demand,' Clinton told Aliyev, 'our nation cannot afford to rely on any single region for our energy supplies.' By helping to develop the Caspian's oil and gas reserves, he continued, 'we not only help Azerbaijan to prosper, we also help diversify our energy supply and strengthen our nation's security.'<sup>5</sup> This statement was followed by the establishment of military aid agreements with Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, along with the provision of military equipment and technical services to these countries' forces.<sup>6</sup> Later, after 9/11, the DoD established military bases in the region and deployed US combat forces there, primarily in support of operations in Afghanistan. The Bush administration has also expanded the military aid programmes initiated by President Clinton.<sup>7</sup> Ostensibly, this aid is designed to boost the counter-terrorism capabilities of friendly forces in the region, but government documents indicate that it is also intended to help ensure the unimpeded flow of oil. Thus, in justifying a US role in creating a 'rapid-reaction brigade' in Kazakhstan, the Department of State noted that formation of the brigade will 'enhance Kazakhstan's capability to respond to major terrorist threats to oil platforms or borders.'<sup>8</sup>

A similar trajectory is now visible in Africa. This began, as in the Gulf and the Caspian, with the assertion of a US national security interest in unimpeded access to African oil. Commenting on this development, the former US ambassador to Chad, Donald R. Norland, told the Africa Subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee in April 2002,

*It's been reliably reported that, for the first time, the two concepts – 'Africa' and 'US national security' – have been used in the same sentence in Pentagon documents.<sup>9</sup>*

Michael A. Westphal, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, also noted this linkage in a Pentagon press briefing on 2 April 2002. 'Fifteen per cent of the US's imported oil supply comes from sub-Saharan Africa,' he declared, and 'this is also a number which has the potential for increasing significantly in the next

decade.<sup>10</sup> Walter Kansteiner, the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, acknowledged the national security implications of African oil during a visit to Nigeria in July 2002: 'African oil is of strategic national interest to us,' he declared, and 'it will increase and become more important as we go forward.'<sup>11</sup>

As in the Caspian, the establishment or expansion of military aid programmes in Africa and the provision of US arms, military equipment, and technical assistance has accompanied these statements. To a considerable extent, this aid is intended to enhance the internal security capabilities of friendly African states, so that they can better control (or suppress) the ethnic, religious, and factional divisions that roil many of these countries. Not surprisingly, the largest chunks of US aid to Africa are going to Angola and Nigeria, Africa's two leading oil suppliers to the United States. Total US security aid to these two countries in Fiscal Years 2002-04 amounted to approximately \$300 million, a substantial increase over the previous three-year period.

In addition to the US aid programmes directed at individual countries, the United States is supporting a number of multilateral or regional initiatives aimed at enhancing African states' internal security capabilities. Typically, these programmes are described as being designed to improve anti-terrorism actions in the region or to support international peacekeeping operations, but the skills and techniques being imparted – small unit manoeuvres, counter-insurgency, light infantry operations, and so on – are of a sort that could easily be employed in the suppression of ethnic, religious, and sectarian strife. And while relatively modest in dollar terms – that is, when compared to the amounts being spent by the DoD in the Middle East and Asia – these efforts represent a significant investment in the African setting, where military expenditures are much smaller.

Washington has used a variety of US security assistance programmes to enhance its military influence in Africa, including military sales and other arms transfer programmes, military training, US Navy exercises, and the acquisition of basing rights in strategic African countries.

## **US Arms Sales & Military Training Programmes**

The main channels for US sales of conventional military equipment to African countries are the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Foreign Military Sales Financing (FMF) programmes. These entail the sale of US arms and military equipment by the DoD to friendly powers, in some cases facilitated through the provision of credits through the FMF programme. FMS sales to African states rose from \$25.6 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 to \$61.5 million in FY 2005 and then fell again to an estimated \$20.1 million in FY 2006. Major recipients included Djibouti (\$19.4 million in FY 2005 and \$8.5 million in 2006) and Kenya (\$23.5 million in FY 2005 and \$5 million in 2006). Other major recipients in recent years have included Botswana, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Uganda.<sup>12</sup>

Several African countries have also purchased US arms and equipment directly from American defence contractors through the Commercial Sales programme, overseen by the US Department of State. Major recipients in recent years have included Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Algeria (a major oil producer and potentially a major supplier of natural gas to the United States) has been permitted to buy very large quantities of sophisticated counter-insurgency equipment – most notably night-vision equip-

ment – to outfit the army and other internal security forces for operations against the Salafists.<sup>14</sup> American firms delivered \$78 million worth of military hardware to Algeria in FY 2004 and an estimated \$80 million worth in FY 2005 and FY 2006.

Most African countries participate in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme, under which the United States provides instruction in combat and technical skills for African officers and enlisted personnel at bases in the United States and abroad. In recent years, the DoD has allocated approximately \$10 million per year to provide training to some 1,300 to 1,700 African personnel annually. Major recipients include: Algeria (\$750,000 in FY 2006), Angola (\$400,000 in FY 2006), Chad (\$250,000), Cote d'Ivoire (\$50,000), Democratic Republic of Congo (\$150,000), Republic of Congo (\$100,000), Eritrea (\$450,000), Ethiopia (\$600,000), Gabon (\$200,000), Nigeria (\$800,000), and São Tomé (\$200,000). The DoD also plans to initiate new IMET programmes in Equatorial Guinea and Sudan in FY 2006.<sup>15</sup>

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2003, the DoD has allocated funds to the new African Coastal and Border Security Programme (ACBSP). ACBSP provides specialised training, equipment, and intelligence data to selected African countries for efforts aimed at combating smuggling, piracy, and other cross-boundary threats to internal and regional security. This effort has also included efforts to promote intelligence-sharing among the nations involved. In FY 2005, \$4.0 million was appropriated for this purpose and another \$4.0 million was requested for FY 2006. Among the many countries participating in this initiative are Angola, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Nigeria, São Tomé, and Uganda. In 2003, the DoD also commenced the delivery of seven surplus US Coast Guard cutters to Nigeria, significantly enhancing the Nigerian Navy's ability to protect offshore oil installations and oil tankers. In addition, the FY 2006 budget request includes \$9.7 million in Economic Support Funds for the Africa Regional Fund, of which 25 per cent will go to support counter-terrorism training and assistance for efforts to combat smuggling and money laundering.<sup>16</sup>

Beginning in Fiscal 2006, American funds for peacekeeping training in Africa will be channeled primarily through the new Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), replacing African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) and other US aid programmes. Out of the \$114 million requested for GPOI in FY 2006, African states will receive most of the \$14 million requested for training, exercises, equipment; an additional \$37 million is to be funneled directly to ACOTA programme accounts. The Bush administration has also requested \$41 million in FY 2006 for the Africa Regional Peacekeeping account to support operations in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Sudan, and to strengthen the peacekeeping forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).<sup>17</sup>

In FY 2002-03, the DoD allocated approximately \$16 million in Africa peacekeeping money to establish the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI). The PSI funding was used to deploy teams of US Special Operations Forces (SOF) to provide counter-terrorism training and equipment to Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. This effort entailed the provision of training and equipment to six light infantry companies in the four countries. As a result of strenuous lobbying by US military officials, PSI was transformed into the new Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) in March 2004 and expanded to include the important energy-producing countries of Algeria and Nigeria, as well as Senegal and Tunisia, along with the original PSI participants. The TSCTI programme obtained initial funding of \$16 million in FY

2005 and will receive \$100 million annually from FY 2007 to FY 2011, for a total of \$500 million.<sup>18</sup>

## Expanding US Naval Operations in Africa

In recognition Africa's growing role as a supplier of oil to the United States, the US Navy has significantly increased its presence in African waters. Much of this activity is focused in the Gulf of Guinea, the body of water closest to the major West African oil producers and itself the site of some of Africa's most promising offshore oil reserves. The US Navy has also conducted joint training operations with the naval forces of African states and engaged them in joint discussion of security problems in the region. A number of recent naval exercises and other events are evidence of the active interest in Africa now being taken by the US Navy.

In May 2003, NATO Supreme Commander General James Jones indicated that in the future, US naval forces under his command would spend much less time in the Mediterranean. Instead, he predicted, 'I'll bet they'll spend half the time going down the west coast of Africa.'<sup>19</sup> The most impressive demonstration of this new posture came in July 2004, when the United States carried out the 'Summer Pulse 04' exercise. This exercise was explicitly designed to show that the United States could carry out naval operations simultaneously in every part of the world and, thus, that US naval forces could respond to a crisis in one part of the world even if it was already engaged elsewhere. The African element of the exercise was conducted off the coast of Morocco, where the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise commanded a US carrier battle group that led a massive joint exercise with naval forces from nine countries, including NATO countries and Morocco itself. The exercise involved a total of 20,000 personnel (both sailors and marines) on board 30 ships.<sup>20</sup>

In October 2004, the US European Command (EURCOM) hosted a three-day Gulf of Guinea Maritime Security Conference in Naples, Italy (headquarters of the US Sixth Fleet). Participants included naval leaders from Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, the Republic of Congo, São Tomé, and Togo, along with personnel from the United States, France, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The conference reportedly focused on common efforts to combat threats posed by piracy, smuggling, and drug trafficking, as well as the fight against terrorism. It ended with joint statement pledging participants to engage in ongoing dialogue, cooperation, and joint activities.<sup>21</sup>

On 25 January 2005, the US Navy commenced a two-month Gulf of Guinea Deployment with participation by the USS *Emory S. Land*, carrying about 1,400 sailors and Marines. The deployment was the direct result of the 2004 Maritime Security Conference held in October 2004, and involved port calls at Douala, Cameroon; Port Gentil, Gabon; and Sekondi, Ghana. Instructors and sailors from Cameroon, São Tomé, Gabon, Ghana, and Benin also participated in the operation.<sup>22</sup> A second Gulf of Guinea Deployment was conducted from May to July 2005, with participation by the US Coast Guard Cutter *Bear*.<sup>23</sup>

From late-June to early-July 2005, the US Navy held ten days of exercises in the Mediterranean with naval forces from Britain, Spain, Italy, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. The exercises, known as 'Barbary Thunder II', consisted of joint maritime interdiction operations by US Marines along with their counterparts from Italy, Morocco, and Algeria.<sup>24</sup>

And on 27 September 2005, the US Navy commenced a five-week West African Training Cruise (WATC) exercise with the deployment of the dock landing ship *USS Gunston Hall* and the high-speed vessel *Swift*. Host nations for the WATC include Ghana, Senegal, Guinea, and Morocco. Planned activities include small boat training, live-fire exercises, and amphibious raids. At the same time, American sailors and Marines participated in Exercise Green Osprey, a British-led amphibious landing exercise on the coast of Senegal.<sup>25</sup>

These operations are particularly significant because they constitute the necessary preparation for what are, in fact, the most likely scenarios for direct US intervention in Africa. While land bases would be required for large-scale ground operations – as, for example during humanitarian relief operations or to actually try to occupy and control large parts of a country like Nigeria should that ever be contemplated – they would not be needed for more focused attacks, such as air strikes or airborne assaults against insurgents who threatened to interrupt oil supplies. Not only would Washington prefer to avoid establishing a highly visible, and thus highly provocative, presence on the ground in Africa, it would actually be easier for the United States to conduct such operations from an off-shore naval armada which could be rushed to oil-rich regions of Africa at short notice in less than a week.

### **The Search for Bases in Africa**

However, to ensure that the United States can deploy troops and equipment to Africa, particularly in times of emergency when even a few days might be too long to wait, the DoD is now beginning to establish a basing infrastructure in Africa, again following the trajectory first seen in the Gulf and the Caspian regions. In recognition of Africa's colonial past and likely popular resistance to anything resembling a permanent military garrison, the DoD does not seek elaborate installations but rather 'bare-bones' facilities – usually an airstrip, basic communications links, and a warehouse or two – that can be tended by local troops or contract personnel most of the time, until needed by American forces for particular operations. Although Pentagon officials tend to emphasise the threat from terrorism when discussing the need for such facilities, they have also expressed a need to protect the flow of oil. In 2003, for example, a senior Pentagon official told Greg Jaffe of the *Wall Street Journal*,

*a key mission for US forces [in Africa] would be to ensure that Nigeria's oil fields, which in the future could account for as much as 25 per cent of all US oil imports, are secure.*<sup>26</sup>

Among the countries that have reportedly been considered as a potential site for the establishment of a US military base in Africa is the island state of São Tomé e Príncipe. São Tomé is located in the Gulf of Guinea near the major West African oil producers, yet is conveniently distant from the ethnic and political strife that has often overtaken countries on the mainland; it is also expected to be a major oil exporter itself, in conjunction with Nigeria (with which it has established a Joint Development Zone in the Gulf of Guinea). Although the DoD has not formally expressed an interest in acquiring a base there, the Deputy Commander of the US European Command (EURCOM), which exercises command authority over much of sub-Saharan Africa, visited the islands in July 2001 to examine possible basing locations.<sup>27</sup>

In its efforts to secure other basing options, the United States has negotiated agreements granting it access to airfields and other facilities in several African nations. These facilities are often referred to as 'lily pad' facilities, because American

forces can hop in and out of them in times of crisis while avoiding the impression of establishing a permanent – and potentially provocative – presence. They include Entebbe Airport in Uganda, where the DoD has built two 'K-Span' steel buildings to house troops and equipment; an airfield near Bamako, the capital of Mali; an airfield at Dakar, Senegal; an airfield in Gabon; and airfields and port facilities in Morocco and Tunisia.<sup>28</sup>

The DoD has also sought basing facilities in North Africa and the Horn of Africa, primarily to support anti-terror operations in the region. After 9/11, the United States received permission from Djibouti to use Camp Lemonier as the headquarters for the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, a multinational naval force led by the United States that monitors and interdicts possible terrorist travel routes at sea and suspected terrorist activities in adjacent countries, specifically in Somalia. Along with the headquarters element, 800 US Special Operations Forces (SOF) troops have set up base at Camp Lemonier.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, under an agreement reportedly signed in July 2003 during Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's visit to Washington, the DoD was granted the right to use the airfield at Tamanrasset, in southern Algeria, for the deployment of US P-3 Orion aerial surveillance aircraft.<sup>30</sup> (In March 2004, P-3 'Orion' aerial surveillance aircraft based at Tamanrasset were reportedly used to gather intelligence on the activities of Algerian Salafist guerrillas operating in Chad and to forward this intelligence to Chadian forces engaged in combat against the Salafists<sup>31</sup>).

## **The Perceived Challenge from China**

For the most part, US policy regarding African oil is aimed at improving the investment climate for American oil firms and strengthening the internal security capabilities of friendly governments. The DoD also seeks to establish a modest capacity for fighting any localised, indigenous forces that might threaten the free flow of petroleum exports. In the past few years, however, another perceived threat has arisen: the possibility that China will pre-empt American firms in the development of promising oil fields and compete with the United States for the loyalty of local governments – possibly through an increased level of arms sales and military assistance. Although not all American officials would put China in the 'threat' category with respect to African oil, there is growing concern over this development in Congress and the Department of Defense.

Before addressing this controversy further, it is useful to make a few basic points about China's role in Africa: first, China is not a newcomer to Africa, having played a significant role there for several decades; and second, China's pursuit of oil assets in Africa is proceeding along lines long trodden by the United States and the major Western European countries.

China first became a major actor in the African scene in the 1960s and 1970s, when, as part of its ideological rivalry with the Soviet Union, it supported certain national liberation movements in the area (notably those that were prepared to eschew Soviet aid, such as UNITA in Angola and ZANU in Zimbabwe) and friendly post-independence regimes. As parts of this effort, China provided arms and military equipment and, after independence, helped build roads and railroads. This aid gave Beijing a respectable stature in Africa, at least in the eyes of certain grateful liberation groups and struggling governments. As suggested by Rep. Barbara Lee of California, in recent comments before the Subcommittee on Africa of the House International Relations Committee (HIRC), China was providing arms to the national liberation

movements in the 1960s and 1970s while the United States was still aiding the European colonial regimes.

*[Between] 1955 and 1977, while many African countries were fighting for independence and self-determination ... we were not on the side of ... the independence movements,' while China 'sold \$142 million worth of military equipment and support to Africans.' Moreover, 'China opened its universities to over 15,000 African students for free education [and] has consistently supported Africa's development and responded to emergencies.' For this reason, she argued, China cannot be considered an interloper in Africa but a legitimate player with a credible history of supporting African development efforts.<sup>32</sup>*

An examination of China's efforts to acquire access to oil assets in Africa would reveal a pattern essentially indistinguishable those of the Britain, France, and the United States. All of the major Western powers have long used whatever means and influence is available to them to secure access to African oil, including economic incentives, diplomacy, and the provision of arms and military equipment. For example, during the 1966-69 civil war in Nigeria, Great Britain provided arms to the Federal government in Lagos while the French government, hoping to gain a foothold for French firms in the oil-rich Delta region (long the exclusive preserve of British and American companies), conspired to smuggle arms to the breakaway Biafran regime.<sup>33</sup>

As noted above, moreover, the United States continues to provide arms and military assistance to friendly oil producers in Africa. Hence, the fact that China has aggressively sought oil assets in Africa and accompanied its efforts with deliveries of arms and other aid cannot be viewed as an innovation but as 'business as usual.' This is not meant to excuse Chinese assistance to regimes cited for persistent human right violations, like Sudan and Zimbabwe, but to show that China's behaviour in this regard is not markedly different from that of the major Western powers. All of these countries – the United States, the Europeans, and China – are avid participants in the 'oil rush' in Africa, and all are using every means at their disposal. This having been said, it is still important to note that Chinese firms, with the evident backing of the Chinese government, are avidly seeking oil assets in Africa and that some sectors of the US government view China's entry into the African oil rush with alarm.

To sustain its rapid economic growth, averaging 9 per cent per year over the past decade, China will need additional supplies of energy. According to the DoE, China's total energy consumption will rise by 153 per cent between 2002 and 2025, from 43.2 to a projected 109.2 quadrillion BTUs. This will entail increased consumption of all sources of energy, including oil: in the DoE's projections, China's net oil consumption will rise by 214 per cent over this period, from 5.2 to 14.2 million bbl/d.<sup>34</sup> Because domestic petroleum production in China is expected to remain relatively flat over this period, at around 3 million bbl/d, it will have to substantially increase its imports of oil in order to satisfy anticipated demand – much as is the case for the United States. To obtain this oil, Chinese firms are scouring the world for investment in the hunt for investment opportunities in untapped reserves. This search has taken Chinese firms to Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran, Indonesia, and Venezuela – and to Africa.<sup>35</sup> Chinese oil companies have already established a significant presence in Sudan – the Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) now owns 40 per cent of the largest oil-producing company in Sudan, the Great Nile Petroleum Operating Company – and in January 2006, the Chinese state-controlled

energy company Cnooc announced a \$2.3 billion deal to acquire a 45 per cent stake in a major off-shore Nigerian oil field that is managed by the French oil firm Total; China is avidly seeking investment opportunities in Angola as well.<sup>36</sup> According to Michael Rannenberger, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, China now obtains approximately 30 per cent of its oil imports from Africa and 'China hopes to increase this proportion in the years ahead.'<sup>37</sup>

China has also strengthened its broader economic ties with a number of African countries – investing in mining projects and dam building for example – and has developed close military relations with a number of African countries, particularly Sudan, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria. Ties with the oil-rich Nigerian government were significantly expanded in September 2004, when the Chinese defence company Poly Technology announced that it was prepared to enter into partnership with the government-owned Nigerian Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON). After years of neglect, the Nigerian government has been seeking to revive DICON, which has recently resumed production of a wide variety of small arms, grenades, and ammunition for the Nigerian Army.<sup>38</sup>

From Rannenberger's perspective, this is nothing unexpected, nor should it necessarily be considered alarming. China's pursuit of African oil 'should not be read as a threat', he told the HIRC in July:

*Nations from every region are seeking markets in Africa and African sources of energy. In fact, this can work to advance our goals in Africa to the extent that it serves to increase prosperity and stability.*<sup>39</sup>

He went on to express concern over the human rights implications of China's continuing support for the northern Sudanese government, but ended with a plea for cooperation between the United States and China in maintaining the stability of world oil markets and seeking the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa.

*China should have many of the same interests in Africa as the United States, based, among other elements, on our shared desire to diversify sources of supply, our shared reliance on a global oil market, and our shared concern over volatile oil prices, [and] our share[d] interests in conflict resolution and promotion of national and regional stability,' he declared. This being the case, the United States should 'engage China directly, at all appropriate levels, to seek to develop new concepts of cooperation that can advance common interests.*<sup>40</sup>

This hopeful view is not, however, shared by all US policymakers. 'Amidst all of this hoopla over China's rapidly growing economy, there is a dark side to [that] country's economic expansion,' Rep. Christopher Smith of New Jersey told the HIRC in July.

*China is playing an increasingly influential role on the continent of Africa, and there is concern that the Chinese intend to aid and abet African dictators, gain a stranglehold on precious African natural resources, and undo much of the progress that has been made on democracy and governance in the last 15 years in African nations.*<sup>41</sup>

It is possible, of course, to take exception to Smith's interpretation of recent developments in Africa and to suggest that Beijing hardly possesses the capacity to do all he ascribes to it, but the fact is that other American policymakers hold a similar view of China's role in Africa, and this assessment will no doubt influence US policy in the years ahead.

The possibility that an alarmist view of China's role in African oil could affect US policy is raised, for example, in the DoD's 2005 report on Chinese military capabilities, *The Military Power of the People's Republic of China*. In an insert in 'Resource Demands as a Driver of Strategy,' the report notes that China's growing reliance on imported energy, especially oil and natural gas, 'is playing a role in shaping China's strategy and policy.' Such concerns, it continues, 'factor heavily' in Beijing's relations with a number of major oil producers, including Angola and Sudan, and have prompted Beijing to seek close ties with these countries. 'Beijing's belief that it requires such special relationships in order to assure its energy access could shape its defence strategy and force planning in the future.'<sup>42</sup> Left unsaid in this statement (this report, it should be noted, is intended as an assessment, not a policy document) is the belief that any such efforts on China's part could pose a challenge – even a direct threat – to US security interests. But even if the DoD did not make this point explicitly, there are others in Washington, including Representative Smith and other Republicans on the House and Senate foreign relations committees, who are certainly prepared to do so.

## Conclusions

It is still early days, and American policymakers have not (so far as is known publicly) yet adopted specific policies or taken specific steps to thwart China's growing interests in African oil. The US aid programmes and military initiatives described above are aimed principally at combating terrorism and containing local threats to the safe flow of oil. But the very act of building military ties with African governments and providing them with arms and military assistance has already evolved into a kind of low-level military competition with China for the loyalty of local elites. China, too, appears to be seeking ties of this sort, through its own modest military aid programmes.<sup>43</sup> Whether all this will lead to something greater – and potentially far more perilous – is something that cannot be foreseen at this point, but it is certainly something that bears close watching, given the dangers this could pose for the states and peoples of Africa.

Although US (and Chinese) military programmes in Africa are relatively small, at least in monetary terms and in comparison to military programmes in other parts of the world, they are growing rapidly – and even relatively small programmes can have a significant impact in Africa. First, they help to encourage African regimes to continue to rely on oil-based development, rather than pursuing broader economic development strategies that promote local manufacturing and agriculture. As the work of Terry Lynn Karl and a number of analysts have shown, the possession of oil by countries in Africa and other parts of the developing world nearly always leads to political repression, corruption, and violence.

Second, US (and Chinese) military involvement often aggravates internal political conflicts over the allocation of oil revenues, particularly when the regime in power monopolises such revenues while depriving other groups in the population of the fruits of oil production. This leads to political unrest, which frequently turns violent since a resort to arms is often seen by marginalised groups as the only means of gaining a larger share of oil profits: it also encourages African regimes to rely on the use of force to constrain such challenges, with the implicit backing of the United States, to maintain control and stay in power. This in turn threatens to lead to disruptions in the flow of oil, exactly what Washington says it wants to prevent.

Third, by developing close military relationships with unstable regimes and becoming more and more deeply involved in African conflicts, the United States (and China) are provoking the spread of anti-American sentiment and promoting the growth of Salafists and other Islamic jihadist groups. This only increases the likelihood of future acts of terrorism against US targets, pro-US regimes, oil installations, and innocent civilians.

Fourth, US (and Chinese) involvement could eventually lead Washington and Beijing to use their own troops to intervene in times of crisis to protect friendly regimes and guard oil installations. This, in turn, would surely give rise to resistance movements of one sort or another and the likely outbreak of terrorism.

Finally, an escalating military competition between the United States and China for power and influence in Africa – in combination with escalating military competition in the Pacific, Central Asia, and the Middle East – will help to tilt the US-Chinese relationship in a more adversarial direction and will make it more likely that their rivalry will spiral into a direct or indirect (surrogate) confrontation. For all of these reasons, the escalating 'oil rush' in Africa and the growing military involvement of the United States and China deserves to be given thorough, and critical, scrutiny.

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# ‘Between a Rock & a Hard Place’: North Africa as a Region of Emigration, Immigration & Transit Migration

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The prevailing Eurocentric perspective on Mediterranean migration lies almost exclusively in the security paradigm, focusing upon African illegal migration to Europe and disregarding the role of migration in the socio-economic development of the African continent. The older emigration histories of North African countries are diverse, with Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria linked to France as a destination country, Libya as an immigration country, and Egypt linked with other Arab countries for temporary migration alongside permanent migration to Anglophone countries. More recent changes include the emergence of southern Europe as destination countries for all except Libyans, and all of North Africa turned into transit countries for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

The ‘new migrations’ from and through North Africa are described, along with known major migration routes and data on interceptions of illegal migrants by southern European countries. North African policy responses are also identified, noting especially the failure of all countries in the region to observe international human rights standards. Finally, I outline the ‘failed policy’ of the European Union, which simply continues the securitisation approach previously pursued by Spain and Italy, neglecting the fundamental realities of Africa as a new continent of emigration. Furthermore, European policy promotes the human rights abuses of North Africa with regard to illegal migrants and asylum-seekers, yet welcomes skilled (as opposed to semi-skilled) African migrants to European territory. Europe thus guarantees the continuation of African underdevelopment – seeking to avoid its negative symptom of mass emigration and asylum-seeking whilst benefiting from the migration to Europe of skilled African workers.

Conventional narratives about migration and North Africa tend to emphasise the role of demography in shaping emigration pressures, ignore the significance of Libya as a guest-worker country for the region, and completely disregard the importance of forced migrations throughout Africa. Furthermore, the complex interconnectedness of migrations and socio-economic development in Africa is somehow lost in Eurocentric approaches. Such approaches can be found at their very worst in the policies and analyses of the European Commission, or the Barcelona Declaration: they focus upon illegal African migration to Europe, advocate a policy of ‘root causes’ of migration which can be remedied with economic

aid, and hail migrant workers' remittances as a panacea for faltering economies (whilst ignoring the massive and serious loss of skilled workers from many countries in the region).

Recent events have only worsened the deficiencies of the European perspective since the most visible manifestation of changing migration patterns has become a physical challenge to the integrity of Europe's external borders. Whether it be through 'boat people' crossing the Mediterranean, or the climbing of the security fences in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, the response of the EU is the same – 'send them back'. Thus, detailed legal provisions known as re-admission treaties are being forced upon all countries bordering the EU, naval patrols and frontiers reinforced, and increasing emphasis laid upon detection and deportation of illegal immigrants and even *refoulement* of asylum-seekers. The ability of North Africa to manage all aspects of migration, especially transit migration of people from sub-Saharan Africa and even Asia, is now central. In particular, the treatment of illegal migrants, returned migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and guest workers have been shown by all independent sources to be at best inadequate, at worst profoundly inhuman.

In this paper, I set myself the ambitious task of exploring some of the linkages between different facets of migration, and how three different regions (northern Mediterranean, southern Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)) are actually intimately connected through migration. Some theoretical considerations are also outlined, since migration and socio-economic development are closely related – even if the complex relationship defies the identification of universal truths. Finally, I conclude with an examination of European policy, and its failure to grapple with Mediterranean or African socio-economic imperatives.

### **A Short History of North Africa & Emigration**

Of the four Maghreb countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Libya), Morocco has been the only one since 1968 with a consistent policy of encouraging emigration in order to manage unemployment levels (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005:4). Even after the oil-shock and the closure of European labour markets to immigration in 1974, Morocco maintained its policy stance of promoting emigration, opposition to the integration of Moroccans abroad, and great emphasis on the remittances received from the Moroccan diaspora (Fargues, 2004:1359). Most migrants did not return, and massive family reunification to European countries in the 1970s and 1980s led to an increase in Moroccans from 400,000 in 1975 to over one million in 1992 in France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany. By 1998, the number had risen to 1.6 million in northern Europe, and despite the opposition of the Moroccan state, 430,000 were granted EU nationality over the period 1992-2001 (de Haas, 2005a). With new Moroccan migrations to Spain and Italy after 1990, the resulting diaspora by 2004 was measured at over 3 million worldwide (over 10% of current population) – with 2.6 million in wider Europe and 280,000 in other Arab countries (Sadiqi, 2005).

Tunisia started with the same sort of approach as Morocco in the late 1960s, but by 1974 the state was encouraging the return of its nationals (Fargues, 2004:1359). Despite this official policy, the number of Tunisians abroad by 2003 was in excess of 800,000 (Zekri, 2005; CARIM, 2005:315), around 9% of current population, with over 700,000 in greater Europe, mostly in France.

Algeria from the outset was more ambiguous about emigration as a safety-valve for the labour market, preferring to denounce migration as a post-colonial form of dependency and instead relying upon development of its oil and gas reserves (Fargues, 2004:1359). Its policy left the diaspora highly disconnected from the country, and also explains the relatively low rate of refugee flows during the civil war in the 1990s. By 2000, over 800,000 Algerians were recorded (CARIM, 2005:374-6) mostly in France – constituting just under 3% of current population.

Libya has a rather different history of migration policy. Owing to the development of its oil and a high *per capita* GDP, it was always a destination country for labour migrants. Some limited temporary emigration occurred, mostly of businessmen and students to Malta and Egypt (NDI, 2005:27) but since Libya removed formal travel restrictions, there has been increasing travel by young people to Italy and Malta. However, the Libyan diaspora is very small. On the other hand, the number and proportion of immigrants in Libya is high: estimates range from 1.1-1.4 million (NDI, 2005) up to 1.8 million, of which only 600,000 are legal workers (EC, 2004:5). With a total recorded population of around 5.5m, this means that the immigrant/population ratio is of the order of 25-30%. The majority of temporary workers traditionally have come from Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, although more recent visa-free entry for all of Africa resulted also in large numbers of sub-Saharan Africans (NDI, 2005:29).

Egypt too has a rather different migration history from the other North African countries. Emigration was prohibited until 1967, after which followed a short period of state-organised temporary labour migration to other Arab countries, mainly in the Gulf. Finally, in 1971 legal restrictions on emigration were removed. Abella (1994:168) identifies three phases of emigration of Egyptians: to Libya, in the early 1970s; to Saudi Arabia, in the late 1970s; and to Iraq, peaking in 1984. Since then, temporary migration flows have been focused on Saudi Arabia, Libya, Jordan and Kuwait, with an equal mix of skilled and unskilled workers. Unskilled workers predominate in Saudi Arabia – the main receiving country – whereas skilled workers are the majority for almost all other countries of the region (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005:8). Permanent emigrants choose mainly Anglophone countries (USA, Canada, Australia) along with Italy and Greece, and are thought to number about 800,000; the estimated number of temporary migrants to nearby countries is 1.9 million. Thus, total emigration as of 2002 constituted around 4% of current population. Egypt also has substantial unrecognised refugee stocks (from Sudan, Somalia and Palestine), which could be as high as 5 million, making the country clearly a net immigration country (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005:8).

For all four Maghreb countries, transit migration (into Europe) and immigration from sub-Saharan Africa and even Asia have recently created serious problems. There are also some informal indications that Egypt is slowly transforming into a transit region, although data are unavailable.

## Some Theoretical Considerations

### Demography & Migration

The older literature on migration (e.g. Ravenstein, 1885), along with occasional contemporary approaches, tended to assume that population growth has a direct correlation with propensity to migrate. In other words, a high birth rate would lead (with lag) to high emigration, whereas low population growth would not (or might

require immigration). This approach to migration has now been abandoned in the mainstream literature, with adequate empirical evidence to show that globally there is zero correlation. Zlotnik, for example, shows that for 164 countries 'there is no simple or unidirectional relation between natural increase and net migration' (Zlotnik, 2004a:33) and that even for countries with high levels of natural increase both net immigration and net emigration can be observed.

On the other hand, demographic developments clearly have some role to play in the socio-economic pressures shaping emigration patterns. Afolayan (2001:10) lists – along with the demographic issues of population growth and population density – economic vulnerability and debt, socio-cultural issues, ecological disasters, social networking, government migration policies and regional economic integration. In the specific case of Africa, Adepoju considers the determinants of emigration to be categorizable under the headings of labour force growth, economic decline and debt, ethnopolitical conflict and ecological deterioration. In this context, emigration should be seen as a survival strategy by individuals and families (Adepoju, 2004:65).

In a similar vein, the World Bank notes that low-skilled migration can improve labour market conditions for other poor workers (World Bank, 2006a:64) and even high-skilled emigration can sometimes be beneficial for countries of origin (World Bank, 2006a:67). These considerations are crucial for North Africa, which still has high fertility rates in all but Tunisia (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005:26) and annual projected labour force growth to 2020 of 2-3% in Algeria and Egypt, 1.5-2.5% in Libya and Morocco, and 1-2.5% in Tunisia.<sup>1</sup> In all these countries, male labour force participation is expected to remain stable, but with significant increases of female participation in Algeria and Egypt. The ability of their economies to absorb the new workforce (rather than simple population increases) will be a crucial determinant of future emigration pressures.

## **Migration & Development**

The relationship between migration and socio-economic development is neither simple nor unidirectional. Emigration is somehow connected with income disparities between countries of emigration and immigration, but very low income countries tend to have very low emigration. Equally, the temporary relief provided to strained labour markets is a short-term help, whereas the loss of workers – especially high-skilled ones – is an impediment to longer-run economic development. Also, workers' remittances from abroad are now increasingly seen as a new development 'mantra' (de Haas, 2005b:1276), especially since recent years have seen declining development aid alongside increasing migrants' remittances to LDCs.

Recent scholarship is inclined to see (voluntary) international migration as a stage of development, indicating a transition from a very low level of development to an upper-lower income level. According to this view, migration stems not from underdevelopment but from development itself. There is much to commend this view, since historically Africa has exhibited high refugee movements within the region – 30% as of 2000 (Zlotnik, 2004b) – whilst emigration rates have been fairly low from all but the Maghreb. Generally, the world's main labour exporters are upper lower to lower-middle income countries such as North Africa or the Philippines (de Haas, 2005c:4). Olesen (2002) names this range of low-middle income and high emigration countries as the 'migration band', above which emigration tends to diminish. He posits the explanation as the reduced differential

in income levels between emigration and immigration countries (PPP), citing ratios from 1:3 to 1:4.5 (Olesen, 2002:141). Olesen also suggests that Morocco is ready to exit the migration band, and economic development will reduce its emigration.

Although historically most sub-Saharan migration was intra-continental, since the mid-1990s emigration rates have increased significantly. Gubert (2005:41) gives net migration rates for 1995-2000 of 6.2% for Guinea, 5.5% for Burkina Faso, 4.7% for Mali and 3.4% for Lesotho. In recent years, emigration outside the continent has taken off: this trend is unsurprising, since internal migration possibilities diminished with worsening economies, and South-South labour migration (e.g. to Gulf countries) options were reduced (Adepoju, 2004). Thus, 'migration for survival' has emerged as a composite type – somehow straddling the western categories of forced and voluntary labour migrations, but crudely classed as 'illegal' (Sandell, 2005). The impact of migrant remittances for sub-Sahara is now such that one analyst states that 'all local development is based on emigration' (Sall, 2005:265).

### Remittances vs. Brain Drain: Some Empirical Data

For the last two decades, remittances to North Africa have constituted the highest ratio to GDP of any region in the world: in 2002, they were 3.1% of GDP compared with 1.6% for Latin America or 0.6% for sub-Saharan Africa (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005:23). However, the IMF figures do not cover informal transfers: in the case of North Africa, this is probably not such a serious problem of data, but for sub-Saharan African countries there is a consensus that the data substantially underestimate the transfers (Gubert, 2005:43; Moré, 2005:4-5). Gubert gives an unsourced figure of 1.3% of GDP for remittances to the region, whilst Sall (2005:277) provides 1990s data showing remittances ranging between 2% GDP for Senegal and up to 20% for Eritrea! Whatever the actual level of remittances, it is certain that they constitute a major source of external development funding for the region.

In the case of North African countries (other than Libya), for some time remittances have played a major role in economic policy and economic stability. Although Morocco remains one of the largest recipients of remittances, in excess of tourism receipts for 2004, its significance as a proportion of GDP is likely to decline from the current high level of 10%. Algeria reports a tripling in remittances over 2001-4 (World Bank, 2006a:87), although exact data are not provided.

As with remittance data, reliable information on the emigration of skilled workers is in very short supply. Recent research undertaken separately by the OECD and World Bank on stocks and flows of skilled migrants make some contribution to remedying the deficit.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 below gives data for North Africa, from the OECD database.

**Table 1: Total Number of Expatriates & Proportion of Highly-skilled in OECD Countries, by Country of Birth**

Country	Total number of expatriates	Of which: highly skilled (%)
Algeria	1,301,076	16.4
Egypt	274,833	51.2
Libya	27,481	43.4
Morocco	1,364,754	14.8
Tunisia	371,274	17.7

Source: OECD (2005: Table II.A2.6)

Several things stand out from this table. First, the total numbers do not correspond with the data given earlier, on diaspora populations. There are significantly more Algerians abroad, and rather fewer Tunisians and Egyptians than could be expected in OECD countries. Secondly, the proportions of highly-skilled are not so high for Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians; the ratio is high for the small number of Libyans, but this was expected, and is also very high for Egyptians. This latter problem is probably because of no data from Italy as a receiving country and doubtless poor data from Greece – both important countries for the Egyptian diaspora. Overall, there does not appear to be a significant brain-drain from North Africa. Data for sub-Saharan countries show a different pattern, with ratios ranging from 25-40%, suggesting a problem of emigration of the highly skilled from the rest of Africa.

The World Bank database is not published in full, but some partial datasets are shown in tabular form (World Bank, 2006b:ch. 5). One indicator of a serious problem with skilled emigration, is the proportion of a country's skilled workforce which has emigrated. North Africa is not prominent in the list, but several African countries are: Gambia (63%), Sierra Leone (53%), Ghana (47%), Liberia (45%), Kenya (38%), Uganda (36%), Angola (33%), Somalia (33%). Morocco is shown as having lost 17% of its skilled workforce: presumably the other North African countries are below 15%, the lowest proportion shown in the table.

The database also shows the proportion of highly-skilled as part of total migration. Here, Egypt is shown with 59%. However, the data also show Egypt with a low emigration rate for its skilled workforce (4.6%) along with Libya (2.4%). Taken together, these data show that emigration from Egypt and Libya is highly selective and low relative to total population and also to the skilled workforce.

Both datasets show fairly reliably that there is not a serious problem of brain-drain for any North African country; unfortunately, the same cannot be said for much of the rest of Africa. Recent empirical data and focused research projects tend to confirm the picture described by both the OECD and World Bank datasets. El-Khawas (2004:44) cites data of 60% of Gambia's university graduates, 25% of Sierra Leone's, and 10% of Kenya's, as United States residents. Tanner (2005:3) cites an older estimate from Stalker that between 1960-87, Africa lost 30% of its skilled workforce. In particular, two sectors show massive emigration rates from SSA – healthcare and education. Mensah et al. (2005:14), in a detailed study of migration of health professionals, estimate that Ghana has lost over 50% of its trained doctors. Bump (2006) cites detailed annual data 1995-2002 from the University of Ghana, showing that by 2002 the emigration rate of doctors was over 90%, of pharmacists over 60%, and of nurses at 20%.

## **The New Migrations & North Africa**

North African economies cannot be described as doing particularly well, with Libya's *per capita* GDP the highest at \$3,500<sup>3</sup> for 2002, Tunisia at \$6,800 (PPP), Algeria at \$5,800 (PPP), and both Egypt and Morocco at \$3,800 (PPP) (UNDP, 2004). However, in comparison with the majority of African countries even North Africa looks prosperous, and it is moreover closer to Europe and therefore a stepping stone to a better life. Thus, in recent years, North African countries have attracted significant numbers of African and also some Asian migrants: most fail to cross the Mediterranean and reach the European continent and remain in very poor conditions in North Africa.

What was once a tolerated income supplement for cash-starved Spanish fishermen with their *pateras* (small fishing boats), has turned since the mid-1990s into a more serious phenomenon of organised smuggling or individual attempts to cross the Mediterranean and reach prosperous 'Europe'. One of the earliest accounts of 'Mediterranean Boat People' (Pugh, 2001) gives a figure of illegal migrants intercepted by Spain for 1996 as 1,573, but rapidly escalating to 15,000 in 2000 (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002). The figure peaked in 2003 at 19,176, and stood at 11,781 persons for 2005 (APDHA, 2006:12). In the case of arrivals in Italy, for 2003 Italy recorded 14,017 arrivals from North Africa; by 2004, this had decreased to 12,737 illegal migrants in 231 boats (van Selm and Cooper, 2006:62). Most arrived on the small island of Lampedusa, close to Libya and Tunisia. Malta recorded 1,369 boat arrivals in 2004, which although a small number is proportionately a larger problem for the island.

ICMPD<sup>4</sup> has identified three main illegal migration routes into southern Europe: the West African route, the North and East African route, and the Eastern Mediterranean route (ICMPD, 2005). For the *West African route*, the main points of arrival are the Spanish island of Fuerteventura (Canary Islands), the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, and the southern Spanish coast adjacent to Morocco. Most departures are from Morocco, although some are from the Western Sahara. For the *North and East African route*, the main points of arrival are the Italian islands of Lampedusa, Pantelleria, Linosa, Sicily and also Malta. The main point of departure is Libya, but also Egypt. For the *Eastern Mediterranean Route*, the main transit country is Turkey. From southern Turkey, boats cross to Italy and Cyprus; from western Turkey, boats cross to the numerous small Greek Aegean islands; and from Istanbul, crossing the River Evros effects entry into Greek territory.

The nationalities of the migrants are not so well documented (and are frequently concealed to avoid deportation), but ICMPD estimated for 2003 that about 25% were sub-Saharan, another 25% from other countries, mainly Asian, and about 50% from the south or east Mediterranean (ICMPD, 2004); 2004 data for Italy show an increasing proportion of Egyptians (60%) and about 28% sub-Saharans (EC, 2005a:38), whilst for Malta the principal nationality in 2004 was Somali (40%) followed by Egyptian (15%) and Eritrean (15%). Spanish apprehensions at sea over 2004 were, according to the European Commission (EC, 2005b:5) mainly of sub-Saharan nationals: the main countries of origin were Mali and Gambia, with smaller numbers from Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Sudan, Liberia, Mauritania, Nigeria and Guinea Bissau. A few hundred Indians and Bangladeshi were also apprehended. Spanish data for 2005 show that of 368 corpses or missing persons, 267 were sub-Saharan, 85 from the Maghreb and 16 from Western Sahara (APDHA, 2006:15).

In the two temporary reception centres in Ceuta and Melilla, in late 2005 some 2,000 persons were detained: 61% were from sub-Saharan countries, of which the most numerous were those from Mali (23%) and Cameroon (7%), although there were also smaller numbers from the entire region including Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Ghana; 18% of those detained were from India and 17% from Algeria.<sup>5</sup> A small subsample of the sub-Saharan migrants by educational level showed that over 20% were university graduates and another 46% had a reasonable level of education (EC, 2005b: Annex 2, Table 5). Most of them had reached Morocco via the land border with Algeria.

## North African Policy Responses

**Morocco:** Morocco views immigration policy as mainly a security policy, with the country now not only a transit country but also a de facto destination country (Sadiqi, 2005:227). Law No. 02/2003 on the entry and stay of foreigners, illegal emigration and immigration came into force in November 2003. Trafficking in migrants was criminalised, and there are also some rights of foreigners granted. Also in 2003 two new institutions were created: the Directorate of Migration and Border Surveillance (Interior Ministry) and a Migration Observatory (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004).

Data on legally present immigrants show only 60,837 for 2002, with some 28,000 from Europe and 25,000 from Africa of which 14,000 are from Algeria and just under 2,000 from Tunisia (CARIM, 2005:233-6). Morocco's record on asylum-seekers and refugees is poor (Lindstrom, 2002) and it has also recently been denounced by a detailed report from Human Rights Watch on the abuse of child domestic workers (HRW, 2005).

Collaboration with Spain, including liaison officers in various regions of Spain and to the S.I.V.E. (Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior) system of naval surveillance, has been extensive and apparently successful in reducing emigration and transit migration from Morocco (Sadiqi, 2005:228). Table 2 shows interceptions of illegal migrants, 2000-2004. From these figures, it seems that control over the illegal emigration of Moroccans improved from 2003 (the year of increased state activity in the area). Other reports (e.g. Daoud, 2005) suggest that progress was made over 2004 in dismantling smuggling networks, and 2005 saw further reductions in illegal migration.

Morocco has re-admission agreements with both Spain and Italy, and since 2004 accepted the return of sub-Saharan illegal migrants from Spain (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004). Morocco has also undertaken co-operation with Nigeria on re-admission of illegal migrants; in 2004, Nigeria sent five aeroplanes to transfer 1,700 Nigerians residing illegally in Morocco (Daoud, 2005; Sadiqi, 2005). However, the more usual state response is either to imprison the illegal migrants or refugees, or simply to evict them from Moroccan territory into the desert of Algeria (Daoud, 2005). Violence by Moroccan state authorities against illegal migrants is well-documented by *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF, 2005) and constitutes a further worry concerning the 'security approach' that Morocco has been encouraged to adopt. MSF notes that out of 2,193 cases (2003-5) of sub-Saharan nationals being treated for medical conditions caused by physical violence, 52% were caused by Moroccan security services, 29% by criminal networks and 15% by Spanish security services.

**Algeria:** Algeria has no co-operation with the EU, nor with Morocco (EC, 2005b:11), although it does participate in the 5+5 Mediterranean Dialogue, managed by IOM.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2: Interceptions of Illegal Migrants in Morocco, 2000-2004**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Moroccans	9,353	13,327	16,034	12,493	9,353
Foreigners	15,056	13,100	15,363	23,851	17,252
Total	24,409	26,427	31,397	36,344	26,605

Source: CARIM (2005: 236)

For 2003 and 2004, the number of illegal immigrants arrested was 4,870 and 5,680 respectively (Labdelaoui, 2005:87). Algeria has signed re-admission agreements with Spain and Italy, but information on their operation is not available. The 1998 Census data show some 72,000 foreigners residing in Algeria, of which 58,000 were from Arab states, 5,000 from Europe and 7,000 from non-Arab African countries (CARIM, 2005:90).

**Tunisia:** Tunisia, like Morocco, has recently passed new laws to deal with illegal migration. Two laws passed in early 2004 aim to limit illegal migration and associated criminal networks. One law allows closer surveillance of vessels and also regulates the ownership of these and sets out rules for mooring in ports (Boubakri, 2004:23). The other law amends a 1975 law on passports and travel documents; its sanctions for directly or indirectly aiding illegal migration are punitive, with up to 20 years' imprisonment and fines of up to 67,000 Euros. Tunisia has a re-admission agreement with Italy, which also covers the return of non-nationals. No data are available on the operation of the agreement.

There are a small number of foreigners residing legally on the territory: as of 2004, they numbered 35,192 of which 9,612 were Algerian, 6,363 Moroccan, and 4,612 French. From sub-Saharan Africa, the small numbers total just over 1,000 persons (CARIM, 2005:317).

**Libya:** Libya has effectively no immigration policy. There is no clear distinction between legal and illegal immigrants, no asylum procedure or system of protection for refugees, it has not ratified the Geneva Convention on refugees and it does not recognise the UNHCR. Libya has not been part of the Barcelona Process and has no formal relations with the EU (EC, 2005a; EP, 2005). In 2005, two new institutional bodies were created – a passport and control department, and a coastguard service. An anti-trafficking law was also passed in 2005, with a maximum penalty of one year's imprisonment (EP 2005: 10). Libya does have bilateral agreements with several EU countries (including Italy) and illegal migrants returned to Libya are then deported to their own country of origin, without legal process at any stage.

As discussed above, Libya has a large illegal immigrant population – of which a great part is sub-Saharan. In 2003, Libya expelled some 43,000 migrants, of which 38% were Egyptian, 15% Nigerians and over 33% sub-Saharan (EC 2005a:38). For 2004, the *verbal statement* made to the EP delegation by the relevant senior public official, stated that 75,000 had been repatriated, of which 17,000 were Nigerians, 11,000 Ghanaians, 7,000 Nigerians, 5,000 Egyptians and 3,000 Sudanese (EP 2005:9). However, it is thought that most of the illegal immigrants residing in Libya are not transit migrants, but simply looking for work. Given the lack of basic immigration infrastructure, there is no mechanism to distinguish between different motivations or types of migrant.

**Egypt:** Egypt essentially has no immigration policy: entry to Egyptian territory is seen as primarily a security matter. Responsibility for non-nationals and foreign workers is divided between a large number of ministries, with frequent problems of co-ordination (CARIM, 2005:106). There are a small number of legally resident aliens in Egypt – as of the 1996 Census, some 116,000. The largest numbers are of Sudanese, Palestinians, and Russians (CARIM, 2005:110-113). However, as noted above there are thought to be millions of unrecognized refugees, who will be, in most respects, indistinguishable from illegal immigrants. There is still no domestic legislation or effective protection of asylum-seekers, the responsibility for which is

given to UNHCR (Roman, 2006:19-24) with the presumption of relocation to a third country. The state violence against Sudanese asylum-seekers in December 2005 was largely the result of friction between UNHCR and the Egyptian Interior Ministry, with strong protests from Egyptian human rights groups about the criminal behaviour of the Ministry with the deaths of up to 100 asylum-seekers (Roman, 2006:23).

Egypt does not have any re-admission treaties with southern European countries, although one is under discussion with Turkey. Information on Egypt's role in illegal migration movements is almost completely absent, although Sawi (2005:2-3) reports that the Interior Ministry maintains records on irregular migrants and regularly collaborates with Interpol and foreign powers on these issues.

## **A Failed Policy for Europe**

Throughout the recent history of the EU there has been a remarkable one-sided emphasis on the security aspects of immigration control [borders, asylum, expulsion of illegal migrants] and an almost complete absence of even co-ordination of policy on immigration for employment, issues of legalisation of illegal immigrants, and until recently on the rights of long-term immigrants (Baldwin-Edwards, 1997). Looking specifically at three issues relevant to southern Europe, by early 2006 there was no EU policy on admission of immigrants (other than the Schengen rules for visitors), there was substantial policy on removal of illegal immigrants (but nothing on legalisation of undocumented immigrants), and also substantial policy on asylum-seeking.

In 2003, the UK started to suggest a new vision of refugee protection, which included the notion of 'transit camps' (van Selm, 2005:16). Most of these ideas were withdrawn in the European Council meeting in Thessaloniki, but by June 2004 the European Commission had made clear its intent to propose a new policy regime. The UK and also German/Italian proposals were rejected in 2004 by the European Parliament (Schuster, 2005:5): those proposals essentially consisted of keeping the majority of refugees outside of Europe, and in particular, in North Africa.

Following opposition not only from the EP but also from many EU member states, Italy independently pursued bilateral arrangements with Morocco, Tunisia and Libya – essentially linking re-admission agreements with development aid and small-scale immigration quotas (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005:32-35). In October 2004, Italy returned 1,000 people, without allowing them to claim asylum, to Libya, which in turn, deported them to Egypt and Nigeria (Schuster, 2005:12). As Libya does not recognise the Geneva Convention or apply the OAU asylum procedures (EC, 2005a:52), this meant that effectively the migrants were denied the right to asylum even though they had arrived in an EU country. The European Parliament in April 2005 passed a resolution effectively condemning as illegal the Italian expulsions from Lampedusa carried out between October 2004 and March 2005. Similarly, UNHCR condemned an incident with 180 people on 17 March 2005. Other expulsions continued later in 2005, although with smaller numbers (Hamood, 2006:66). The recent report of the Commission (EC 2005a) makes no mention of these serious problems with 'safe third countries' such as Libya, whilst admitting that

*the EU has no formal relations with Libya ... Libya is not a member of the Barcelona Process ... and there is no avenue for a formal dialogue on migration management (EC, 2005a:5).*

The report also notes that Tunisia has no functioning asylum system, but nevertheless the EC intends to include it in the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan. In the case of Morocco, the main concern of the Commission seems to be that they have been unable to conclude a re-admission agreement to cover non-nationals (unlike Spain, which has concluded such).

In the absence of coherent policy initiatives from the European Union, Spain and Italy have pursued their own national agendas, which has resulted in 'an increasing 'militarisation of migration and crime control along the EU's Mediterranean borders' (Lutterbeck, 2006:64). In the case of Spain, the 'bloodbath' that occurred on the frontier of the Spanish enclave of Melilla in October 2005 was symbolic of the frustration of African migrants and the legitimised state violence which has arisen from Spanish-Moroccan collusion (Mead, 2005). For Italy, the collusion with Libya takes a different form, which includes the financing of a detention camp in northern Libya, and provision for two more in the South. Italy also finances the repatriation flights from Libya to country of origin (including Eritrea). Detailed lists of provisions include such macabre items as '1,000 sacks for transport of corpses' (Trucco, 2005:3).

The current EU agenda recycles all the old baggage which serious analysts discredited years ago (such as the 'root causes of migration'), whilst spouting nice rhetoric about eradicating poverty, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In reality, the latest policy document (EC 2005c) is concerned only with security measures (such as coastal patrols, FRONTEX, more detection technology, better management of migration for North African countries, re-admission agreements) whilst paying lip-service to the fundamental problems faced by African economies. Emphasis is placed on 'political dialogue' (EC, 2005c:6-7), specifically focused on the following:

- Remittances (the EU will try to reduce bank transfer charges);
- Capacity-building (legal and technical infrastructure to stop migration);
- Management of migration flows and skills (to 'raise awareness of legal channels for migration' to EU states);
- Improving integration in destination countries (possibly this means trying to get EU states to obey the anti-discrimination directives and the directive on the rights of long-term immigrants).

Essentially, Europe fiddles while Africa burns. Southern European countries in particular, but even northern European, have some limited demand for semi-skilled and unskilled immigrant workers. For the past two decades, this demand has been filled by illegal immigrants and asylum-seekers; more recently, by Romanians and Bulgarians migrating as 'false tourists' under Schengen rules, and then working illegally (Baldwin-Edwards, 2006). The expansion of Europe to the East has badly damaged Africa's chances of labour migration and associated economic development: the cynical reaction of the European continent is to blame Africa for the logical outcome of European policies. Basically, there are no legal channels for semi-skilled labour migration to Europe, although the developed world continues to rely heavily on skilled migrants trained in Africa, and the European Union offers Africa nothing more than 'political dialogue'.

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## Endnotes

1. Approximations from World Bank data (2004: Table A.7).
2. Both the OECD and World Bank datasets on skilled expatriates are based primarily upon detailed population stock data from the OECD area, of which only a few countries are unable to provide such data (Italy, Greece, Turkey et al.). The World Bank methodology is described in detail in World Bank (2006b), pp. 155-196. Essentially, the study optimises the use of available data by using stock data for 1990 and 2000 in OECD receiving countries, country of birth of migrants rather than nationality, and attempting by various mechanisms to standardise the data. The stocks of skilled foreign-born nationals are then related to population by educational level in the country of origin, using the UN population dataset (supplemented in some cases by the *CIA World Factbook*). The ratio gives a rough indicator of the emigration rate, i.e. how significant emigration of skilled personnel is for that country. Comparison with previous studies is made (pp. 192-194) and the authors conclude that faulty data on educational levels used in the older studies resulted in overestimation of the rate of skilled emigration for North Africa and Turkey, whilst seriously underestimating the rates for sub-Saharan Africa and, globally, small island countries.
3. PPP data are not available for Libya.
4. The International Centre for Migration Policy Development – an intergovernmental agency based in Vienna, with a specific focus on border management and illegal migration issues.
5. Own calculations from EC (2005b), Annex 2, Table 4.
6. The International Organization for Migration, based in Geneva.

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## Briefings

### Darfur: Dying for Peace

Julie Flint

Hundreds of thousands of people have died in Darfur, one of Sudan's most marginalised areas, since rebellion erupted early in 2003. More than three million are in need of food aid, many of them beyond the reach of aid because of insecurity and government obstacles to humanitarian relief. With a donor shortfall of \$389 million, World Food Programme rations cut by half and murderous, government-supported *Janjaweed* militias still uncontrolled, the conditions of life in the wretched displaced camps of Darfur will soon deteriorate, lethally, as the rainy season sets in.

And yet the people in those very camps are rejecting, in significant numbers, the Darfur Peace Agreement that was signed in Abuja on 5 May between the Government of Sudan and the faction of the Sudan Liberation Army that is led by Minni Minawi. So, too, is Abdul Wahid Mohamed al Nur, chairman of the SLA and leader of the largest SLA faction (although not perhaps the strongest, in purely military terms). The message is clear: they do not believe this peace will work. On 15 May, Abdul Wahid won from the African Union, which mediated the Abuja process, another two weeks in which to sign the DPA – or be damned and subjected to punitive sanctions under Security Council Resolution 1591. But the AU, under the leadership at Abuja of Salim Ahmed Salim, has thrown in the towel and the international com-

munity is falling over backwards to do nothing to alienate the two parties whose signatures are on the bottom of the agreement – parties which are ruled by small, tribally-based elites, which run ruthless security apparatuses and which do not have the confidence of even a fraction of the people in whose name they have divided the spoils of war.

With the AU mediation leaderless, there is no *process* today even to attempt to bring Abdul Wahid around – a difficult task, certainly, but a vital task when the alternative is, at best, the probable failure of the DPA and, at worst, a descent into chaos in which the man who created the rebel movement, inasmuch as any one person did, will be portrayed as the villain and the genocidal government which made rebellion necessary as a disappointed partner in peace.

Abdul Wahid's support for the DPA is what is needed to change the opinion of the displaced camps and villages of Darfur, if not the intellectuals in Khartoum and the diaspora. For most Darfurians, Abdul Wahid, not Minni, is the symbol of the 'revolution'. If either of the two factional leaders has a political vision it is Abdul Wahid, no matter how poor his leadership skills and how chaotic and unreliable his negotiating style. Minni's Zaghawa are at most 8% of the population of Darfur and are themselves divided; Abdul Wahid's Fur, historic rulers of the Sultanate which gives Darfur its name, comprise 26-30% and are more cohesive. If either man has support outside his own tribe, it is Abdul Wahid. Not one of Abdul Wahid's key negotiators at the inter-Sudanese peace

talks in Abuja was Fur; Minawi's, by contrast, were all Zaghawa.

Senior diplomats on both sides of the Atlantic admit privately that Abdul Wahid's demands are reasonable – an increase in the pathetic \$30 million (6% of its annual oil revenue) that the government has put in the Darfur Compensation Fund; better safeguards for Darfurians attempting to return to their villages, many of which have been occupied by settlers from other tribes; and more seats in Darfur's three state legislatures so that those who were excluded from the Abuja talks – most importantly the Arab tribes from which most *Janjaweed* are recruited – can be brought into the peace with less incentive to disrupt it from outside. But Abdul Wahid has been told, in no uncertain fashion, that the DPA cannot be re-opened. The process, in other words, is more important than the peace.

The SLA chairman is being ordered to make a leap of faith – not because the peace agreement cannot be improved upon, but because it has been decided that the time for talking is up. The DPA has many strong points but it also has several weaknesses – any one of which could prove fatal. There is insufficient detail about the implementation of a number of key issues; a reliance in many areas of implementation on a government which no one trusts; an absence of any accountability mechanism or human rights monitoring. In essence, Abdul Wahid and the people of Darfur are being told to put aside these concerns and to trust in assurances that the international community will ensure implementation.

But why should they trust the international community? Why should they be impressed that the ruling National Congress Party has just committed to disarm the *Janjaweed* for the seventh time in two years? Why should they believe that we will punish Khartoum for violating a

seventh agreement when it has done nothing to punish it for violating the first six? What is different this time around?

Abdul Wahid may perhaps not be forgiven for assurances given and then retracted at Abuja, but we must understand why he doubts our good faith now. We must also remember the lesson of Iraq: without the people, the peace we are seeking to impose on them will not be a peace.

On 16 May, two courageous human rights lawyers – Adam Mohamed Shareif and Mossaad Mohamed Ali, coordinator of the Amel Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture in Nyala, the state capital of South Darfur – were detained by the National Security Agency and were held incommunicado, at risk of torture, for four days even though the authorities are supposed to allow the UN unrestricted access to all detainees in Darfur. Khartoum is already violating the DPA. In the days since the agreement was signed, severe new restrictions have been imposed on journalists seeking to report from Darfur. What is it that Khartoum is attempting to hide from the world now? Presumably not diligent implementation of the DPA.

The silence of the international community to Khartoum's latest abuses is deafening. Is there any wonder that Abdul Wahid, himself a lawyer who worked in the field of human rights before taking up arms, trusts us as little as we, apparently, trust him?

One week remains before the AU's latest deadline expires and Abdul Wahid is either in or out of the peace. If he is out, there should be no doubt that many – perhaps most – Darfurians will be out with him. If he is in, there is still no guarantee that the agreement will bring a lasting peace. The government in Khartoum today is the same government that launched a genocidal holy war in the Nuba Mountains and killed many tens

of thousands of people in southern Sudan in order to satisfy its lust for oil dollars with which to arm itself against its own citizens. Western leaders who have decided to let the SLA chairman stew are no doubt hoping that some of those dollars will be used to attempt to buy his support for peace. If they are wrong and he cannot be bought, they, more than he, must be held responsible for the many deaths that will follow.

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## Explaining the Darfur Peace Agreement

*Justice Africa*

### **An Open Letter to Those Members of the Movements who are Still Reluctant to Sign, from the African Union Moderators**

We are writing this open letter to our dear friends and colleagues in the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army and Justice and Equality Movement, who are hesitating to support the Darfur Peace Agreement that was presented by the African Union Mediation to the Parties on 25 April, and which was enhanced with the support of the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and the European Union, and signed by Dr. Magzoub el Khalifa on behalf of the Government of

Sudan and Mr. Minni Arkoy Minawi on behalf of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army, on 5 May.

Although we are members of the Mediation Team in Abuja, we are writing this as individuals who are deeply concerned with the situation in Darfur and committed to bringing about peace. We are concentrating on the actual paragraphs of the Darfur Peace Agreement, explaining its provisions, rather than exploring the wider political context and choices facing the leaders of the Movements.

We believe that the Darfur Peace Agreement represents a good deal for the Movements and for the people of Darfur. It is not perfect and it does not meet all the aspirations of the Movements. But it is a very strong deal in each of three main areas: power-sharing, wealth-sharing and security arrangements. And the Darfur Peace Agreement has stronger guarantees for implementation than any other peace agreement in this African continent.

In this open letter, let us explain some of the most important provisions of the Darfur Peace Agreement. We believe that many of the suspicions about this Agreement are based on misunderstanding and the fact that many of you have not had time to study the text in detail, and understand what it provides.

The Darfur Peace Agreement does not demand that anyone gives up on their political demands. The SLM and JEM are still able to pursue their political objectives, by peaceful means, and they still have the opportunity to gain power in Darfur and establish governments at the level of State and Region, through democratic processes. At the moment you have nothing. Everything in the Agreement is a gain, and if you obtain the support of the people, you can gain still more.

## Power-Sharing

A basic principle of the DPA is compromise. The Movements did not win the war and were not in a position to dictate their terms. The Government is in power and has no intention of handing over that power at the negotiating table. The Movements did not control a single state capital and controlled very few sizeable towns. The Mediation squeezed many concessions out of the Government. But we would never have been able to squeeze the Government so hard that it agreed to hand over a majority of control at any level of government.

If we could not find a means to provide the Movements with majority control of government structures in Darfur, what did we do for them? What the Darfur Peace Agreement does is create new structures especially for Darfur. Our solution to this problem was to set up a new position in the Presidency, a new Regional Authority with six subsidiary bodies, and enable the Movements to have at least equal representation in these. The purpose of all these bodies is to implement the Darfur Peace Agreement. Most of these bodies are directly supported by the international community. Most of them are transitional: they will be dismantled in a few years when their job is done. But in three years time, elections will be held. Whoever wins those elections, governs Darfur. A year after that, a referendum is held for the people of Darfur to decide whether Darfur should be a region or three states. The future will be decided democratically, depending on the decision of the people.

### Let us go into some more detail on the DPA proposals for power sharing

The central proposal is the creation of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority (TDRA). The TDRA is headed by a Chairperson, who is also the Senior

Assistant to the President, and the fourth-ranking person in the Presidency. His competencies are equal to those of a Vice President.

The TDRA has eleven members. The Senior Assistant to the President, who is chosen by the Movements, is the Chairperson. The three Governors are members – one from the Movements, two from the Congress Party. But the majority of members are the heads of the new bodies set up:

- The Darfur Rehabilitation and Resettlement Commission;
- The Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund;
- The Darfur Land Commission;
- The Darfur Security Arrangements Implementation Commission;
- The Darfur Peace and Reconciliation Council; and
- The Darfur Compensation Commission.

In each case, the Senior Assistant to the President will nominate who is to be appointed. The heads of these Commissions should be individuals of integrity who enjoy the confidence of all Darfurians. This means that the TDRA has eight members nominated by the Movements and two by the National Congress Party.

Examine for a moment the powers, competencies and resources available to the four Commissions, the Fund and the Council that fall under the TDRA. These are the bodies that will determine the real fate of the people of Darfur, which will decide how the key questions of rehabilitation and resettlement, reconstruction and development, land and compensation are decided.

The Security Arrangements Implementation Commission will oversee the integration of the Movements' combatants, the disarming of the *Janjaweed* and other militia, and the downsizing of the Popular Defence Forces. The DSAIC is also responsible for a thorough-going reform of the Police. Within it is a Security Advisory Team from a foreign country or an international organisation. And it is to be chaired by a person of integrity who enjoys the confidence of all, who will be a nominee of the Movements, with the Movements and the Government equally represented under the Chairperson.

These bodies will be well-funded. The DRDF in particular will have resources that completely dwarf what is available to states. The GoS has agreed to fund the DRDF to the tune of \$300 million this year and \$200 million for each of the following two years. How many times greater is this than the budget of a State Government? And that is just the GoS contribution: the international donors are likely to double the amount, at the minimum. Already, contributions are being offered.

The head of the DRDF is nominated by the Movements. He reports to the TDRA which has eight out of ten members nominated by the Movements. And the President of Sudan is required to consult with the Senior Assistant to the President on every decision relating to Darfur.

The Movements demanded a Region for Darfur. The Darfur Peace Agreement does not give a Region today. But it sets up a process whereby the people of Darfur can vote to set up a Region. After four years there is a referendum that allows every Darfurian to vote for or against the creation of a region. Any Darfur Region will have the borders of Darfur as of 1 January 1956, one of the Movements' central demands.

If we turn to the State Governments, here the Movements enjoy significant repre-

sentation, but it is short of a majority. One of the three Governors is from the Movements, and the deputy Governors of the two other states. In each state, two of the eight ministers are from the Movements. The NCP has about 50% of the seats in the State Legislatures, with the Movements getting about 30% and the balance with the other parties including the SPLM. In six of the localities, the Movements nominate the Commissioner; in another six, they nominate the Executive Director. Clearly the Movements do not get a majority in the Darfur States, either in the executive or the legislature. But one Governor is a Movement nominee too.

But, dear friends in the Movements, reflect on the comparative power and respective roles of the States and the TDRA. They are designed to do different things. The States continue to function with routine activities such as health and education. It is the TDRA that is responsible for the things that the displaced people, the victims of war, and the members of the Movements themselves, care most about.

What happens if the States try to block the programmes of the TDRA? At the specific request of the Movements, we built in a mechanism for breaking the deadlock and overcoming any such obstructionism. The matter is referred to the Presidency. And the President is required to consult the Senior Assistant to the President on all matters relating to Darfur.

This arrangement is in place for three years. Then there are elections and the winner governs. Many in the Movements are fearful that the Congress Party will use its influence to win those elections even though the people of Darfur's true loyalties may be elsewhere. But consider that the elections will be monitored and international donors have promised extensive funds for the SLM to transform itself into a political party and campaign

in the elections. Before leaving Power-Sharing, let us briefly examine four other issues. One is the post of Senior Assistant to the President. This is not the Vice Presidential post that the Movements demanded. In fact, it has more competencies. A Vice President functions at the request of the President. This position of Senior Assistant is specifically designed to have powers over Darfur. He will be the fourth-ranking member of the Presidency.

A second point is representation in Khartoum. Paragraph 89 provides that one minister in Khartoum State should be a nominee of the Movements.

An additional question is representation in the civil service. Here, a Panel of Experts under the National Civil Service Commission is to determine the correct representation of Darfurians, using the criteria of population size, affirmative action, and precedents (the Comprehensive Peace Agreement). This has to be done within a year. In the meantime, the Government is required to take action to put Darfurians in senior positions across the civil service.

Related to this is the provision for education in paragraphs 86-88. There is a quota for Darfurians to be represented in universities, both in Darfur and in Khartoum. And education for Darfurians is to be free.

Lastly, we must mention the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation. This will be an opportunity for every Darfurian voice to be heard, for all those who have not been at the table in the peace process to come and join in the peace process during its most important phase, which is implementation.

## Wealth-Sharing

Turning to Wealth-Sharing, there is less to explain. The great majority of the text was agreed by the Movements. There are three key issues to elucidate.

1. One of these issues is how much money is to be transferred from central government to the states, through the Fiscal and Financial Allocation Monitoring Commission (FFAMC). The FFAMC has been set up but has not yet completed its formula. Mindful of this delay, the DPA proposes that a panel of experts is appointed to work out a formula to enable the government to make an allocation from the National Revenue Fund to the States.
2. The second issue has been the seed money for the Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund (DRDF). On this issue the DPA provides US\$300 million for the year 2006 and US\$200 million for 2007 and 2008 respectively. These amounts will be adjusted after the Joint Assessment Mission outcome and recommendations. Already donor governments have committed themselves to literally hundreds of millions of additional dollars for this fund and a big donor conference has been scheduled for September in Holland.
3. Finally we have the most controversial issue of all: compensation for victims. Fourteen paragraphs in the DPA – from 199 to 213 – provide the details for setting up a Compensation Commission. Agreement on this was reached only at the last moment, against strenuous opposition from the Government. The Government has agreed to \$30 million as its first payment. Let us repeat: the DPA includes compensation. Let us repeat again: the Movements' demand for a Compensation Commission has been met. This is a victory for the Movements.

## Security Arrangements

For the Movements, the security arrangements are the strongest part of the document. The first section of the Security Arrangements chapter is a comprehensive ceasefire and transitional security arrangements. The core of this is three phases over five months. In stage one, the Parties disengage their forces, to their respective areas of control. Demilitarized zones are created along humanitarian supply routes and around camps for internally displaced persons, and in buffer zones that separate the forces of the Parties.

In the coming months, the GoS is required to neutralize the *Janjaweed* armed militia. Given that the GoS has been slow in proposing its plan for how to do this, the DPA has done most of the work of developing this plan. The first step is that all *Janjaweed*, militia and PDF must be confined to their camps, strictly designated areas or their own communities. Then all heavy weapons must be taken from them. Read Paragraphs 314-317. This is all to be verified by AMIS before the Movements are asked to withdraw their forces. There is also a special provision that they cannot be active in areas where civilians live or where the Movements are asked to redeploy their forces, in paragraphs 366-368.

At long last, there is a clear plan for dealing with the problem of the *Janjaweed*. This is another victory for the Movements' negotiators in Abuja.

The DPA also includes extensive measures for providing security to IDP camps including the creation of a community police force, which acts as a temporary guarantee of the safety of IDPs until such time as normality is restored.

The second section of the Security Arrangements is the long-term question of the final status of security in Darfur. This includes three main pillars, organised

under a new institution which we are calling the Darfur Security Arrangements Implementation Commission, which is to be supported by a Security Advisory Team.

The first pillar is provisions for integrating former combatants from the Movements into the Sudan Armed Forces and other security services. This section is remarkably strong: 4,000 former combatants into the army, 1,000 into other security institutions, and 3,000 for special programmes of assistance and education. Read paragraphs 399-416 for the details.

Equally important is a robust mechanism for disarming the *Janjaweed* and other armed militia. The obligation on the GoS to disarm the *Janjaweed*, contained in UN Security Council Resolution 1556, is given concrete form in Paragraph 457. Let us repeat: the Darfur Peace Agreement sticks to the principle that the *Janjaweed* must be disarmed, and creates a practical process whereby this can be accomplished.

The third pillar is the reform of selected security institutions in Darfur, specifically those that have been expanded during the war as paramilitary branches of the army, such as the PDF and Border Intelligence. The aim is to return these to their normal size and function. (Paragraph 429.) Alongside this, the civilian police is to have its capacity built so that it can become the instrument of law enforcement in Darfur.

## Guarantees

Most of the members of the Movements are deeply worried that the Government will not implement this agreement fairly and faithfully. You fear that implementation will lag behind or be blocked. You are looking for guarantees. The DPA in fact has some of the strongest guarantees of any peace agreement of recent times. There are four layers of guarantee.

The first and the most important guarantee is the sequence of the implementation of the agreement itself. The Movements are not required to lay down their arms until the Sudan Armed Forces have withdrawn to its garrisons and the *Janjaweed* and other militia have been brought under strict control and disarmed. If the Government doesn't stick to its obligations, then the armed forces of the SLM do not have to do their part: they don't have to redeploy, or assemble, or disarm, until they are sure that the Government has done what it promises. Overall, the Agreement also has a Darfur Assessment and Evaluation Commission and the deadlock-breaking mechanisms of referring matters to the Presidency, where the Senior Assistant to the President has to be involved in every decision relating to Darfur.

The second guarantee is the monitoring mechanisms of AMIS and the Ceasefire Commission. The Agreement strengthens all of these. Every stage needs to be verified. And we must not overlook one of the most important facts about this Agreement: now it is place, it is possible for the UN to send a force to Darfur. All of these mechanisms will be much stronger if the UN is involved. The DPA provides a Security Advisory Team from an international partner.

The third layer of guarantee is international mechanisms at the African Union and the UN. This Agreement does not supercede any of the existing UN Security Council Resolutions relating to Darfur. There will be resolutions at the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council supporting it, and Resolution 1591, which provides for individuals who obstruct the peace process to be subjected to individual sanctions, can also be applied to individuals who obstruct the implementation of the DPA. Darfur will remain on the agenda of the Security Council until this agreement is fully implemented and normality has returned.

Lastly, there are the bilateral guarantees of the international partners. There is no conflict in the world that has obtained more international attention than Darfur, and this will continue. There is no peace agreement that has obtained greater international recognition. The President of the United States, George W. Bush, wrote personal letters to both Abdel Wahid Nour and Minni Minawi, assuring them both that he would do his utmost to ensure the faithful implementation of the Agreement.

What more guarantees could one have? One cannot go higher than the UN Security Council and the President of the United States. These are stronger guarantees than were provided to the CPA, stronger than any other peace process in Africa today.

In summary, we firmly believe that many of the reasons why members of the SLM and JEM have hesitated in accepting the Darfur Peace Agreement, are not based on an accurate reading of the actual text of the Agreement. It is understandable that many people have not had the time to read and analyse this long and complicated document fully. We hope that this open letter enables you to better understand how the DPA does indeed meet the core demands and concerns of the Movements, and can be the basis for a just and lasting peace in Darfur.

Yours very sincerely,

*Sam Ibok, Boubou Niang, Nouredine Mezni, Alex de Waal, Abdul Mohammed, Dawit Toga (www.justiceafrica.org).*

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## New Saharawi Poetry: A Brief Anthology

*Liman Boicha (Generación de la Amistad)*

To have a better understanding of Saharawi contemporary poetry, written in Spanish, it is necessary to start talking about the context in which it emerges and develops. This poetry of ours is very recent; it has just been taken from the oven and can only be eaten as a tender piece of bread. What we, the poets who form the 'Generación de la Amistad' (Friendship Generation), have in common is that we write in Spanish. But, why such a name, why the Friendship Generation? Because it is thanks to friendship that we have survived, and that we could also study. We have all lived the same experience: the exodus from our homeland, Western Sahara, caused by the Moroccan occupation; then, the exile. Later, the second exile, more than exile, was an opportunity, a grant to study in Cuba.

To this Caribbean country we arrived very young, only 11 or 12 years, and we stayed there for more than ten years without coming back. In Cuba, we grew and during all this time, and despite the distance, and the cultural differences, we never felt foreigners. If during the first years we missed our families, once with a University degree, our nostalgia was for the Caribbean, the Cuban friends, the girlfriend, the beach, the salsa, and especially the Cuban sense of humour, so lively, sharp and contagious. The return was voluntary, but brusque.

During many years, one after another, one forgets the rigours of the desert, the dramatic situation of a refugee, one forgets the sounds of the war that haunted us and still haunts us, the traditions, the lost of fluency in our mother tongue, *Hassania*; and as we left at a very early age, one has to start learning

again many things left behind in our infancy. Things such as taboos.

One feels a stranger in his own family, the customs are more rigid in contrast to the spontaneous character that we assimilated in the Caribbean.

In this situation, lots of existential questions arise, doubts about the identity of the 'self' and the 'us' as a collective identity. On our return, many doubts emerge. Confusion. But when one has the opportunity to travel to Tiris, that splendid and calm land in the south of Western Sahara, land of poets or 'girlfriend of poets' as a friend of mine would say, land of pastures ... Land of our ancestors, 'Sons of the Clouds', that inspires to meditate ... land that overwhelms with its immortal beauty. There, one reconciles with itself, with his 'identities' that, in fact, are just one. And in the middle of such a panorama, the poetry battles to surface. And it emerges ... with its mixtures and with its strange hybrid taste of the Caribbean and the desert.

And although for some this sounds like an impossible blend, for us is something normal, a product of the abnormal circumstances that we have lived in and we still suffer from.

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**Editor's Note:** The following poems are part of a collection compiled by Pablo San Martín and translated by Lucy Frankel and Antonio Martínez Arboleda (*Mi Mundo, Añoranzas, A la Deriva, Venías, Acuarela* and *Tiris* by Ali Salem Iselmu) and Jill Coperland (*Tiris* by Luali Leshan and *Mitología*).

## Zahra el Hasnaoui Ahmed

### Voces

*A las voces saharauis secuestradas en  
tumbas y cárceles*

Quizá pienses que tu voz no me llega,  
que el malvado siroco la rapta  
antes de llenar mis sentidos.

Quizá sueñes que el eco es mudo  
el espejo ciego y los versos  
se acobardan.

Se agolpan tus clones,  
y alborotados pugnan  
por salir en blanco y  
negro de mi garganta.

A veces escupo,  
casi siempre embucho,  
ira, sangre,  
paz, tierra.

Quisiera encadenar  
tus manos a las mías,  
el techo oscuro  
abrir a las estrellas.  
Quisiera, los ojos,  
limpiar de rabia.

Treinta voces,  
Treinta veces,  
repiten la historia,  
porque nadie pudo,  
nada puede domar  
las voces que rozan el alma.

### Voices

*To the Saharawi voices abducted in jails  
and graves*

May you think  
your voice reaches me not.

May you fear  
the wicked wind hushed it,  
before it filled up my senses.

May you dream  
of muted echoes  
and mirrors blinded.

Your words  
choke my throat  
in their way out  
in black and white.  
I sometimes manage to spit  
but almost always swallow  
rage, blood, land, peace.  
I wish to chain  
your hands  
to mine,  
the gloomy ceiling  
open to the stars.

I wish I could  
lave the wrath  
in your guiltless eyes.

Thirty mouths  
chanted history,  
as nobody could  
nothing can tame  
the soul-touching voices.

## Liman Boicha

### Mitología

*Los años son un pozo de memorias*  
(Mario Benedetti)

Mi padre me dijo:  
'Yo nací en año  
de los dientes verdes  
de los dromedarios'

Ahora yo me pregunto:  
¿Qué hemos hecho de nuestros años,  
tan lejanos y estrechos?

¿Cayeron malbaratados  
entre el olvido de la tradición  
y la sed de las dunas?

¿Se esfumaron en el aire  
como haces de leña?

Buscad en la poesía,  
huesos de la memoria,  
como nuestros antepasados.

Nuestros años son versos,  
como una lluvia de estrella  
scomo la hermosa yerba  
o el parto de las abejas.

Estos son nuestros años  
abandonados  
esqueletos trágicos,  
como grandes tormentas  
como una lluvia roja  
o un vendaval de langostas.  
Y no son estos otros  
Incipientes y artificiales  
que ahora colgamos  
del almanaque  
de nuestros sueños.

### Mythology

*The years are a well of memories*  
(Mario Benedetti)

My father said to me:  
'I was born in the year  
of the dromedary's green teeth'.

Now I ask myself:  
What have we done with the years,  
So distant and yet so close?

Did they fall, squandered,  
between forgotten traditions  
and the thirty dunes?

Did they fade in the air  
like burning firewood?

In the poetry we look for  
the bones of memory,  
for our ancestors.

The years are verses,  
like a downpour of stars  
like the magnificent grass  
of the labour of the bees.

These are our years,  
abandoned  
tragic skeletons,  
like a great storm  
like the red rain  
or a plague of locusts.  
And not those other years,  
embryonic and artificial,  
that we now hang  
from the almanac  
of our dreams.

## **Moroccan Autonomy for the Western Sahara: A Solution to a Decolonisation Conflict or a Prelude to the Dismantling of a Kingdom?**

*Malainin Lakhali, Ahmed Khalil & Pablo San Martin*

The Moroccan king, Mohamed VI, recently visited the territories of the Western Sahara under Moroccan occupation to promote a plan of 'autonomy' for the territory, as a 'political solution' to the last colonial conflict in the African continent still open in the UN agenda.

The autonomy idea is not new at all; it was first proposed in 1974 by Spain, and again by the Moroccan king Hassan II in the eighties and nineties, being rejected both times not only by the Saharawi party in the conflict, the Polisario Front, but also by the international community, which clearly defined the territory of the Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing territory that must be subjected to a decolonisation process (which according to the UN Charter must entail a free and fair self-determination referendum with independence as an option).

In 2001, James Baker, then UN Secretary General personal envoy to the Western Sahara, drafted also a preliminary proposal based around the same idea of autonomy, but such a possibility was immediately rejected by the Security Council. The final Baker Plan, endorsed unanimously by the Security Council in 2003 and defined by the Secretary General as the 'optimum political solution' to the conflict, despite introducing the possibility of Moroccan settlers to take part in the referendum, established clearly that independence should be an option in the referendum. Thus, the current Moroccan proposal far from in-

roducing some fresh air to a stagnant peace process sounds more like just a desperate repetition of failed old formulas, which, in addition, collide with the UN decolonisation doctrine.

But, the question is not whether or not 'autonomy' is a legal and acceptable solution to a decolonisation issue. This is only half of the question. The main issue, if we analyse the proposal (in 'realpolitik' terms, if one wants to use such a fashionable term) is perhaps the following: Is autonomy a consistent, feasible and reasonable proposal to be presented by a strongly centralist multi-ethnic State and an unstable system such as the Moroccan?

Many elements, if analysed in detail, reveal that the plan of autonomy, aired by the Moroccan regime, after 30 years of failed attempts to 'legalise' an illegal occupation, after a year repressing a real and increasingly influential Saharawi popular uprising and the progressive diplomatic and political reinforcement of the Saharawi Republic (recently recognised by South Africa, Kenya and Uruguay), is no more than a new Moroccan tactical move aimed at diverting once more the attention of an international community, which is increasingly alarmed by the human right situation in the occupied territories of the Western Sahara (as the SG acknowledges in his last report to the Security Council). It is also a Moroccan 'move' intended to gain an extra time hoping to succeed in its old attempt to destroy the Polisario Front, the only internationally recognised and legitimate representative of the Saharawi people.

The Moroccan plan is impossible because of many constitutional, legal, economical, historical, ethnic and geographical factors that make of it not only an additional waste of time for the Saharawi people and the international community but, and more dangerously, an adventure that may destroy the Mo-

roccan State if Rabat is really determined to impose it on its colony. It is a road to perdition that will only contribute to destabilise an already unstable regime with a rising republican Islamist movement, an economy that does not grow enough to generate employment for an increasing population, and sharp social tensions. One has the impression that such an adventure can only be the result of bad royal advisors or perhaps advisors with an agenda the inexperienced Moroccan king has not still managed to grasp. In the following paragraphs, we will draft some of the main obstacles to the proposal:

### **Constitutional & Economic Obstacles to the Idea of Autonomy**

First of all, what kind of autonomy can a regime, widely considered as a dictatorship, or at least generally acknowledged to have very weak and precarious social and political (democratically elected) institutions, like the Moroccan, offer to the Saharawis?

In current Morocco, despite the modernising façade of the king, there are still several taboos and lines that can not be crossed, such as the (peaceful and public) questioning of the Monarchy, which still entails jail sentences for those who dare to cross it. However, the idea of autonomy does not have sense at all if the regional institutions are not democratic and can guaranty the normal participation in the political life of all kind of political parties and organisations, including those which peacefully advocate for independence or in favour of a Moroccan Republic. The only red line should be the employment of terrorism with political objectives, but apart from that, in a truly democratic autonomy, there should not be any limit to the political debate (including debate about religious issues, such as the role of the king as maximum religious authority). This will obviously require not only

a radical constitutional change but also a shift in the current civic culture promoted by the dominant Moroccan elites (which is very far from the promotion of a culture of open, fair and democratic exchange, especially with regard to the 'Sahara question'). Is Rabat prepared to accept such a challenge? Will the Monarchy survive such an open debate?

The Spanish case has been named in several occasions by some Moroccan politicians as an example of decentralisation and autonomy, mentioning specifically the cases of the Canary Islands, the Basque Country, Andalusia or Catalonia, as possible models. Is Morocco prepared to have, like in Catalonia, an openly separatist and republican party (Ezquerria Republicana de Catalunya) controlling – as part of a wider coalition – the autonomic government?

Is Rabat willing to grant to the hypothetical 'Saharawi regional government' the same level of financial independence of Spanish regions such as the Basque Country and Navarre (which, in a few words, consists in these regions having their own taxing agencies and autonomy over these resources and to negotiate periodically with the State an amount – called 'the quota' – to 'pay' in exchange for the services provided in these regions by the few remaining central institutions)?

Is Rabat prepared to accept a Saharawi nationalist and republican autonomic government (if the electorate decides so, in free and fair elections monitored by the UN), to allow these government to control the natural resources of the territory (fisheries, oil, phosphates, etc.) and then to negotiate with them 'the quota' of, for example, the benefits of a hypothetical fishing agreement with the EU, with which the regional government will contribute to the funding of the central state? Obviously, all these issues regarding the nature and functioning of a hypothetical Saharawi autonomy, men-

tioned as just an illustration, can only be addressed in the context of a profound reformulation of the basic foundations of the Moroccan state as a whole and have implications that exceed the 'southern provinces' question. Is it possible to articulate in the same regime a Spanish-style autonomy in the Sahara (possibly with republican and separatist parties controlling a regional assembly, whose free and fair elections should be monitored and safeguarded by the UN) combined with a central Moroccan government in the rest of the state (where the 'red lines' will persist, such as for example the prohibition of regionalist parties)? No credible autonomic project for the Western Sahara seems feasible without a radical reformulation of the foundations of the Moroccan state as a whole and such reformulation far from stabilising the region will probably generate a period of openness and uncertainty that will be very difficult to manage for the young monarch and his team.

A second issue, closely related to the previous one, is the economic implications of the plan. Is Rabat prepared to give to a democratically elected Saharawi government real control over the economic resources of the territory? The economic potential of the Western Sahara territory after the resolution of the conflict is very promising, with rich fisheries, phosphates, tourist potential and most probably also oil reserves, similar to the ones recently discovered in Mauritania. If the answer to the previous question is positive, what are the gains Rabat will expect to get from those resources? If a Saharawi government controls such resources, how and who will decide the Saharawi contribution to the general budget of the Moroccan state? What will be the reaction of the real Moroccan regions (of those non contested parts of the kingdom, where nevertheless the regional identities are also very strong), and ethnic groups, when they will see how the 'rebellious' southern 'subjects of the king' are 're-

warded' not only with a wide autonomy but also with the control of a significant amount of the natural resources of the kingdom, while the obedient Moroccans of the Suss, Zayane, Rif, Chraga, Fas – dispossessed from the wealth of the 'southern provinces', are still maintained under the grasp of the same regime that governs them from Rabat?

Will Rabat give up its centralist control over the country, rewrite from scratch its Constitution and give all the other regions the same sort of autonomy as the Western Sahara? And if not, why? That solution would mean the recognition in the Constitutional text of two different concepts of citizenship: one for the 'Saharawi Moroccans' and another one for the 'simply Moroccans', which will entail different rights.

It is relevant to note here that the Spanish autonomic state is articulated upon the recognition of the equality of all the citizens and the possibility of all the regions to have the same level of self-government. Although the level of self-rule in the Basque Country and Catalonia is higher than in other regions, this only depends on the demands of each of the 17 autonomic governments (which obviously are higher in those autonomies where the nationalist parties are stronger). Will the Western Sahara be the only 'autonomy' in Morocco or will be Morocco a regional / federal state? Will all the regions, autonomies or federate states have the same level of self-government? Will there be mechanisms to guarantee the 'solidarity' between the autonomies with more and less economic resources? This is a crucial question with deep implications regarding the control of the natural resources of the Western Sahara in practical terms, not just a theoretical reflection about the nature of the state.

On the other hand, if Morocco becomes a regional, autonomic or federal state, another crucial point emerges: are the geo-

graphical borders of each region clear? This leads to a second block of obstacles.

### Historical, Geographical & Ethnical Obstacles

Going back to the Western Sahara, where is the autonomy to be implemented, geographically speaking? In the internationally defined borders of the Spanish former colony or in a supposed 'historical Western Sahara' that includes the southern cities of Morocco (Tan Tan-Gulmim-Assa, part of the Spanish Sahara until the late 1950s)? Will it also include the population of the whole Moroccan south, who were presented by the Moroccan regime as 'ethnic Saharawis' during the UN's operation of identification of the Saharawi candidates to vote in the old-promised referendum of self-determination?

The main Moroccan argument against a list of voters for the self-determination referendum based on the Spanish census of 1974 has traditionally been that this census did not include the 'Saharawi tribes' of southern Morocco. In fact, the appeals to the final list elaborated by the Identification Commission of the UN come mostly from supposed Saharawis from this so-called 'Tarfaya strip'. Therefore, any credible autonomy within Morocco should not be limited to the borders of the Spanish Sahara but extended to the Tan Tan-Gulmim-Assa axis, if Rabat does not want to deny its own argumentation and strategy during the whole identification process. If the Tarfaya strip is excluded from the Western Sahara autonomy, if the 'Saharawi tribal areas' of this region are not considered 'Saharawi enough' by Rabat for joining the Western Sahara region, then the problems regarding the identification process would be immediately resolved since the list based on the Spanish census is already finished.

Rabat's orientalist perception of the south promotes a tribalist vision of Saharawi

society and denies the modern Saharawi collective identity that emerged within the colonial borders of the Spanish Sahara. As we have said, if Rabat accepts to implement autonomy only in the territory of the former Spanish Sahara, its entire argumentation to reject the census elaborated by the UN would collapse. But, if on the other hand, Rabat attempts to redrawn the frontiers of the Western Sahara in order to include all the 'Saharawi tribes' of the south, this will open an extremely explosive situation. Will the 'new' Western Sahara include *all* the 'Saharawi tribes'? If the ergueibat 'territory' from southern Morocco is to be part of the Western Sahara region, what will be the reason not to demand also the inclusion of the ergueibat 'territory' of Algeria and Mauritania? Will all the hassania speaking tribes - from Morocco, the Western Sahara, Mauritania, Algeria and Mali - the people of *trab el Bidan*, be candidates as well to integrate the new Western Sahara? These are all very sensitive questions that the Moroccan plan will need to address carefully, in a continent that has decided to respect the colonial frontiers to avoid territorial conflicts in the post-colonial era. If Morocco wants to avoid the problems that a 'tribal' delimitation of the territory to be autonomous would generate, the autonomic project should be limited to the borders of the former Spanish colony. The paradox is that if it does so, as we have said, the whole argumentation to challenge the current list of voters based on the Spanish census of 1974 will collapse.

For all the above reasons, among many others, the announced autonomic plan is a bomb that will explode as soon as the first details of the 'autonomy' were clearly explained by Rabat. It is probable, however, that the Moroccan Government is only manoeuvring to escape the international pressures and that, in fact, there is no plan at all. Up to now, Morocco has done its best to gain time by keeping the details of its 'plan' secret, while increas-

ing its attacks and propaganda war against the Saharawi political organisation, Polisario Front, in an attempt to break the Saharawi unity. The meeting of the Security Council last April was a golden opportunity for Morocco to make public its autonomy plan and try to score a goal by introducing a new element in the debate.

But the plan remains secret ... Is there a plan after all? Or the plan is just to talk about the plan? And if there is a plan how is it going to address all the issues mentioned before? Morocco will be under pressure in the following months to make public its so vehemently aired definitive solution to the dispute. If Rabat does not manage not only to delineate the contours of the future autonomy but also to explain all the details, all the small print of its autonomic proposal, it will definitely lost its remaining credibility. If the proposal is only for a limited autonomy (far from the so many times mentioned Spanish-model) and the 'red lines' (that prevent free press, free speech and free political activism) persist, the plan will not be credible as a democratic option of autonomy to solve the conflict. If the plan is brave enough to address some of the most problematic issues, mentioned before, it will require a radical reformulation of the bases of the Moroccan state and will open a period of unmanageable uncertainty and tension in the region. Is autonomy the road to stability in the region? Will the autonomic route strengthen or weaken the Moroccan regime?

On the other hand, the autonomy proposal can also be seen as a turning point in the colonial tactics of the Moroccan system in the Western Sahara. Rabat has always tried to gain the blessing of the international community, but after 30 years of dispute, and as the UN Secretary General rightly acknowledged in his last report to the Security Council, no country in the world has officially recognised the Moroccan sovereignty over the Western

Sahara. The UN and all the big powers, including a France always willing to support Rabat, were unable to do so, because such recognition would blow up the last chances of maintaining the illusion about the existence of some sort of 'international legality'. The United Nations will never be able to support a plan for the Western Sahara without a referendum in which independence is one of the options, as the Secretary General made clear in his last report to the Security Council. Given the Moroccan rejection to include independence in the ballot papers (even in a referendum in which large numbers of Moroccan settlers would take part!) and the recognition by the Secretary General that the UN will not impose a solution to the parties (that is, that it will not force Morocco to accept the referendum), the position of the UN mission on the ground – MINURSO – seems unsustainable, even absurd. This is the context in which the Secretary General, siding with Rabat, Paris and Madrid, has suggested to the parties – Morocco and the Polisario Front – to negotiate directly and to take into account the 'realpolitik' that mark the situation. In other words, what the Secretary General has suggested in his report is that although the UN will never be able to support a plan such as the autonomic route since it collides with the basic principles of its own Charter, the parties can negotiate the implementation of such a solution at the margins of the UN. The problem is that, as we have explained, the autonomic route will probably mean desestabilisation, uncertainty and new conflicts, and perhaps also a definitive blow to the future of a Monarch that has promised too much and accomplished too little.

The only solution for Morocco seems to be the proposal a very limited and simply symbolic autonomy, completely void in political terms, which will reproduce and even reinforce the 'red lines' that have jeopardised the development of a free and democratic Morocco in the

last decades. The recent developments seem to point towards this direction. And they seem also not very well advised moves. As president of a recently created Royal Consultative Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) which will promote the idea of autonomy, a Council devised as the nucleus of the future regional government, the King has appointed Khalihenna ould Rachid. Khalihenna, a former Francoist agent, president of the PUNS, a puppet political party created by Spain to counteract the growing social support of the Polisario Front in the early 1970s, who later deserted to Morocco and became one of the strong men of Rabat in the territory and has been Mayor of El Aaiun since the early days of the Moroccan occupation 30 years ago ... does not sound like fresh air to resolve the conflict and lacks any credibility as a democrat, while, on the other hand, helps to clarify the real commitment of Rabat with the development of a truly democratic process towards a serious and credible regional autonomy for the Western Sahara. The autonomic plan will never have a serious content, if Rabat does not want to put at risk its own future as a state. But what in the following months Morocco will try to do is to find a Saharawi group (of Polisario dissidents or human right activists, for instance) to support its void autonomic proposal in order to create some confusion and delegitimise the Polisario Front as representative of the Saharawi people.

However, the questions remain the same: Is Morocco really thinking about a real and democratic autonomic system in the Western Sahara? If so, will the Regime survive the conflicts that such an autonomy will triggered? If there is no plan, for how long will be Rabat able to deceive the international community and how will be its credibility affected? If the plan is only for a limited, symbolic and ultimately void decentralisation, who will 'impose' it on the Saharawi party?

Autonomy more than an credible alternative for the definitive resolution of the Western Sahara dispute and the regional stability is a dangerous adventure that Rabat can not explore seriously without putting at serious risk the future of the very Kingdom. Perhaps the king is already tired of reigning.

*Malainin Lakhal*, Saharawi journalists' and Writers' Union; *Ahmed Khalil*, Saharawi writer and researcher; *Pablo San Martin*, Lecturer in Spanish, University of Leeds.

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## Open Letter to His Majesty Mohamed VI Palais Royal Rabat, Morocco 27 October 2005

*Your Majesty,*

*I feel the duty to address you, with the greatest respect and sincerity, as an old doctor who has spent most of his professional life in relieving the sufferings of others, both in Italy and in Africa, and as an old university professor who, over a forty year period, has taught many young people, also in four African countries. I wanted to address you, the Head of State of a nation for which I feel strong ties for various reasons, to express my viewpoint – I would not dare to call it my advice – concerning the dramatic events that have been happening in the territory of Western Sahara.*

*It is a sign of strength for a man, let alone a sovereign, not so much to conquer an enemy but to conquer himself. In other words, to recognize one's own mistakes, if they have*

been made, and to hold out a hand to the one who has suffered from them, even if this was not the intention. You know the history of your country very well and will remember that the Green March was nothing but astute propaganda by your deceased father to invade the former Spanish colony of Rio de Oro, which is rich in phosphates and has abundant fishery resources. You will remember that Morocco's claim over that territory was, to say the least, arguable (as if Italy should claim the territories bordering the Mediterranean, including Morocco, as they had been part of Ancient Rome). You will remember the bombardment of Saharaoui refugees fleeing towards Algeria and the guerrilla warfare that ensued, which was first denied – as always happens in such cases – and then blocked by a wall of over 2,400 kilometres (known as the 'Wall of Shame').

You will remember that the referendum to which the people had an unalienable right was first refused and then hindered by all kinds of excuses, then partially accepted and finally again completely refused. You will certainly know, even though the governmental press has never spoken about it, how many people have been assassinated, how many have been forcibly removed (there are still today more than 500 disappeared Saharaouis) and that only a few days ago a mass burial grave was discovered containing the corpses of 43 Saharaoui civilians, including the parents of the current Saharaoui Minister for Foreign Affairs.

There continue to be farcical trials, sentences to years of imprisonment (Mohamed Daddach, prisoner of conscience – 20 years of prison!). You will remember the existence of the so-called 'Secret Gardens', denied for years by your deceased father and then acknowledged when it was already too late because by then everyone knew of those shameful prisons as the news had gone round the world, seriously damaging the good name of Morocco. Kalaa M'gouna, Agdz (Tazmamart was reserved for Moroccans only) are names that conjure up horror, just to hear them.

Need I remind you of how many years (30!) that Saharaoui civilians have been subjected to outrages, offences, inhuman and degrading treatment (which degrade more those who commit it than those who receive it). I know that you made a courageous and generous gesture by setting up the 'Instance Equité et Réconciliation'. It was however only partially courageous: why could the torturers not be denounced? Torturers who still move around in all tranquillity today, and who can still mock their old victims, or threaten them, or torture them once again.

I should however remind you of the outbreak of the Saharaoui intifada last May and the violent repression by the armed forces of your government that followed. Many Saharaoui human rights militants were arrested, their homes destroyed and 37 of them went on a hunger strike that lasted 51 days! I mention this because perhaps you have not received the news, which is concealed behind all the lies propagated by the governmental news agency MAP and by your Minister of Justice. This hunger strike, after an interruption of twenty days, has now started up again, with a dignity and courage which is truly stupefying.

Imagine what strength and faith these Saharaoui must have to sacrifice the most precious thing for every human being, their own lives, in order to claim the right to independence of their people!

But you, Sire, may perhaps be even stronger than these people. Not by beating, torturing, imprisoning those who protest, not allowing those who are on a hunger strike to die slowly (and who will be for ever glorified by posterity), but by recognizing the errors that have been made by you and your government. Just think how you would be honoured, respected and sincerely venerated (and not, how it happens to you now, often through petty opportunism) and your shining image would remain in the story of the Maghreb if you humbly recognized the crime that started through the work of your deceased father, followed by yourself up until now. If you extended your hand to your Saharaoui

*brethren, recognizing their legitimate right to independence, letting them out of prison (and what a prison! The photos in which we can see how the Saharaoui detainees are treated are circulating around the world). Or at least start a genuine dialogue with their legitimate representatives (legitimacy acquired through the purity of their commitment) for an authentic peace process. To insist on continuing such a wrong path can only lead to more fighting, disasters and still more suffering for hundreds of thousands of people and create ever more hatred. And history will implacably point to those who are guilty, in spite of the smokescreen of propaganda lies that MAP is producing every day. If Ali Salem Tamek should die, how great would your own responsibility be! His brave and honest regard, which has never wavered in confronting his own responsibilities, and death itself, will persecute you for the rest of your life!*

*Be victorious over yourself, Sire. Think about it, look courageously at the problem from another point of view. Speak about it with your very beautiful wife. Perhaps a woman can understand these values better than a man.*

*Extend your august hand to the Saharaouis. By so doing you will obtain nothing but glory, nobility and eternal recognition. And peace will return to your heart and your realm, which will then be a really magnificent country. Believe me. It is the life experience of a doctor of over eighty years of age which leads me to say these things to you. Thank you for kindly reading these lines.*

**Professor Silvio Pampiglione, M.D., Ph.D.,** c/o Dipartimento di Sanità Pubblica Veterinaria and Patologia Animale, Università di Bologna, Via Tolara di Sopra 50, Ozzano Emilia (Bologna), Italy

In case this letter is not delivered to you, I am sending copies to the Italian Embassy in Rabat and to the Moroccan Embassy in Rome. If I do not receive your reactions in a reasonable length

of time I am going to send copies of my letter to some international newspapers and post it on the internet in the hope that the contents of this letter will reach you, at least through these channels.

The Italian Embassy in Rabat, 2 rue Idriss El Azhar, B.P. 111. Morocco. The Moroccan Embassy in Rome, Via L. Spallanzani 8, Italy.

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## A Stain on Medical Ethics

*Silvio Pampiglione*

A serious issue of medical ethics, recently raised in the *Lancet*,<sup>1/2</sup> is being brought up in countries with different degrees of dictatorial rule where governments have adopted the so called 'strategy of terror'.<sup>3</sup> In these countries medical doctors worry about the consequences of denouncing of what they have witnessed, for fear of loosing their jobs or, more scarily, of severe 'exemplary' punishments.

A current example comes from the Western Sahara (former Spanish colony illegally occupied by Morocco in 1975 and the last African country to date not yet de-colonised). Since May 2005 a violent repression from Moroccan police forces is taking place against the civilian Sahrawi population, which is peacefully asking for the independence of their region through a self-determination referendum approved by the United Nation as long ago as 1991. Sahrawi people are denouncing the continuing violation of human rights carried on for over 30 years by the occupation forces. Hundreds of protesters have being wounded, often very seriously (two of them died), hundreds have been arrested, torture of detainees is widespread, and the denial by judges to verify and accept as court evidence the injuries reported by the victims is common place.

The detainees are kept in filthy prisons, in appalling conditions of dirt and overcrowding (clandestine photos from the Carcel Negro of El Ayun have travelled around the world on the web). In spite of this, not a single report has been made by local doctors of the injuries they have detected on victims admitted to hospitals nor of the conditions of Sahrawi detainees. Moreover, during detention 37 Sahrawis have in protest carried out a hunger strike carried on for 51 days (they were nearly all about to die). No proper health care has been provided. Why such a deafening silence from the medical profession? The answer is one only: fear. It is the fear imposed by a government which, under the mask of a constitutional and parliamentary monarchy, is in reality a feudal regime by divine law.<sup>3</sup> To criticize, verbally on in writing, the King, 'an inviolable and sacred person', or express doubt about the 'morocconism' of Sahrawi territory brings about the risk, by law, of many years of jail,<sup>4</sup> or of disappearing in a 'royal secret garden'.

In fact, Western Sahara is virtually 'sealed' in a media blockade and an almost absolute territorial isolation. All of 9 foreign delegations which arrived to verify allegations circulated in the web have been expelled at the airport. Those few journalists or foreign observers who managed to penetrate the region have been arrested and sent back to their countries. Very few lawyers could attend as observers to a trial against 14 Sahrawi political detainees at El Ayoun. The country is almost in a state of siege from thousands of policemen, *ad hoc* remunerated hit-men, secret services and, in the latest weeks, soldiers too.

Fear is widespread both because of forced disappearances (mass graves have been recently discovered with the remains of over 40 Sahrawi *desaparecidos*) and more importantly because of torture. Torture is commonly practised, from street violence to more sophisticated and modern methods of inflicting torments, used not so

much to obtain confessions of non-existent crimes or extract information more or less true, but rather to create a climate of fear in the whole community and lead to an anguishing condition of social paralysis.<sup>5</sup> By generating a climate of terror, fear impacts on all individuals, including those with no genuine political interest, and influence doctors too, who could incur police retaliation should they contravene 'official versions' of the facts.

In such a country what can principled doctors do? A letter enquiring about doctors' behaviour, sent to the President of Morocco Medical Council has received no reply. What could my colleague in fact respond without risk to his personal safety?

As this issue is no doubt relevant to many other countries both in Africa and elsewhere, I believe it is worthwhile, in order to help the medical profession to overcome fear, to denounce such situations to the international public opinion as widely as possible. Only in this way will courageous doctors begin to feel some protection and will be encouraged to speak out about what they see, firstly anonymously, via the web, and then more openly, refusing to no longer accept any collusion with a police regime. 'By speaking out they would take an important step toward reclaiming their role as healers'.<sup>6</sup> They will no longer feel guilty when, looking in the mirror, they will not see any more 'the face of whom had cowardly accepted to become an accomplice through his own silence',<sup>7</sup> but the face of a true doctor. I thank the *Lancet* for hosting this appeal.

*Silvio Pampiglione*, MD, PhD, c/o Department of Veterinary Public Health, University of Bologna, 40064 Ozzano Emilia, Italy

## Endnotes

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**Editor's Note:** This Letter to the Editor was rejected by the *Lancet* for the following reasons: 'There are a number of possible reasons for rejection, including late submission (i.e, more than 2 weeks after publication of the article on which you are commenting, inclusion of original research (the section is not peer reviewed, so we cannot publish such work here), submission of case reports (we have a separate section for these), reiteration of points made by another correspondent and inappropriate length'.

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## Western Sahara: British Government to Fish in Illegal Waters

*War on Want, London*

The British Government has been condemned by War on Want and campaign groups from across Europe today for supporting a Fisheries Agreement that will allow European ships to fish off the coast of illegally occupied Western Sahara, despite claims that this violates international law. Sweden stood alone in opposing the Agreement though Finland, the Netherlands and Ireland conditioned their support with a statement

that the Agreement should benefit the 'local population' of Western Sahara. The Agreement, between the EU and Morocco, which has occupied Western Sahara for 30 years, will now go into effect after being ratified by the Moroccan Parliament. A European-wide coalition ([www.fishelsewhere.org](http://www.fishelsewhere.org)) has warned the European Commission that they could now face a legal challenge in the European courts. Last week the British Government's own MEPs in Parliament, along with the Green group and rebel MEPs, voted against the Agreement. Nick Dearden of the British anti-poverty campaign group War on Want, said:

*The British Government has shown exactly what it thinks of international law. A few thousand tons of fish is worth more to our Government than the rights of 165,000 refugees and the self determination of a people who currently live in the last colony in Africa. While the British Government has always claimed there was not enough political support to amend this Agreement, the stance of Sweden, together with many UK MEPs, has shown that it is possible to take a principled position in international politics.*

Carlos Wilson from Western Sahara Resources Watch, said:

*For 30 years 165,000 refugees have lived in camps in the Algerian desert because the international community has failed to act. Today the countries of the European Union have compounded 30 years of inaction, by happily stealing the resources of those refugees from under their noses.*

**Editor's Note:** As Nick Dearden says, 'European fishing corporations will be the real beneficiaries of this Agreement, together with the Moroccan Generals who control industry in Western Sahara'. We will continue this discussion in the next issue. ♦

NEW BOOK

*The Western Sahara Conflict: The Role of Natural Resources in Decolonization* by Claes Olsson (ed.), with Pedro Pinto Leite, Claes Olsson, Magnus Schöldtz, Toby Shelley, Pål Wrangé with contributions by Hans Corell and Karin Scheele

This book highlights also the question of the fishing rights in the Western Saharan coastal area, a very current question because of the newly negotiated fishing agreement between the European Union and Morocco.

Published by the Noridska African Institute in Uppsala, Sweden in cooperation with Global Publications Foundation (Stiftelsen Global Kunskap). ISBN: 91-7106-571-7 ISSN: 0280-2171 Price: 90 SEK/ 7.95 GBP/ 9 EURO; For more information see below or please visit our website <http://www.nai.uu.se/publ/publeng.html>

## Truth & Justice After a Brutal Civil War: Algeria – the Women Speak

*Wendy Kristianasen*

The 200,000 dead and 8,000 disappeared of Algeria's long civil war were almost all men. They left behind a generation of women from different backgrounds and political opinions who have come together in opposition to the president's charter for peace and reconciliation.

There was an unusual event in Algiers on 24 February, when six associations working for the victims of Algeria's long and brutal civil war held a joint press conference to reject the new charter for peace and national reconciliation approved three days earlier by the government. The charter, decreed on 15 August 2005 by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to 'close the chapter', as he put it, on Algeria's violent past, won 98% of the vote in a referendum on 29 September. This was based on a simple proposition: were people for or against peace?

Despite the size of the vote, opposition to the charter is fierce among rights activists and has brought together old enemies. Chérifa Kheddar is the head of Djazaïrouna, an association of victims of terrorism. Nacéra Dutour leads an association that works for those who disappeared at the hands of the state or its agents. She said that Bouteflika, in promising peace to the Algerians, had 'ended the dreams of truth and justice for thousands of families of the disappeared'.

As international rights groups observed on 1 March 2006, the new law, which will grant amnesty to state-armed militias and members of armed groups who surrender, would 'consecrate impunity for crimes under international law and other human rights abuses, and even

muzzle open debate by criminalising public discussion about the decade-long conflict'.<sup>1</sup> A referendum could not 'be the means by which a government evades its international obligations'.

Although they would scarcely have spoken to each other before last summer, Kheddar and Dutour have come together because they feel that Algeria cannot move on without truth and justice. Algeria's society was torn apart in 1992 when those in power cancelled an electoral process that the Islamist Front Islamique de Salut seemed likely to win; this triggered a violent civil war in which 200,000 people died, and provoked the rise of shadowy, extremist militias such as the Groupes Islamistes Armées. A chasm now separates the disappeared (presumed terrorists) from the victims of armed Islamist groups. For most Algerians, including moderate Islamists, the conflict was not a civil war, which is an idea too painful to articulate, but le terrorisme: armed insurgents against the state and those that the state had armed for self-defence.

Kheddar and Dutour's backgrounds are similar. Both worked with women's associations. Dutour said:

*In 1986 I left to live in France. I was divorced and couldn't bring my three sons with me. One day, 30 January 1997, I got a phone call: Amin, my middle son, had disappeared. Numb with shock, I went to Algeria to look for him. He had been living with my mother at Baraki. There had been an attack on the visiting prefect of Algiers; the army were called in and there were mass arrests. My son wasn't interested in politics; he didn't have a job and was trying to become a taxi driver. He wasn't an Islamist. He wasn't even observant. The only thing he did was fast during Ramadan. That was what he was doing when they arrested him.*

*At the local police station they told me: 'Of course we torture people: they always have something to confess. You're all terrorists. You gave birth to terrorists. So everything that's happening is normal.'*

*After that I got tips about where they had moved him, but they led nowhere: people were too frightened to tell. The last I heard of him was in 2000. 'Did she think he was still alive? Her eyes blazed: 'Of course he is. I feel him. He will come back.'*

Dutour tried to organise other mothers but there was too much fear.

*So I came back to Paris and set up the Collectif des Familles de Disparus en Algérie, working with French and international rights groups. Now that people are less frightened, I've been able to set up committees inside Algeria.*

At the rundown office of SOS Disparus in downtown Algiers, funded by Dutour and presided over by her mother, Fatima Yous, the corridor was packed with veiled women (two in black robes and niqabs), there to report or follow up family cases: the security forces or the police are thought to have abducted 8,000 people. Yous said: 'The victims always know who's kidnapped them, even their names. But after that the trail goes cold.' Since 1998, SOS Disparus has been organising demonstrations every Wednesday in front of the parliament building.

Of the victims' associations at the February press conference, five are headed by women.<sup>2</sup> That is unsurprising since Algeria's women were crucial to the war of independence against the French, then in the violence of the 1990s. As fathers, husbands and sons were arrested or killed, they became heads of households. They were also raped and tortured. As Akila Ouared, militant feminist and one of the original moudjahidates, said: 'We women were always there at the helm.'

She was an agent for the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN) in France, tasked with giving money to the families of militants.

*I inhabited secret, separate worlds. By day I was Jacqueline, working for the French (something I did not tell the Algerians). In the evenings or at lunch breaks, I would slip away to meet a fictitious fiancé. In July 1962, after the ceasefire, we created a first women's association. I came back to Algeria and remained an activist with the FLN until 1965. I saw myself as an average Algerian engaged in a just cause. Now I call myself a feminist: not one who hates men but who simply wants equality between the genders.'*

She blames the FLN: 'It was a front for independence; after that was gained, it should have opened the political field to others. It was responsible for introducing the family code in 1984. Two hundred moudjahidates sat down in the street to protest.' Ouared, 69, is still fighting that battle.

The code was amended on 27 February 2005.<sup>3</sup> Soon after women's rights activists, including Ouared and Chérifa Kheddar, met in a private house in the pleasant suburb of Al Bia to discuss their position on it. All were educated, middle-class, unveiled women who define themselves as democrats, a reference to the brief democratic opening from 1989 to 1992. All their associations are independent of the state and fought hard for the abrogation of the code, which Ouared called 'Algiers's dishonour, an insult to women'. Chiefly, they objected to the retention a *wali* (guardian).

'It's emblematic of women's absence of freedom,' said Kheddar. 'You can be president of the republic but you still need a guardian.' Women can now choose their guardian - is that an advance? 'No, it makes the condescension even clearer.'

Nadia Aït-Zaï, 54, a lawyer and professor of law at Algiers University, runs a centre for women and children, Ciddef (Centre d'Information et de Documentation sur les Droits de l'Enfant et de la Femme). She calls herself 'a militant who defends women's rights. Not a feminist: that word has another history in other countries. We're working on abortion, a taboo subject. At present only therapeutic abortion is permitted. One of the problems is that contraception is available to married women but not to the unmarried, widows or divorcees, who deal with these issues illegally, often abroad. We also want to add a special clause for women to article 39 of the penal code which forbids sexual harassment.' Aït-Zaï said of the family code:

*It could have been abolished; it's part of the Napoleonic civil code, with Islamic references, a hybrid. Parliament was supposed to vote on the amendment. Instead, Bouteflika had it quietly passed as a presidential decree. As a jurist, I find the reform incoherent: it's got one foot in modernity, the other in the past.*

Unlike many other activists, Aït-Zaï decided to 'take what is positive: it's a small step in two areas: justice and equality. Marriage is now consensual; relations between spouses are equal; the marriage contract confers separation de biens [separation of estates]; artificial insemination is allowed; in a divorce whichever parent has care and control becomes guardian; and the father must provide a decent home for that parent.' However, Aït-Zaï objects to the retention of the *wali*, and of polygamy (this has been made harder and is anyway only practised by 2%); and the lack of change over inheritance, which remains two-thirds to sons and one-third to daughters.

Aïcha Dahmane Belhadjar is national secretary for women and family affairs for the Islamist MSP (Mouvement Sociale pour la Paix, formerly Hamas), a junior

partner in the ruling coalition; she is just as elitist as the women who met in Al Bia, although there is hardly any contact between her and them. She said:

*We've tried to work with secular women but they're hostile, so dialogue is difficult. It's a mistake on their part because society pays the price. After all we are here: we can't be avoided.*

It was not surprising that she viewed the amendment positively:

*It preserves marriage as a social act, that's what's important. And women are not minors, because there's no marriage without their consent: the wali is just a symbol of family relationships. But some of the changes aren't clear. I would like to see a fund for divorced couples; I also think the obligation on women to contribute materially is a retrograde step.*

Belhadjar is a rebel. 'Everything that's not a declared sin is permitted,' she said. 'I never thought Islam stopped women being part of public life; rather, I think it sees it as a duty. The home is important but it's not everything. What I'm doing isn't exceptional. If more Muslim women aren't doing the same it's because we've acquired patriarchal traits from our colonial past.' She sidestepped the charter: 'It's one step to remedy the crisis, but it's not everything. There are sequels from the terrorism and they have to be addressed.'

Louisa Aït Hamou, 54, a lecturer at Algiers University, is a member of the Wassila network of women's NGOs and professionals, including psychologists:

*It began in 2000. We hold workshops, a weekly clinic for children, arrange professional help. But as well as action, there is reflection – about Algeria, but also beyond – which we publish. We are breaking the silence on taboo subjects: sexual aggression against women and children, family violence, rape, battered women, economic*

*violence. Take Hassi Messaoud, a new oil-rich city: 30 women went to work there, where working women are unusual. The local imams accused them of being prostitutes and, in 2001, they were raped and knifed. One was buried alive. Wassila, with other NGOs, ended the long silence over this and supported the women in their search for justice, though only three of the 30 dared attend the appeal court on 3 January 2005.*

Aït Hamou described the beginnings of the women's movement in 1979:

*There was just one organisation, the Union Nationale des Femmes Algeriennes, and they only worked on education. So we started the Collectif Autonome des Femmes. It was illegal because you had to be in the FLN or the Union Nationale. Most of the women came with political and ideological baggage. I thought it was a distraction from real action. In the 1980s NGOs were permitted: but 99% of them were appendices of political parties so the distraction escalated and the divisions grew. At that time the struggle was against the family code. In the 1990s the women's groups were empty shells because of the violence. But because rape became so widespread, we began to address the problem. Even if we haven't used this breakthrough to its full to talk about ordinary domestic violence, women's associations, though still highly political, now see the need to do practical work.*

One is SOS Femmes en Detresse, an independent association funded by German foundations. Meriem Belaala, its president, said:

*In Algiers a centre staffed by lawyers and other professionals advises on personal problems – domestic violence, sexual and family violence, incest and unmarried mothers. The centre also holds seminars to teach awareness of the psychological distress of women after the decade of violence.*

The association has opened a centre in Algiers to provide shelter for women and teach skills. There is another centre for women in Batna. 'A huge success,' said Belaala, 'because there we are breaking a taboo by getting women to talk. It's a big step forward, even at the level of marital relations; women think that frigidity is their fault.'

It is hard for women's associations to be both effective and independent of the state (something Wassila and SOS Femmes en Detresse have achieved), because of problems of funding and licensing. The movement is divided between those independent of the government and those within its ambit. The defection of a key figure in the movement, Khalida Messaoudi Toumi, to become minister of culture in 2002, is a source of bitterness. She was a member of the commission on the amendment to the family code and defended the reform:

*Giving women the right to choose their guardian means women are now the subject, not the object. Women won, secularism lost. I'm for women every time. I am a publicly avowed feminist. And I'm a secularist: I want separation of state and religion. But women come first.*

She expressed 'regret that the women's movement did nothing. No one mobilised except the government and the Islamists.'

That statement was greeted with outrage. 'No one from the women's movement was appointed to the commission,' said Belaala. 'In 2002 many of us got together to campaign for the code's abrogation.' She raised a wider issue: 'Almost all of us who supported abrogation are against the new charter.'

Bouteflika's civil harmony law in July 1999, which offered immunity or reduced sentences to members of armed groups who gave up their arms and disclosed their actions, soon became a

blanket amnesty for crimes by all who declared they had repented. With ex-GIA emirs openly flaunting their actions, many who supported the measure felt they had been duped. The law has been extended under the charter. Saida Benhabiles Kettou, an activist in the government camp, is a teacher who went on to promote the conditions of rural women and children in Wagla, and was briefly a minister in 1992. She said: 'The crisis in Algeria was about poverty and backwardness; Islam was its vector. While the democrats were in the salons, the FIS were on the ground.' She sees the charter as the only option: 'Truth and reconciliation on the South African model wouldn't work here: we Algerians aren't made like that.'

No one would dispute Algeria's need for social justice but there is a need for a consensus about its future. Chérifa Bouatta, president of Sarp (Association pour l'Aide Psychologique, la Recherche et la Formation), said of the association's work for women since 1990 in Sidi Moussa:

*Our psychologists are worried about what will happen to the children of traumatised mothers. We think all this could repeat itself in another generation. But it's not up to us to pass an opinion on the new charter: it's up to the victims. Those I have seen want peace. They also want to know who was responsible.*

The victims I met all said that there was a need to know. Among them are women who became activists because of the violence. Brakni Taous, 38, is a civil engineer from Blida, where the worst violence happened. When her husband was kidnapped in 1996, she left with her baby daughter for Tizi Ouzou. 'I know the names of the three men who kidnapped my husband. And I know he's dead. But I don't have the status of widow because his body hasn't been found. What I want most is to find his body so that I can move on. I'm trying to

contact and support others like me, and campaign for state recognition of victims of disappeared people. The new charter wants to pass all this over in silence.'

Madame Zinou's real name is Keltoum Larbes, and she works as a nurse at Mustapha Bacha hospital in Algiers. She is 39, widow of Alioussalah Zineddine, known as Zinou, a journalist at the daily newspaper *Liberté*. 'We lived in Blida. Zinou was one of 24 journalists "condemned" by the AIS [the FIS armed wing] for what they wrote. At 10 a.m. on 6 January 1995 they gunned him down in front of our house. When I took him in my arms, he was dead. That was when my own struggle began. I joined the Comité National Contre l'Oubli et la Trahison but in 2001 it ceased to be active. So now I work on my own. Once a year I write an open letter to Zinou, which is published in the papers. I'm not an eradicator and I'm not political. I want peace, but not this peace with impunity that the charter is forcing on us. In South Africa it wasn't like this.

*I'm a Muslim: the term secular makes people think you're an atheist. But I'm working to promote secularisation, so that religion stops being used for political ends. It's abhorrent to say that 'Islam is the religion of the state' [article 2 of the constitution]; we should say it's the religion of the people.*

Religion was a bastion in the fight for independence; with article 2 it became entrenched in the thinking of the FLN. The regime tried to use it and failed. 'The problem now is how to become secular, something we're doing in our own way, with difficulty,' said Fatima Oussedik, professor of sociology at Algiers University. 'The transition is deep and painful because we have lived through so much violence. We need to deal with that before we can have any sort of amnesty: it's directly linked to truth and justice. We'll remain an authoritarian society if we don't have this debate.'

Women have taken up this challenge, and also the need for urgent social reform. The 200,000 dead and the 8,000 disappeared of the past years were almost all men: so women have a crucial role in the social, psychological and economic future.

*Wendy Kristianasen, Le Monde Diplomatique.*

#### Endnotes

1. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Centre international pour la justice transitionnelle and Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme. See: [http://www.algeria-watch.de/fr/mrv/...](http://www.algeria-watch.de/fr/mrv/)
2. Nacéra Dutour heads SOS Disparus and the CFDA; Lila Ighil heads the Association Nationale des Familles de Disparus. Djazaïrouna, Somoud and the Organisation Nationale des Victimes du Terrorisme et des Ayants Droit, working for victims of terrorism, are headed respectively by Chérifa Kheddar, Ali Mrabet and Halaimia Fatima.
3. The nationality law was also changed to allow Algerian women married to foreigners to pass on their nationality to their children.

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## The African Union: Prospects for Regional Peacekeeping after Burundi & Sudan

*Paul D. Williams*

Since taking over from its predecessor the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in July 2002, the African Union (AU) has taken significant steps to develop the structures and capabilities necessary to conduct its own armed peace operations. The two biggest practical tests of this burgeoning security architecture have come in Burundi and Darfur, Sudan. This short briefing reflects upon these developments and the emerging debates about how and when the AU should use military force to manage the continent's political crises.

### Institutional Developments

In institutional terms, significant developments have taken place since the AU's inauguration. In May 2003 the African Chiefs of Defence Staff took an important step forward when they agreed a policy framework to establish an African Standby Force (ASF) and Military Staff Committee that would be capable of managing complex peacekeeping operations by 2010. The building blocs of the Standby Force were to be brigades developed in Africa's five regions. These brigades were supposed to cope with six potential crisis management scenarios (AU, 2005:A-1):

- 1) AU/Regional military advice to a political mission. Deployment required within 30 days from an AU mandate resolution.
- 2) AU/Regional observer mission co-deployed with a UN Mission. Deployment required within 30 days from an AU mandate resolution.
- 3) Stand-alone AU/Regional observer mission. Deployment required

within 30 days from an AU mandate resolution.

- 4) AU/Regional peacekeeping force for Chapter VI and preventive deployment missions (and peacebuilding). Deployment required within 30 days from an AU mandate resolution.
- 5) AU peacekeeping force for complex multidimensional peacekeeping missions, including those involving low-level spoilers. ASF completed deployment required within 90 days from an AU mandate resolution, with the military component being able to deploy in 30 days.
- 6) AU intervention e.g. in genocide situations where the international community does not act promptly. Here it is envisaged that the AU would have the capability to deploy a robust military force in 14 days.

Missions for Scenarios 1-3 should be self-sustainable for up to 30 days, while operations dealing with Scenarios 4-6 should be self-sustainable for up to 90 days. In the absence of an African defence alliance akin to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Scenario 6 would have to rely on individual AU member states to provide the capabilities. For other scenarios the Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) is seen as providing a useful model.

The plan was for the ASF to be established in two phases. In Phase One (up to 30 June 2005) the AU was to develop 'a strategic level management capacity for the management of Scenarios 1-2'. By the end of Phase Two (30 June 2010) the aim was for the AU to have fully developed 'the capacity to manage complex peacekeeping operations'. The generic standby brigade was to consist of approximately 2,200 military personnel, including head-

quarters, four light infantry battalions, engineers, signals, reconnaissance, helicopters, military police, medical units, military observers and civilian support groups for logistics, administrative and budget components. Effective command and control of the ASF would depend on devising

*an appropriate Africa-wide interoperable C3IS [command, control, communication and information system] integrated infrastructure, linking units with mission HQs, as well as with the AU, PLANELMs [planning elements] and Regions/RECs [Regional Economic Communities] (AU, 2005:12).*

A further important development was the inauguration of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) on 25 May 2004. The seriousness with which the AU is taking the security dimension is reflected in the fact that the new Department for Peace and Security (under Commissioner Saïd Djinnit of Algeria) will eventually have 53 staff, making it the largest of the Commission's eight substantive departments. More recently still, the AU has acknowledged the need to take conflict prevention activities more seriously (Olanyan, 2005:10) with the result that more effort has recently been given to developing effective early warning systems across the continent (see Cilliers et al. 2006). A welcome indication of international support for the AU's efforts came with the World Summit's endorsement of a 10-year plan to build African capacity for peacekeeping (UN, 2005: para. 93). Since the UN Security Council currently spends over half its time discussing political crises in Africa, this endorsement represents a prudential recognition of the unique difficulties facing the African continent.

### Operational Developments

The AU has now deployed two multidimensional, armed peace operations, one in Burundi (AMIB) and one in Sudan

(AMIS). These are not totally unprecedented operations: the first pan-African peace-keeping force was deployed to the Shaba province of Zaire in 1978–79 while the OAU undertook peace operations in Chad between 1979 and 1982, the military backbone of which was provided by Nigeria. It is fair to say, however, that AMIB and AMIS represent the first cases of a trend that is likely to continue rather than an ad hoc experiment of the kind seen in Chad in the early 1980s.

AMIB was deployed between April 2003 and June 2004. It involved military forces, observers, various civilian components and operated alongside a UN political operation and other UN agencies, NGOs and donors. AMIB took over from the South African Protection Support Detachment that had been sent to Burundi in 2001 to support the peace process by protecting various Hutu politicians. At its height, AMIB consisted of 3,128 troops from Ethiopia, Mozambique and South Africa, and military observers from Burkina Faso, Gabon, Mali, Togo and Tunisia. The annual cost of the operation was estimated at US \$185m, some of which was covered by European Union (EU), North American and other donors (Cilliers et al. 2006). After just over a year of operations AMIB became the core of the UN Operation in Burundi (ONUB) with effect from 1 June 2004 (see Bellamy & Williams, 2005:189-93).

Several conclusions emerge from AMIB's operations. First, the operation could not have got off the ground without South Africa's leadership and its commitment to maintain troops in Burundi for several years. Despite initial pledges of troops for the Protection Detachment from Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal, and for AMIB from Ethiopia and Mozambique the South Africans were forced to operate alone until September 2004 when the Ethiopian contingent finally arrived. This hardly represents a strong and concerted continental response to Burundi's crisis.

Second the operation suffered from significant logistical problems. This explains the fact that while the Arusha Agreement envisaged AMIB arriving in December 2002 the South African forces did not fully deploy for another four months. Third, it was clear that African states were unwilling to fund the operation sufficiently, which became part of the reason for transferring the peace-keeping baton to the UN force ONUB in June 2004.

Just as AMIB was winding down, the AU began its second armed peace operation, AMIS, in June 2004. This involved military observers, a protection force, police officers and a variety of civilian and humanitarian components (for an initial assessment see Williams, 2006). It also operated alongside humanitarian NGOs and the UN mission in the south of Sudan, UNMIS. Initially, AMIS 1 consisted of some 60-80 monitors protected by a Protection Force of approximately 300 troops. Shortly thereafter, in late July, the AU Assembly suggested that the Protection Force's mandate would include 'the protection, within the capacity of the Force, of the civilian population' (AU, 2004a: para. 8). This was wholly unrealistic given the strength of the *Janjawiid* and Government of Sudan forces operating in Darfur and the tiny size of AMIS. The AU belatedly recognised this problem when on 20 October 2004 it decided to 'enhance' AMIS by authorising the deployment of 3,320 personnel (AU, 2004b). When the security situation in Darfur continued to worsen, the AU decided on two more waves of expansion whereby AMIS 2 was supposed to consist of 7,000 troops by the end of September 2005 and 12,000 troops (in AMIS 3) by spring 2006. In practice, by 1 February 2006 AMIS had 4,815 troops and 1,390 civilian police (AU, 2006a).

Shortly thereafter it was apparent that discussions were taking place within the UN about how and when a UN operation should take over from AMIS (see, for

example, UN, 2006; VandaHei & Lynch, 2006). The UN Department of Peace-keeping Operations estimated this could take until 1 January 2007 despite speculation that AMIS would run out of funds by the end of March, 2006 (Refugees International, 2006). The fact that such discussions took place caused some consternation within the AU for at least two different reasons. First, some AU members were apparently worried about agreeing to a UN force, thereby acting against the wishes of the Government of Sudan which had undertaken a lobbying campaign to prevent such an outcome (Reuters 2006). But others within the AU were worried for a different reason. As the Head of the AU's Peace Support Operations Division, Bereng Mtimkulu (2005:36) put it,

*How well can the AU salvage institutional pride when clearly it cannot stay the course in complex operations owing to fragile structures and unpredictable funding and other resources?*

As it turned out, on 10 March 2006 the AU's Peace and Security Council decided to extend AMIS's mandate until 30 September 2006. It also decided that, as long as the Government of Sudan had no objections, it would 'support in principle the transition from AMIS to a UN Operation, within the framework of the partnership between the AU and the United Nations' (AU, 2006b: para. 2). For its part, the Government of Sudan suggested that it would accept a UN force in Darfur as part of peace agreement concluding the Abuja negotiations (AU, 2006b: para. 5).

AMIS's recent experiences suggest some conclusions similar to those already noted about the AU's operation in Burundi. First, the AU was prepared to accept a political fudge by deploying a hopelessly weak force that refused to challenge the Government of Sudan's position despite clear evidence that Darfur was enduring 'grave circum-

stances' (namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity as set out in Art. 4(h) of the AU Charter). Second, once again, the AU was unable to deploy its peacekeepers in significant numbers without the assistance of NATO and EU states. Third, the military backbone of AMIS came from just three states, Rwanda, Nigeria and Senegal. Fourth, once again, the AU mission lacked the funds to cover its \$465 million annual operating costs as well as adequate transportation and intelligence capabilities. Nevertheless, in areas where significant numbers of AMIS peacekeepers eventually arrived, they did have a positive impact on the security of at least some of Darfur's desperate civilians. The problem was these areas were few and far between.

### **(In)Capacity**

These operational difficulties raise the question of what capacity African states currently possess to conduct complex and multidimensional peace operations and how well the AU is doing in relation to its target of creating an ASF by mid-2010. A good practical indication of the continent's current capacity can be gauged by counting the number of African personnel deployed on UN and other peace operations both within and outside Africa.

According to figures published in late 2005 by *Conflict Trends* (2005:39-53), African states deployed 17,175 troops to the seven UN peacekeeping operations active on the continent. In addition, African states deployed approximately 4,900 further troops in AMIS. The bulk of these contributions came from just nine states: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa.

Outside the continent it is clear that African states contribute far fewer troops to UN peacekeeping operations. As of 31 January 2006, only 19 African states

contributed to a total of 1,544 personnel deployed on UN peace operations outside Africa. The four missions involving African personnel were UNIFIL (646 Ghanaian troops), MINUSTAH (168 Moroccan troops and 581 police from 15 other African states), UNMIK (141 police from seven African states and three military observers), and UNOMIG (one policeman and four military observers).

Several inferences can be drawn from these figures. First, less than half of the AU's member states are contributing personnel to UN peacekeeping operations, and the bulk of contributions are coming from just nine states. Second, by early 2006 the total number of peacekeeping personnel deployed by African states was approximately 23,600, roughly the equivalent of one large peace operation such as UNSOM II in Somalia or UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In this sense, Africa's capacity to keep the peace on the continent is woefully short of what is required. As a result, to envisage the AU's planned regional brigades as a substitute for UN peacekeeping would be a dangerous mistake. Consequently, the crucial practical question is how should the AU's emerging structures relate to the already existing UN structures? Unfortunately, the answer to this question has not always been clear.

### **Mixed Messages on the Use of Force**

Which actors have the authority to legitimate the use of force in peace operations has been a long-running source of international debate. In the African context, the legal bone of contention has been Article 4(h) of the AU Charter. This states that the Union has the right 'to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity'. In theory a decision to trigger Article 4(h) could come from an initiative within the

Assembly, from a recommendation by the Peace and Security Council, or at the request of an AU member state under Article 4(j).

Although Article 4(h) is yet to be invoked, the Union's Legal Adviser, Ben Kioko (2003: 819) described it as institutionalizing a shift in the AU's stance from non-intervention to 'the doctrine of 'non-indifference'. This development is particularly striking because, as Kioko (2003: 821) reveals,

*When questions were raised as to whether the Union could possibly have an inherent right to intervene other than through the Security Council, they were dismissed out of hand. This decision reflected a sense of frustration with the slow pace of reform of the international order, and with instances in which the international community tended to focus attention on other parts of the world at the expense of more pressing problems in Africa. Furthermore, the process of drawing up the Constitutive Act took place not long after the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government had adopted the Ouagadougou decision defying the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council on Libya in connection with the Lockerbie crisis. ... [African] leaders have shown themselves willing to push the frontiers of collective stability and security to the limit without any regard for legal niceties such as the authorization of the Security Council.*

This is an extraordinary insight into the AU's deliberations given that the Union is officially classified within the UN system as a regional arrangement and hence subject to the rules set out in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. As recently as March 2005 the AU was still claiming it did not need to abide by the letter of Article 53 of the UN Charter although it did soften its stance somewhat from the tenor of the discussions noted above. In the so-called Ezulwini Consensus document the AU agreed

*with the Panel [High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change] that intervention of Regional Organisations should be with the approval of the Security Council; although in certain situations, such approval could be granted 'after the fact' in circumstances requiring urgent action (AU, 2005a: 6).*

Less than two weeks later, however, at a meeting of experts on the relationship between the AU and the Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution a 'roadmap' was produced that offered yet another position on the issue of intervention. The roadmap stated:

*At the strategic level, and in terms of the provisions of the Protocol establishing the PSC, the AU constitutes a legitimate mandating authority under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. In this regard, the AU will seek UN Security Council authorisation of its enforcement actions. Similarly, the RECs/Regions will seek AU authorisation of their interventions (AU, 2005b:5).*

The mixed messages coming from the AU on this issue have been unhelpful in some respects but they do highlight one of the problems with the UN system. In situations where the UN Security Council is actively engaged in a crisis the AU should refrain from using force without the Council's authorisation. The issue is more complicated, however, in cases like Burundi, where the Security Council consistently refuses to establish a peacekeeping force when one is clearly needed. In such cases, the AU and its members have arguably been forced to improvise and have done so with at least a modicum of success. More debate is needed to resolve this issue because the AU's inability to sustain even medium-scale peace operations means that it will be the UN that continues to bear the weight of the continent's peacekeeping burden for some time to come.

## Conclusions

The AU has made considerable institutional progress in developing its capacity to conduct complex peace operations. The operational evidence, however, suggests that there is a considerable way to go before the AU should be thought of as a serious and effective keeper of the peace. At this stage, therefore, relying on the mantra of 'African solutions to African problems' will fail to save the victims of Africa's wars and give the continent's ethnic cleansers and genocidaires the upper hand. Even if the ASF is fully operational before the Union's 2010 deadline it should not be seen as a substitute for UN peacekeeping. Consequently, more effort must still be devoted to ensuring that well-resourced UN operations are sent to Africa's crisis zones in a timely manner. As one recent analysis concluded,

*Expecting weak and poor democracies to bring peace in failed states, when they often cannot do so at home, is clearly unrealistic* (Cilliers et al. 2006).

This is a sensible message and one that NATO and EU states would do well to heed.

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## The European Commission Considers Gender & Security

*Meredeth Turshen*

The Unit for Protection and Security of the Citizen, attached to the Joint Research Centre, which is attached to the European Commission – a mouthful to designate a group that develops new satellite imaging technology for civilian monitoring and surveillance – convened a workshop on gender and security on 8 March, Internationale Women's Day. With Lake Maggiore sparkling in the foreground and the snow-capped Alps looming as a dramatic backdrop, a group of 50 scientists, mostly women, grappled with new definitions of security that could appreciate the concerns of women as well as men.

GMOSS (Global Monitoring for Security and Stability, a consortium of EC governmental member research units and some industry partners) met to discuss their activities at what they called an 'information market' (where there was much talk about the needs of users – aka clients) on 7 March. The following day (after most of the men left), GMOSS assembled a group of women academics and representatives of nongovernmental and intergovernmental organisations to talk about women in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction and peace building. GMOSS asked each speaker to address the meaning of security from a gender perspective.

We had interesting things to say: how the meaning of security as has changed from security of the state into human security with new dimensions beyond physical safety (Ruth Jacobson, Bristol University); how UNDP has led the process of redefinition by documenting the meanings of economic, food, health, environment, and political insecurity (Meredeth Turshen, Rutgers University);

how these concepts of security are gendered (Susie Jacobs, Manchester University); how gendered insecurity plays out in sites of militarised conflict (Wenona Giles, York University); how men's violence against women (and men are responsible for 90% of all physical violence) is rooted in male roles and masculinities (Ingeborg Breines, UNESCO); how the increased presence of women in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peacekeeping, disarmament, accountability for war crimes, post-conflict reconstruction, and peace education could change the outcomes of conflict (Rawwida Baksh, Commonwealth Secretariat); and how the presence of a gender advisor on the scene in the emergency response to and recovery from disasters like the Asian tsunami made a difference to the lives of widowed men and surviving women (about 30% more women than men died in sampled districts in Indonesia and Sri Lanka).

The final speaker (Johannes Klumpers of the EC Women and Science Unit, the only male speaker) explained that gender equality had been part of the EC's agenda since 1957, that the quality of scientific work improves when women are included, and that the present plans call for meeting a target of 40% women on panels that advise, monitor, and evaluate projects. The 'Women and Science Unit' collects sex disaggregated data in Europe; it funds very little research.

Questions from the audience followed the panelists' presentations (abstracts are available on the GMOSS website). Does gender analysis described for Africa and Asia also apply to Europe? What can scientists do about gender inequality? What kind of technical assistance would have helped deliver gender-sensitive assistance after the tsunami? What indicators could technicians use to apply technology? What kind of satellite imagery can help with land issues in monitoring potential conflicts? How does

the gender dimension in vulnerability inform a spatial or socio-geographical analysis or mapping of conflicts and disasters? Should the EC shift its focus from security to stability? The questions revealed a lack of consensus on the premises on which the women speakers based their presentations, namely that the classic formulation of national security had given way to an emerging paradigm around human security. A poll conducted by anonymous ballot during the workshop determined that the majority of participants thought that security was a matter of perception and that apparently men and women had different perceptions of security.

### A Gendered Perspective on Security

From a gendered point of view, there are ten threats to human security and in each women are at a greater disadvantage than men. Economic, food, health, education, employment, environment, personal, community, political and legal, and cultural insecurity are all aspects of human insecurity. Most can be measured statistically with indicators showing not only male/female inequalities but also North/South inequalities, racial and ethnic inequalities, and class inequalities within countries. In each case, the indicators show a worse situation in war-torn countries. The data shown here are for sub-Saharan Africa.

### Economic Insecurity

Poverty and homelessness are two dimensions of economic insecurity; unemployment is considered separately. There is more poverty in the South than North (see Table 1).

The World Bank defines poverty as GNI per capita less than \$2 per day, or \$730 per year. The average GNI per capita was \$1,243 for sub-Saharan Africa in 2003. Poverty is greater in war-torn societies, and it affects women more than men. Table 3 shows poverty in selected war-torn countries in Africa, comparing estimated earnings of women and men. There is also more poverty among racial and ethnic groups that are discriminated against, but statistical data documenting this claim are scarce for Africa, even in South Africa, which no longer compiles data by race (see Table 2).

Women aged 15 to 64 years comprise about 25% of the population in most African countries, and children under 15 years of age comprise around 45%. Because African women have primary responsibility for their children, these figures can be aggregated: together women and children comprise between 69% and 74% of the population. In comparison, the equivalent figures for the US and UK are 54% and 51% respectively. It is important to note that the frequently cited figure for refugee

**Table 1: The Poorest Getting Poorer, the Richest Getting (much) Richer, GNP per person (US\$)**

Poorest Countries	2003	1986	Richest Countries	2003	1986
Burundi	100	240	Norway	43,350	15,400
Congo (DRC)	100	160	Switzerland	39,880	17,680
Sierra Leone	150	310	USA	37,610	17,480
Malawi	170	160	Japan	34,510	12,840
Niger	200	260	Denmark	33,750	12,600
Mozambique	210	210	Sweden	28,840	13,160
Rwanda	220	290	UK	28,350	8,870
Nepal	240	150	Finland	27,010	12,160
Uganda	240	230	Austria	26,720	9,990
CAR	260	290	Netherlands	26,310	10,020

Source: World Bank *World Development Report 2005*

**Table 2: Poverty in Selected War-Torn Countries  
Estimated Earned Income PPP 2003**

Country	Male	Female	Country	Male	Female
Chad	1,525	902	Ethiopia	931	487
Congo, D.R.	903	500	Mozambique	1,341	910
Côte d'Ivoire	2,142	792	Rwanda	1,583	985
Eritrea	1,125	579	Sierra Leone	783	325

Source: UNDP *Human Development Report 2005*

populations comprising 80% women and children is not far above national averages. The problems raised by poverty in war-torn countries have specific gender dimensions: new forms of slavery, bonded labour, sex work, and the predatory organisation of human trafficking (for example, 85% of conflict zones report the trafficking of women and girls [Save the Children 2002]).

### Food Insecurity

A concomitant of poverty and war is the disruption of food production and markets, which increase food insecurity, leaving women and children weakened and susceptible to disease. The data for food insecurity in war-torn countries are not disaggregated by sex, although we know that pregnant and lactating women have greater needs for high quality nutrition.

**Table 3: African Women & Children,  
Percentage of the Population, 2003**

Angola	69
Burundi	71
Congo (Kinshasa)	73
Côte d'Ivoire	71
Eritrea	70
Ethiopia	70
Liberia	70
Mozambique	69
Niger	72
Rwanda	70
Senegal	70
Sierra Leone	71
Somalia	71
Sudan	71
Uganda	74

Source: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)

### Health Insecurity

Generally women have a longer life expectancy at birth than men, though in certain age groups, more women than men die in some societies. The risk of dying in pregnancy and childbirth is disproportionately high in poor countries, where the risk (for example, 1 in 12 in Burundi) more closely resembles the rate (16 per 100,000 live births) in rich countries. High maternal mortality rates reflect the fact that during wartime the number of women in labour reaching a health facility with a skilled attendant on duty is severely reduced.

There are many more issues to consider under the heading of health security: the correlation of violence against women with rising rates of AIDS among women; the correlation between certain tropical diseases in women and women's greater exposure because of the gendered division of labour; the association of women's deaths from Ebola with women's task of washing corpses, etc. War creates a pro-natalist environment, which puts

**Table 4: Life Expectancy in Selected  
War-Torn Countries, 2003**

Country	M	F
Angola	45	48
Burundi	41	42
Chad	47	50
Congo, DR	45	46
Cote d'Ivoire	45	46
Mozambique	40	42
Sierra Leone	36	39
Sub-Saharan Africa	45	46

Source: World Bank *World Development Report 2006*

**Table 5: Food Insecurity in Selected War-Torn Countries  
Daily Calorie Supply Per Capita, 1970 & 1997**

Country	1970	1997	Country	1970	1997
Angola	2,103	1,903	Ethiopia	...	1,858
Burundi	2,104	1,685	Mozambique	1,896	1,832
Chad	2,109	2,032	Rwanda	2,224	2,056
Congo, DR	2,178	1,755	Sierra Leone	2,449	2,035
Eritrea	...	1,622	Sub-Saharan Africa	2,271	2,237

Source: UNDP *Human Development Report 2000*

pressure on women, affecting their reproductive choices; the result in some countries after World War Two was the phenomenon known as the post-war baby boom. Demographers have done almost no research on this phenomenon in Africa.<sup>1</sup>

### Employment Insecurity

We know that, worldwide, women earn less than men, that women are in lower echelons than men in all hierarchies, that more women work in the informal sector, and above all, that much of women's work is unpaid and not accounted for in national accounts. Informal employment (non-agricultural) in 1994 and 2000 in sub-Saharan Africa was 63% for men and 84% for women (UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, 2005). Women's wage employment differed significantly between industrial countries (46.4%) and 9 sub-Saharan countries (29.5%) in 2002 for

which there are data. As to job security, few data are available, but apparently more women than men are unemployed as shown in Table 9. Work responsibilities shift dramatically in wartime, but we do not have data to document these changes. The collapse of livelihoods is the most dramatic consequence of violent conflict.

### Environmental Insecurity

The way war changes environments needs far more analysis. We know that war damages the physical environment, and this has a long-term impact on women's lives. We know that the military pollutes the physical environment and that this affects women's reproductive health. Damage to the natural environment is long-term. Military operations destroy wildlife habitats and contaminate land, air, and water, affecting food supplies. Chemicals and radioactive materials cause damage that can last for

**Table 6: Maternal Mortality Ratios, 2000  
Adjusted Rates & Lifetime Risk of Maternal Death**

Poorest Countries	Rate	Risk1 in:	Richest Countries	Rate	Risk 1 in:
Burundi	1,000	12	Norway	16	2,900
Congo (DRC)	990	13	Switzerland	7	7,900
Sierra Leone	2,000	6	USA	17	2,500
Malawi	1,800	7	Japan	10	6,000
Niger	1,600	7	Denmark	5	9,800
Mozambique	1,000	14	Sweden	2	29,800
Rwanda	1,400	10	UK	13	3,800
Nepal	740	24	Finland	6	8,200
Uganda	880	13	Austria	4	16,000
CAR	1,100	15	Netherlands	16	3,500

Source: UNICEF *The State of the World's Children 2005*

**Table 7: Births Attended by Skilled Health Staff in Selected War-Torn Countries (% total, 1996-2004)**

Angola	45
Burundi	25
Chad	16
Eritrea	28
Ethiopia	6
Guinea-Bissau	35
Mozambique	48
Rwanda	31
Sierra Leone	42
Somalia	25
Uganda	39
Sub-Saharan Africa	42

Source: UNICEF *The State of the World's Children 2006*

generations because these substances remain in the environment. It appears that, by virtue of the gendered division of labour, women are more dependent than some men on environmental resources. It follows that degradation, pollution, and natural disasters affect women more.

The sowing of landmines on agricultural and pastoral lands in Africa has exposed women and children to death and injury because women are the majority of farmers and children graze livestock. Few measures of environmental management are published: they include the generation and recycling of waste (including nuclear waste) and the percentage of national territory designated as protected, but I found no data for Africa.

### Education Insecurity

The data on educational inequality are unequivocal: lower rates of female literacy, school enrolment, and university degrees in the poor countries of the

South. In war-torn countries, all of these figures are worse. It is sufficient to contrast net school enrolment ratios in sub-Saharan Africa and the industrialised countries.

### Personal Insecurity

Global prevalence data for violence against women show high rates for both intimate partner violence and non-family or stranger violence – more than half of the women surveyed in Zambia. Scattered data on intimate partner violence for sub-Saharan Africa reveal 41% of Ugandan women and 48% of Zambian report an intimate partner having physically abused them, and 25% of Zimbabwean women report an intimate partner forcing sex on them (UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, 2005).

The costs of such violence are only now beginning to be computed. Intimate partner violence costs the United States about \$12.6 billion each year; it costs Nicaragua \$32.7 million (1.6% of GDP) and Chile \$1.73 billion (2% of GDP) (Waters et al. 2004). Non-monetary costs include increased suffering, illness, and death; abuse of alcohol and drugs; and depression. The economic multiplier effects include increased absenteeism; decreased labour market participation; reduced productivity; lower earnings, investment, and savings; and lower inter-generational productivity (UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, 2005).

Personal insecurity is of course greatest in wartime. The shifting trend over the

**Table 8: Net School Enrolment Ratio**

	Primary M	School F	Secondary M	School F
Sub-Saharan Africa	70	62	29	24
Industrial Countries	95	96	91	92

Source: UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children, 2006*

**Table 9: Unemployment Rate 1997/2003 (%)**

Country	M	F
Botswana	16	24
Lesotho	31	47
Namibia	28	39
South Africa	27	33

Source: UN, *The World's Women 2005*

20<sup>th</sup> century from troop deaths to civilian deaths is well documented. Scholars do not usually specify the gender change in this trend: the burden of death has shifted from male troops to women and children who make up two-thirds to three-fourths of the civilian population. The type of conflict is another way to deconstruct the trend from troop deaths to civilian deaths. The four types of collective violence are as follows: genocide, international wars, internal wars, and terrorism (ranked in descending order of lethality).

Death rates are highest in genocidal wars: in Rwanda, an estimated 800,000 died during the 1994 genocide, which is an annual death rate of 44%. Put another way, approximately 11% of the population died, raising the crude death rate from 172 per 10,000 per year (before 1994) to 4,266 per 10,000 per year (in 1994). Deaths in international wars fall into two categories: troops (note that the per cent killed has fallen dramatically since World War II) and civilians (the highest recorded figure is 5% of Korean civilians from 1951 to 1953). About three times more soldiers than civilians die in international wars. It is not known whether more civilians die in international wars than in internal wars be-

**Table 10: War Dead (millions)**

	WW One	WW Two
Troop deaths	8.6	17.3
Civilians deaths	6.9	20.3

Source: Garfield & Drucker, 2002

**Table 11: Deaths in Wartime (ranked in descending order of lethality)**

- Genocide
- International wars (three times more troops than civilians die)
- Internal wars (troops and civilians combined)
- Terrorism

Source: Garfield & Drucker, 2002.

cause it is difficult to distinguish soldier and civilian deaths in internal wars, though it appears that the civilian risk of death in international wars is half again as high as the risk of death in internal wars. In the three internal wars in Africa for which there are data – Burundi (1993-98), Sudan (1982-96), and Sierra Leone (1997-99) – the crude death rate was lower than the baseline rate, which is the expected death rate in the absence of war.<sup>2</sup>

Terrorism appears to have a greater psychological than demographic impact. In the decade of Islamist terror in Algeria (1992-99), an estimated 60,000–100,000 people died, but the crude death rate remained far below the baseline.

One obvious consequence of the higher mortality among adult men is more widows and more female-headed households. The per cent of widows is far higher in Africa than in industrial countries regardless of conflict because of polygamy, age differences between spouses, and a shorter life expectancy for men than women; war accelerates this trend.

The available data for household heads who are women show that the figure of 42% for southern African household is the highest in the world (see Table 4).

### Community Insecurity

Minority communities may be oppressed by institutionalised and social discrimination; in war-torn countries the State

**Table 12: Widowhood, Percentage, 1985-97**

Age group	45-59	60+
N. Africa	19%	59%
Sub-Saharan Africa	16%	44%
USA (1991/97)	34%*	55+*

Source: UN, 2000; \*world's highest figure

may single them out or they may join insurgent groups. Women in inter-ethnic or inter-religious marriages may be placed in ambiguous even dangerous situations in which their loyalties are questioned (for example, in the Biafra civil war); and in countries where radical versions of religious institutions are vying for power, non-conforming women may be harassed or even killed (in the Algerian conflict, Turshen 2002).

### Political & Legal Insecurity

We have been celebrating the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia, a first for Africa, even as we note women's lack of political representation more generally. Women may lose legal status in the course of war, especially if they are widowed and are dispossessed from their homes and the land they have cultivated. This is one reason that repercussions for the exclusion of women from peace talks are grave.

### Cultural Insecurity

Beyond the personal insecurity, which includes the fear of physical violence and crime, and community insecurity, which includes oppression by the community, disintegration of one's community, or discrimination against one's community, there is also a specific kind of cultural insecurity related to ethnic cleansing, forced evictions, internal displacement, and refugee status, which destabilise cultural identity. Leaving behind the artifacts of one's culture in the midst of armed violence, losing the material indicators of one's cultural heritage

that may be destroyed willfully or incidentally in the fighting, may be especially traumatising for women because they are so often freighted with the duty of conserving cultural values and teaching them to their children.

The ten threats to security just outlined could also be regarded as the fallout of war, the stuff of daily headlines from the frontline. When discussing women and children who are regarded as victims of war requiring humanitarian responses, there is a tendency to de-politicize war. Yet these threats to human security are highly political: they play out against a background of two decades of increasing poverty among Africans and the feminisation of poverty in Africa. Behind the headlines are the historical legacies of conflict, including the legacies of the Cold War, as well as the altered political and economic environments in which women in war-torn societies live, now dominated by neoliberal ideologies.

### Systemic Subordination of Women

Although all of us believe in the importance of gender equality, the current thrust of feminist research is to reveal the power relations and institutions that sustain and perpetuate gender inequality. Although it is important to continue to document male/female inequalities because we still lack many of the details needed for postwar planning, we also need to look at the systems of subordination that undergird women's inequality.

The study of conflict offers us insights into the fate of women when war dis-

**Table 13: Household Heads Who Are Women % 1985-97**

Northern Africa	12%
Southern Africa	42%*
Rest of Sub-Saharan Africa	21%

Source: UN, 2000; \*world's highest figure

**Table 14: Women's Political Participation  
Selected African Countries 2005**

Women in government at ministerial level % of total		Seats in Parliament held by women % of total
Angola	5.7	15.0
Chad	11.5	6.5
Congo, DR	12.5	10.2
Côte d'Ivoire	17.1	8.5
Eritrea	17.6	22.0
Ethiopia	5.9	7.8
Mozambique	13.0	34.8
Sierra Leone	13.0	14.5

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report, 2005*

rupts systems of subordination. All of us have witnessed the destabilisation of gender, generational, and social class hierarchies in wartime. The fracturing of social ties permits some women to take on new roles and responsibilities, to become head of their household or leader of their community. And some women traders become rich.

We have observed that positive gender shifts are fragile. Society may not support women's new economic, social, and political roles, and new regimes easily deny their demands for participation. Women's war 'gains' – such as new opportunities for leadership – are often reversed in the aftermath of conflict, though the reversal is not inevitable. Basic services – education for children and illiterate adults, health care for all – can transform women's chances. Truth commissions and other mechanisms of accountability and reparations may contribute by explicitly recognising women's war ordeals – like rape committed in a systematic manner, and enforced prostitution – and lead to the rehabilitation of women in the eyes of society. Women's early participation in peace negotiations and the creation of a new government may help the new government set gender priorities.

It is doubtful, however, whether such improvements in women's standing will change the structures of subordination.

While some women move forward, we have also observed regressive trends in war-torn societies: a tightening of men's control of women, a narrower definition of culturally sanctioned gender roles. In conflicts that target ethnic or religious identity, women living alone are prey to predators, rapists, traffickers, and looters. Lacking the protection of family and community, women are especially vulnerable to enemy troops; some women attach themselves to soldiers for support. Women who serve rebel armies are not always welcomed back into their society, and the children of rape are rejected outright. Sometimes both outcomes occur in the same country – some women emerge as leaders while others are ostracised.

The contradictions of women's losses and gains in conflict have led us to explore the nature of masculinity and how war transforms men's expectations of themselves and others. Judy El Bushra (2003) showed that in Angola, Mali, and Somalia, even gender role reversal, in which women take on such male roles as breadwinner, is not accompanied by an ideological shift in women's status, either within the household or outside of it. Women remain subordinate to men, and ideologies of male superiority and masculinity remain intact. Feminists are thus challenged to integrate research on men and masculinities into our work on women in war-torn societies. As R.W.

Connell (2005) has written, women are the subjects of national and international policy documents concerned with gender equality; 'men are present as background throughout these documents.' There is an implied comparison with men as the advantaged group, but it is difficult to raise issues about men's interests, problems, or differences without a real dialogue on 'the relational character of gender.'

Xenophobia increases in wartime, as do racism, sexism, prejudice, and discrimination. Women have studied the gendered structures of ethnicity, trying to understand their rigidity and fluidity. An especial challenge is to track the gendered expressions of ethnicity under the pressures of violent conflict. The fate of women in inter-ethnic marriages during conflict offers some clues about the intersection of gender subordination and ethnic discrimination.<sup>3</sup> Power-hungry leaders often manipulate both ethnic conflicts and religious confrontations. We have documented the blatant, sometimes brutal, use of women in these struggles. Analysis requires the integration of new understandings of gendered religious identities into studies of communal conflict.

The kinds of research I am outlining here are not so easily quantified as gender inequality. Counting numbers in religious or ethnic categories is useful, but tells us little about gender relations within and between groups. Studies of refugee and immigrant women are new avenues of research that reveal the gendered nature of ethnic and religious identities, but these necessarily use qualitative rather than quantitative methods.

When conflict ends, a country's physical infrastructure can be swiftly rebuilt. In the desire to return to some semblance of 'normalcy', national and community leaders may also rush to reconstruct old patriarchal patterns of gender relations.

The aim of feminist research is to see if conflict offers an opportunity to set new values of women's human rights in place.

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## Endnotes

1. A study of the Dinka in an emergency relief center in southwestern Sudan concluded that families desire many children to replace the infants lost to war (Jok, 1999). But the recalcitrance of young Dinka women that agree reluctantly to conceive thwart family desires; as many as 35% terminate pregnancy, resorting to unsafe and clandestine abortion and risking infertility, infection, or death.
2. The crude mortality rate, usually expressed as deaths per 10,000 people per day in the early phases of an emergency, is the most specific indicator of health status among refugee populations (Toole, 2000).
3. One of the few studies that documents xenophobia is a social history of the Nigerian civil war (Harneit-Sievers, Ahazuem and Emezue, 1997). Women who married outside their cultural area faced immense problems: an Ibibio woman was killed by her people after she elected not to flee with her husband and returned to her people; an Efik woman said her life was in danger, that the hatred of her husband's people made her panic; and another woman said that as a 'foreigner', she was discriminated against, called a harlot, and nearly became insane (Emezue, 1997).

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## Tuareg Take Up Arms

*Jeremy Keenan*

Several dozen Tuareg, led by Hassan Vaghagha (Fagaga), leader of the *Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad*, attacked two army bases at Kidal (NE Mali) and another at Menaka near the Niger border on May 23. The Kidal bases were quickly overrun, with most of the 400 garrisoned troops reported as fleeing – in spite of the much-publicised US training of the Malian army. The rebels looted the armouries, disappearing into the desert before reinforcements arrived. Casualties were light: 2 soldiers, 2 rebels but no civilians were killed.

Vaghagha, a leader of the 1990s Tuareg rebellion, had been integrated into the Malian army as a Lieutenant-Colonel, but deserted in February, demanding more development for his region and a better deal for Tuareg in the defence forces, many of whom have deserted in recent months. A rebel spokesman in Bamako stated:

*We do not want war ... We want to enter into negotiations with the government ... Our region is poor and we want to see it developed quickly. We also have problems regarding our integration into the army.*

Vaghagha himself subsequently telephoned a correspondent in Nouakchott, requesting that France step in as a matter of urgency to stop what he called the 'genocide' being perpetrated by the Mali government against the Azawad population under the guise of the 'war on terror'. He also called on the Malian government to honour the 1992 Peace Accord. Mauritania, meanwhile, has reinforced its frontier with Mali.

The uprising follows Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi's recent launch in Timbuktu of his 'Great Sahara' state

project. Depending on interpretation, this would stretch from Senegal to the borders of Iraq or be something more tangible in the form of a Libyan-backed Tuareg federation extending across northern Mali and northern Niger, southern Mauritania, northern Burkina Faso and southern Algeria. The idea has caused ructions in Algeria, as well as Niamey and Bamako. Libya opened a consulate in Kidal in February.

Whether Qadhafi's pronouncements incited the rebels, as Algeria claims, is still uncertain. He was certainly aware of Tuareg resentment towards both the Americans, whose 'War on Terror' has led to the 'invasion' of their lands and lost livelihoods, and local governments. The latter have used the pretext of the 'War on Terror' to crack down on legiti-

mate opposition. In Mauritania, this resulted in a successful coup against President Ould Tanja last August. Both the Niger and Algerian governments have provoked their Tuareg in attempts to portray them to the Americans as 'putative terrorists'.

With the US fabricating and over-hyping the 'security' importance of northern Mali, the Kidal attack came as no surprise. The question is whether the uprising spreads to Niger, which is possible, and to Algeria, which is unlikely.

This widespread resentment is being compounded by the way foreign oil and mining companies are moving into the region with complete disregard for indigenous rights.

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## Theatre / Book Reviews

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*Breakfast with Mugabe* by Fraser Grace, Directed by Anthony Sher for The Royal Shakespeare Company, London (May 2006). Reviewed by Victoria Brittain

In Africa, as in Europe, Presidents, Prime Ministers, almost universally hate to step down from power. Long after most of their people, and their own colleagues, wish they would go, they hang on, convinced the country still needs them. Fraser Grace's play about Zimbabwe in 2001 has a neat echo of Britain 2006. But whereas people are merely impatient with Blair, in the case of Mugabe the old African stereotypes come up and we say, he's mad. The Western press, with its hysterical coverage of the land question in Zimbabwe, and its demonising of Mugabe, over many years, has prepared popular British culture for a play like this.

Fraser Grace, a young writer from Derby who has written several successful plays, took a bold leap based on a newspaper article by a journalist with a history of unfriendliness to southern African liberation movements. It is astonishing that the Royal Shakespeare Company did not have any adviser brought in who would have raised a warning about the political minefield they were stumbling into.

'Paranoid Mugabe dines with a ghost.' Mugabe was depressed, and was being treated by a white psychiatrist, a Serb, is the Sunday Times story which became the play, *Breakfast With Mugabe*. Tempting but perilous territory for an imaginative writer, and probably only one who had never been to Zimbabwe would have been so daring. (In the programme Grace warmly thanks the journalist R.

W. Johnson for his 'half-page report, I have it here, in front of me.')

I had breakfast with President Robert Mugabe myself once, some fifteen or twenty years ago, in an expensive London hotel where we ate in a small room, with the ministers and the bodyguards left outside. That Robert Mugabe was, with Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, one of Africa's leading intellectuals in power in the post-colonial period. He was cultivated, courteous, and as clever as his academic record of degrees gained in prison suggested. His conversation was about world economic trends, new books, though, inevitably, mostly about the grinding hidden war apartheid South Africa was waging against Angola, Mozambique, and the other Frontline states. I had been often in Angola, the war's epicentre where US funding, logistics, and propaganda were critical to the South African military offensives aimed at regime change and the defeat of the Cuban soldiers defending the MPLA government. Mugabe wanted to hear the real story from the ground, as whatever the outcome, it would shape the entire region's history.

The President was on one of his unproductive visits to Margaret Thatcher's Britain to ask for support against the death and devastation South Africa was causing across the region. It was not easy for him to ask for anything from Britain, so raw was the old wound of the colonialism which had shaped his life, but Zimbabwe, like its neighbours, was in real trouble then from South Africa.

Economic and political destabilisation were crippling the country and the re-

gion, and political assassinations of African National Congress members, commanders and cadres, in ANC camps and offices were terrorising every neighbouring country, while high profile assassinations were also taking place as far away as Western Europe. In Harare the ANC representative, Joe Gqabi, was killed outside his house in 1981, and the New Zealand born priest, and ANC member, Father Michael Lapsley, lost both hands to a letter bomb, shortly after the ANC had moved him from Lesotho because of direct threats against him, and many ANC cadres being killed.

A year or so later Mugabe's Zimbabwe took the considerable risk of hosting a conference of South African children who had been detained and tortured by the apartheid regime, and for the occasion large numbers of ANC leaders in exile came to Harare to meet for the first time lawyers, churchmen and township leaders from South Africa. And it was in Harare that President Fidel Castro made his defiant key speech that he would keep Cuban soldiers in Angola until the end of apartheid. These things fired the courage of the South African resistance, and explain why today's Mugabe is still a hero in South Africa despite the catastrophic collapse of the economy, crude repression, and the flight of thousands of Zimbabweans into South Africa.

Grace's Breakfast, like the *Sunday Times*' article, has Mugabe haunted by the spirit of the charismatic Josiah Tongogara, military leader of the ZANLA guerrilla army.

CIA briefings said Tongogara was killed by his own side because he was a rival to Mugabe. Ian Smith's later memoirs told the same tale. To choose to believe that Western version was a political choice in the Cold War climate of 25 years ago, but it is an inexcusable version of history to maintain it today when everyone who has made even a superficial study of the

event, knows that the car crash was a tragic accident. As a device in the play it allows the bullying white psychiatrist to pronounce that guilt over the death of Tongogara and the idealism he represented, is at the root of Mugabe's anxiety attacks.

In a handy twist for the drama, Grace's psychiatrist is also a tobacco farmer, improbably married to a former guerrilla. Truth telling to the president brings him his comeuppance of course, and it is a broken bloodied man who sits in his farm with his own ghost, and watches a sprightly Mrs Mugabe look it over and decide it will be just right for one of her nieces. In a casual aside she tells him she'll meet him to discuss it later, in the Gynaecology department of the hospital, 'There are some places where even the CIO wont follow.'

Political theatre is fashionable in Britain these days, there have been important plays at the National Theatre by David Hare, on the war in Iraq, and the state of the railways, for instance, and there have been a series of plays at the Tricycle Theatre made from edited transcripts of official enquiries. All these, like the American play, *The Exonerated*, using the words of men and women wrongly held on death row for years, have a serious political purpose, and are effective because they tell a truth which the powerful would like to remain hidden.

Power corrupts, we know, though we can never be reminded too often. The complex story of Zimbabwe's tragic recent history is not the story of one man, and Zimbabwe's own writers will tell it truthfully one day.

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*Enemy Combatant*, his account of his years in the US prisons of Kandahar, Bagram and Guantanamo. A version of this article appeared in *The Guardian*.

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*Challenging Hegemony: Social Movements and the Quest for a New Humanism in Post-Apartheid South Africa* by Nigel C. Gibson (ed.), Africa World Press: Trenton, NJ, 2006. Reviewed by Carl Death.

*Challenging Hegemony* is an account of the new social movements that have emerged in South Africa over the past few years in response to what many (including the authors in this edited collection) have seen as the 'selling out' of the ANC government to neo-liberal economics and authoritarian politics. The overall style of the collection combines academic analysis with deeply felt and often impassioned critiques of the ANC, in a way which is both reminiscent of, and often draws upon, the searing style of Frantz Fanon.

The chapters move from Nigel Gibson's wide-ranging introduction, and Michael Neocosmos' philosophical attack on the liberal State as inherently authoritarian, through empirically-driven chapters on Johannesburg's social movements, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and the National Land Committee by Patrick Bond, Mandisa Mbali and Andile Mngxitama respectively. The final two chapters critically question the roles of class and organised labour (Franco Barchiesi), and global linkages (Richard Pithouse), for South Africa's new social movements.

Gibson begins his introductory essay by asserting that 'it has been more than a decade since the end of apartheid and the larger promise of creating a 'new' South Africa is growing threadbare' (p.

2), and this is a repeated theme of the collection. Accusations of co-optation and broken promises are variously levelled at the ANC, civil society and the established Left, and much is made of the difference between bourgeois, bureaucratic NGOs and the vibrant, radical, grass-roots social movements. This comes across most strongly in Mngxitama's account of the National Land Committee between 1994 and 2004. He argues convincingly that the 'fundamental transformation of South Africa can only occur if the land question is addressed' (p. 161), and notes that as of 2004 only 3% of land had been redistributed to black South Africans, whereas the ANC's original target had been 30% after five years (p. 158).

Having established the importance of the land question, Mngxitama proceeds to offer a detailed organisational history of the National Land Committee (NLC) in the post-Apartheid period, and the growing divides within the NGO over the issue of land occupations, a question which split members into those willing to work with the ANC government and those prepared to openly oppose it. These issues reached crisis point with the emergence of the Landless People's Movement in 2001, and represents (for Mngxitama) a clear example of the struggle between the NGO form and the social movement form. Because of its decision to collaborate with and lobby the state, Mngxitama argues that the NLC cannot solve the land problems which provide its *raison d'être*. His conclusion, although carefully qualified, is that the job of an NGO is to work itself out of a job, and ultimately that 'the NGO form must cease to exist' (p. 193).

This concern with the 'NGO-ization' of resistance (Gibson, p. 21) is prominent in many of the chapters, although as Pithouse notes, the simplistic distinction between 'bad NGOs' and 'good social movements' is one that must be avoided

(p. 256). There are moments however where some of the contributors slip into this easy characterization. It is somewhat frustrating therefore that one of the most apparently interesting and complex case studies is dealt with relatively briefly in Gibson's introduction. He notes that the Bisasar Road landfill in Durban is championed as a carbon-trading project, whilst being opposed by nearby home-owners and Kyoto-sceptical environmentalists. The dump is however necessary for the everyday survival of those in the nearby informal settlements. Thus the World Bank emerges as the surprise defenders of the very poorest, whilst residents and environmentalists are accused of not consulting with those who depend upon the dump for their survival (Gibson, pp. 12 - 15). The close focus on organisational politics in this collection sometimes means that broader issues of transformation and long-term changes are not easily captured, and the NGO/social movement dichotomy that some of these essays risk falling into can obscure the fact that both NGOs and social movements are often working towards similar goals, especially when considered with a wider political lens.

Whilst the politics of the new social movements and the shortcomings of the established political system are dealt with by all the contributors persuasively and convincingly, there is occasionally ground for concern that some situations may be rather more complicated than is suggested. Is the ANC really just 'the local agent of global capital' (Pithouse, p. 248)? We are given few clues as to why the ANC, one-time heroes of resistance, have become apparently so fully and quickly co-opted into the neo-liberal hegemony. What is the 'new humanism' of the title, beyond Fanon's assurance that the poor don't search for the truth, rather 'they are the truth' (Gibson, p. 12)? Gibson is reluctant to provide answers (beyond what he describes as basic human rights) since it must be 'collec-

tively and self-consciously envisioned and articulated as the future-in-the-present' (p. 35).

Nigel Gibson deserves credit for editing a collection of essays that complement, interact with and reinforce each other. There is a common tone of frustration and anger with the failure of liberal politics to deal with the problems of poverty, inequality, race and land. These are important concerns, and this collection develops and theorises many of the (increasingly familiar) arguments of activists and academics such as Ashwin Desai and Trevor Ngwane. Whilst it sometimes presents a rather one-sided or uneven picture of contemporary South African politics, these essays together do constitute a very forceful, stimulating and coherent book.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**If you would like to review books for us, please get in touch with our new book reviews editor,  
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