

A POWER AUDIT OF EU-NORTH AFRICA RELATIONS

Nick Witney and Anthony Dworkin



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Executive Summary

Although the revolutions in North Africa last year caught Europeans at a moment of crisis, they managed a respectable initial response: they got themselves smartly on “the right side of history”, were largely forgiven their past complicity with the old autocrats, and, led by Brussels, converged on a common policy. Eighteen months on, there is less cause for satisfaction. In North Africa itself, last year’s sweeping tide of democratic change has given way to slacker water and confused eddies. Meanwhile, the EU’s focus on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as the main vehicle for its response (with the important exception of the military intervention in Libya) looks increasingly like displacement activity before normal politics are resumed.

Consolidation of democratic reform in North Africa is hugely in Europe’s interest. If more open and dynamic societies take root, a region long viewed as a threat will offer Europeans new economic openings and major strategic opportunities – to tackle the perennial problems of migration and radicalisation, to pursue regional problem-solving, to grow European influence across the Middle East, and to build a healthier relationship with the wider Islamic and Arab worlds. The immediate outcome is largely in North African hands. But Europe has assets and influence to bring to bear – provided that Brussels and the member states that really matter (to some extent Germany, but principally Italy and Spain, and above all France) work together.

On the other hand, if Europe fails to develop a more substantive and genuinely collective strategy, mutual disillusion across the Mediterranean seems all too predictable. The risk is of reversion to old habits, whereby Brussels preaches on democracy and human rights, the member states pursue their short-term national interests, the North African countries note and exploit the hypocrisy, and European authority and influence fade. The moment is fragile, and Europeans need to respond by raising their game, not relapsing

into business as usual. Accepting the constraints of their current economic problems, there is still much they can do to ensure that they do not fumble an historic opportunity.

18 months on

In 2011, the democratic wave sweeping the Arab world looked unstoppable. Not so in 2012. The Syrian revolution has descended into a bloody civil war. In Egypt, the manoeuvres of the “interim” military rulers have underlined that decapitation of an autocratic regime may be only the first step in eradicating it. In Libya, despite successful countrywide elections to a new national assembly, power continues to reside with heavily armed regional militias. Even in Tunisia, where the democratic transition has seemed to advance most smoothly, national unity and euphoria have been overlaid with polarisation and disillusion. The scale of the post-revolutionary challenges – achieving national political consensus, creating jobs and growth, restoring law and order – is daunting.

Little wonder, then, that doubts grow about whether the two remaining autocracies in Algeria and Morocco are sincere in their commitment to reform, or are really just playing for time as they wait to see how events elsewhere play out.

Europe’s attitude, too, has moved on. The initial uprisings were a profound shock not only for their unexpectedness, but for how they destroyed the Faustian pact which had long been the real basis of European policy across the Mediterranean – quiet European complicity with the autocracies, in exchange for their cooperation in keeping their teeming populations and disturbing religion at arm’s length. The result had been a curiously insubstantial trans-Mediterranean relationship; even counting major imports of oil and gas from Libya and Algeria, the North African states between them have accounted for less than 4 percent of the EU’s external trade. With the exceptions of Italy, France and Spain, few European states have had any significant relations with North Africa in recent times: Europe has literally overlooked the region, focusing beyond to the wider Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa.

Suddenly, then, there was a policy void on Europe’s doorstep, which no individual member state – least of all those most closely tied to the old regimes – was anxious to fill. So Brussels stepped in and came up with a policy framework upon which the member states could converge. The key elements were summed up in the slogans “more for more” (the principle that, in future and in contrast with the

sham “conditionality” of the past, European support would depend upon genuine democratic progress) and the “3Ms” of money, markets and mobility – the three main ways in which, it was proposed, Europe could offer a helping hand. With some active individual diplomacy (Catherine Ashton, Štefan Füle, Bernardino León), authorities across North Africa – excepting the autistic generals in Cairo – seem to have been persuaded both of the EU’s good intentions, and of its potential value as an external validator of their reforming efforts.

Yet, just as revolutionary optimism across the Mediterranean has faded, so in Europe the initial impulse to support the brave revolutionaries has been tempered by other concerns. It has not helped that the victors in the new elections across North Africa have tended to be not the attractive young secular liberals who led the demonstrations, but men with beards. And Europeans have been increasingly preoccupied with their own deepening economic problems: youth unemployment in Tunisia may be at 30 percent but it is at 50 percent in Spain. Initial talk about the need for a European “Marshall Plan” for North Africa was always wishful thinking; but the extra money that Europeans have in practice been willing to commit, in single figures of billions, constitutes welcome but marginal help to struggling North African economies. Nor are Europe’s governments disposed to open the door so that North African immigrants, or fruit and vegetables, can come and “steal European jobs”. The 3Ms, in short, begin to look more promise than delivery.

Brussels is not the navel of the world. The chastened mood in the capitals of Europe’s Mediterranean states, and concomitant readiness to follow a Brussels lead, is also on the wane. The “big three” – Italy, France and Spain – have substantial national interests at stake, in trade, investment and energy links. They host the biggest North African immigrant communities and worry about radicalisation and terrorism. And they can draw on assets – ties of history, culture and language, and military links – of which Brussels does not dispose. They can put the brake on any EU aspiration to allow greater access to Europe, whether for North African people or goods.

France’s role in particular is pivotal. Its bilateral aid exceeds anything on offer under the ENP. Its investment in Morocco is double that of other Europeans combined. Under its former president it led the Libyan intervention; under its new one it is working to achieve a reconciliation with Algeria. And it is deeply concerned with instability in the Sahel – tempting it, especially in the absence of effective action from Brussels, to pursue its own policy.

The coming 12 to 24 months will determine whether the democratic tide in North Africa continues to progress or goes into reverse. Europe therefore urgently needs to raise its game – not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it is profoundly in Europe’s long-term interest, both economic and strategic, to see the “Arab Spring” succeed. Money is tight, and people suffering recession are inevitably in a defensive mood. But there is a range of things which Europeans, severally and collectively, could do significantly better – many of them turning on a recognition that the ENP is not the only, or even the most important, game in town. If Brussels wishes to continue to lead, it will have to learn how to engage more closely the key member states.

How Europe can do better

Brussels’s response to the Arab uprisings has been framed by the ENP – a set of policy approaches and techniques applied to the 16 countries that surround the EU, from Belarus in an arc through Azerbaijan and Jordan to Morocco in the west. A key part of the first EU response to the Arab uprisings was to boost the ENP budget for 2011–2013 from €5.7 billion to €6.9 billion. The policy was conceived in the context of the union’s great enlargement of 2004, and aims to achieve gradual but wholesale transformation of the countries to which it is applied – embedding not just democracy but the whole European way of doing things (including over time the full EU *acquis* of law and regulation). For a “European” neighbour such as Ukraine, which might one day aspire to membership of the EU, it is arguable that this makes sense. For the countries of North Africa, which see themselves as part of the wider Arab, Muslim and African worlds rather than as Europe’s periphery, it does not.

In consequence, Brussels is operating a policy that grinds too slow and too small. It has embarked on a technocratic programme, rather than responding to a political earthquake with big strategic opportunities at stake. Thus, preoccupation with how to fine-tune levels of financial assistance in light of progress with detailed “action plans” for reform crowds out the big issues such as how to make use of Egypt’s need for macroeconomic assistance to influence the country’s political development, or whether Morocco is really moving towards democracy at all. “Deep and Comprehensive” free trade arrangements are proposed, as though the countries of North Africa need an arduous, protracted economic makeover to fit them for eventual entry to the EU’s single market rather than urgent, near-term improvements to their ability to export to the EU. And, because the ENP sees each of the 16

neighbours as an individual “client”, the policy sells short the vital need to foster intra-regional cooperation.

The ENP is the European Commission’s instrument and therefore focuses on the Commission’s, essentially economic, tools. It thus undervalues the ways in which Europe could lend diplomatic, political and security support to the “Arab Spring” in North Africa – ways which would also be more effective in embedding European influence, and promoting regional integration. One of the most encouraging developments to date in post-uprisings North Africa has been the upsurge in efforts at bilateral and regional diplomacy – much of it driven by local security concerns. Fall-out from Libya has destabilised the Sahel, and encouraged the southern littoral states to talk security cooperation – including with some of the EU’s member states. Yet Europe’s Common Security and Defence Policy remains largely unused. Brussels, of course, has few of its own diplomatic, political or security resources – and therefore needs to co-opt the member states. But such outreach within Europe is essential in its own right, as member states increasingly grumble that they do not know what Brussels is up to on North Africa, and contemplate reviving national approaches.

Ideally, Europe would look beyond its internal preoccupations, wake up to the historic, but fragile, opportunity to shape a North Africa more aligned to European values and interests, and put together an altogether more generous and ambitious response to the revolutions in North Africa. But until the euro crisis is sorted and growth returns to Europe, this is simply not going to happen. So Europe must up its game in other ways. In particular, it should do the following.

Overlay “conditionality” with real political strategies

“More for more” may be an unexceptionable principle, but it does not amount to an effective political strategy. The carrots on offer are too meagre to truly incentivise “good behaviour”; the assessment process will be gamed and/or resented; and formal conditionality is not the right way to address the differences between European and conservative Muslim societies.

Brussels and the member states need to take a more strategic view, focusing less on progress against detailed “action plans” for reform and more on the touchstone of popular legitimacy. And they must arrive at shared, country-specific policies to foster democratic progress while accommodating both

local realities and the different interests, and influence, of EU member states in the different North African states. The need is to complement the limited tools at Brussels's disposal with other instruments – political, diplomatic and military, as well as economic – in the hands of member states, and to work to apply them coherently, at key junctures.

This will require Brussels to work harder to understand the priorities of key member states – France, Spain and Italy in particular – and to get them actively to support agreed strategies. Equally, instead of leaving the Brussels institutions to make the best of this corner of the EU's neighbourhood policy, member states should be much more active in collective policy formulation – demanding more of the institutions while themselves being franker about their national priorities.

Promote intra-regional cooperation

Autocrats prefer closed societies and over the years Brussels has indulged them by treating North African states as individual clients. The countries of the region have been largely insulated from each other, with minimal mutual trade or other exchange. Yet intra-regional interaction is a key to growth, and to both economic and political democratisation. Shared security concerns are already producing new regional dialogues. Europeans need to encourage this by:

- supporting Tunisian-led efforts to revive the Arab Maghreb Union, offering advice and the prospect of an institutional relationship with the EU (ideally associating Egypt too);
- shifting the balance of EU aid away from country-specific programmes to projects which foster regional integration;
- promoting major integrative projects such as solar power development – a win/win for both sides of the Mediterranean which is currently on hold while the Commission ponders offering more realistic framework conditions;
- rethinking the inappropriate “deep and comprehensive” approach to trade relations, offering instead the possibility of a Customs Union to stimulate intra-regional as well as trans-Mediterranean trade;
- seeking to mediate the Western Sahara dispute (or at least find ways to move aside this roadblock to better Algeria–Morocco relations).

Get into the security game

Sahel instability preoccupies all North African governments – and France too. So the EU has a huge and largely neglected opportunity to offer practical support while embedding European influence, through the CSDP. Trust built through cooperation on countering lawlessness in the Sahara and the Sahel could lead on to the major prize of European involvement in security sector reform. To kick-start this, Catherine Ashton should appoint a three-star military officer as her Special Security Representative to North Africa, charged with working with the 5+5 (an existing forum of Western Mediterranean states, north and south) to devise an ambitious programme of security assistance to the region. Defence and security attachés should be added to all five EU delegations in the North African capitals. Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi should also be sounded out about the possible revival of the EU's border assistance mission at the Rafah crossing in the Sinai between Gaza and Egypt.

Do diplomacy

To exert collective weight, it is vital to close the gap between the way Brussels presents itself to North Africa – as a big NGO, with delegations functioning mainly as development project managers – and the profile of individual member states as traditional powers. Brussels and the member states need to work together to treat North Africans as partners rather than as clients, encouraging them to engage on regional problem-solving. The EU should also work more closely with other external actors. This should involve:

- reinforcing EU delegations with political officers – redeploying Brussels's own resources or borrowing from the member states; and otherwise co-opting member state assistance, e.g. through joint reporting;
- engaging with Egypt on everything from the Israeli–Palestinian conflict to the Nile basin;
- beefing up dialogue with the Gulf states, with Turkey (making common cause on economic democratisation), and with the United States (exploring a joint effort to mediate the Western Sahara dispute).

The majority of these recommendations are addressed to member states (and in particular to France, Italy and Spain) as much as to Brussels. Brussels will respond if these major stakeholders push it. If they shrug their shoulders and

go back to separate pursuit of short-term national interests, EU policy will default to the irrelevance of the past. Time is of the essence. The situation in North Africa is fragile and could easily slide back. The EU has successfully rebuilt some credibility, in the eyes both of the region and its member states – but it is in danger of losing both. And the opportunity is too important to waste for a lack of attention or urgency.

Introduction

Eighteen months on from the start of the Arab uprisings in Tunis and Cairo, the view across the Mediterranean is sombre. The region is gripped by economic crisis, with at least one state in real danger of collapse; illiberal forces are feeding on popular discontent and insecurity; new institutions are struggling to establish their authority. And that is just Europe.

Certainly, the Arab uprisings could not have caught Europe at a worse time. Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini may have called for a “new Marshall Plan” – but there was never the slightest chance that Europeans would match the courage of the young revolutionaries with the generosity of their response, or mobilise support on a scale commensurate with the historic opportunity.

Nonetheless, caught out in their complicity with the old regimes, Europeans at least had the grace to blush, place themselves smartly “on the side of history”, and begin to make some material amends. Unusually, the response has so far been largely Brussels-led (with the major exception of the military action in Libya). The Ashton/Barroso Joint Communication of March 2011 set out the aim (“support to the democratic transitions”), the means (the “3Ms” of money, markets and mobility) and the methodology (“more for more”) around which all the EU member states have been able to converge. North African leaders, old and new, have mostly shown a renewed interest in EU validation of their efforts to rebuild, or at least reform, their governments and societies.

So far, then, so good – except that, as this report argues, this Brussels-led European response is unsustainable. It overvalues the importance of what the EU will in practice be able to offer – to the economists at the IMF, Europe bears on the future of North Africa less as a source of assistance than as a risk to already fragile economies. It persists in a misconception of North Africa

as part of a Eurocentric “neighbourhood” – as five of 16 pale moons orbiting the EU, rather than as a part of the separate constellation that is the Arab world. It fails to look beyond the Commission’s familiar, economic, tools for handling “the neighbourhood” to bring to bear other resources – diplomatic, political and military – which are primarily in the hands of the member states. And it fails to think through how policy can best serve European interests – something that crisis-racked Europe can no longer afford to ignore – rather than just a sympathetic altruism.

For the changes sweeping North Africa offer Europeans an historic opportunity. Of course we must ask how we can help. But it is also necessary to ask how can we maximise our influence, to encourage outcomes that will suit us – and suit us not just in terms of producing congenial societies, more like us, but in terms of our economic and strategic interests. The European member states with the biggest stakes in North Africa – Italy, Spain and above all France – will certainly frame their national policies in this way – and will increasingly prioritise national over collective EU approaches unless Brussels meets them halfway.

This report aims to offer ideas, both general and specific, on how to mitigate the risk of reverting to business as usual in Europe’s approach to North Africa, and to exploit the historic opportunity to promote Europe’s interests as well as its values by strengthening its influence in North Africa. Recurring themes are the need to rethink traditional approaches to neighbouring states too easily assumed to want to become more like us; to exploit the full range of foreign policy tools available to the EU, and not just the economic instruments the Commission is used to wielding in the context of enlargement; to recognise the importance of developing a regional dimension, which cuts across the well-worn tracks of North–South Mediterranean relations; and to work a lot harder to ensure that Brussels and national capitals continue to pull in the same direction.

Chapter 1

Always something new out of Africa

The five countries of the North African littoral are widely diverse in history and self-perception – Egyptians, indeed, see themselves as situated not on the North African coast but at the centre of the Arab world. Their differing experiences of Europe are reflected in their use of French, Italian or English – or even, in Algeria and the more senior reaches of the Egyptian officer corps, an east-accented German. Libya and Algeria are big exporters of oil and gas, while Egypt is a net importer despite its substantial production, and Tunisia and Morocco are endowed only with phosphates and fertile soils. Literacy levels in the three central countries are notably higher than in Egypt and Morocco.

The political trajectories of the five countries over the past 18 months have also been very different: from the dramatic ousting of autocrats by largely peaceful mass demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt (leading in the one case to a relatively smooth constitutional process, and in the other to a tense confrontation between Islamists and the military); to a short but bloody civil war in Libya; to more cautious reform processes in Morocco and Algeria, controlled by two authoritarian regimes of very different tempers.

Nonetheless, from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, these historic developments have exposed the shared desire of North Africa's 160 million inhabitants for greater freedom and a fairer economic deal. Whether they get it or not is another question. In no case is what optimists term the “democratic transition” of these countries secure. Revolutions can be reversed, or sabotaged, or hijacked, or smothered before they begin. The future of North Africa is still in the balance, and likely to remain there for a good while to come.

Tunisia looks the best bet. Elections last October to a constituent assembly (that is, an assembly charged with writing a new constitution) saw Rashid

Ghannouchi's Ennahda Party, linked to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, win 89 out of 217 seats. In coalition with two leading "secular" centre-left parties, they have formed an interim government and chosen an interim president – with both presidential and parliamentary elections to be re-run in 2013 once the new constitution is in place. There is much discontent at the government's inevitable failure to deliver rapid economic improvement, and sporadic violence linked to a substantial Salafi movement. But, for now, a national consensus on where the country is trying to go seems broadly intact.

Egypt, under the arbitrary and often erratic guidance of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), has gone on a very different journey. National assembly elections last winter gave the Muslim Brotherhood over 47 percent of the seats – and, to the surprise of Egyptians as much as outside observers, a hefty 24 percent to the Salafis. Confusion then ensued, over both the composition of a constituent assembly and the timing of presidential elections – which the SCAF had originally promised would enable them to hand over power by mid-year.

After many twists and turns, the elections proceeded without a new constitution to define the president's powers; the Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi squeaked a narrow victory over former general Ahmed Shafiq (whom former president Hosni Mubarak had called his "third son"); and the SCAF, far from stepping down, resorted to the courts and to unilateral decrees to dissolve the national assembly and claim both the legislative function and the decisive voice in drafting the new constitution. At the time of drafting, it seems that President Morsi's cull of the military top brass has swung the balance back his way, but he still has much to do in demonstrating that he will govern for all the people.

In Libya, the civil war has left a fragmented country, with a self-appointed National Transitional Council (NTC) struggling to assert central authority while real power resides with heavily armed regional militias. Major clashes or power grabs have so far been avoided, though the security situation prompted the NTC to delay the first national elections – to a constituent assembly – from June until July. In the event, the elections passed off relatively smoothly – delivering a surprise victory to Mahmoud Jibril, an interim "prime minister" under the NTC, and his National Forces Alliance, which secured 39 seats against the Muslim Brotherhood's 17. However, with 120 seats reserved for independents of uncertain allegiance, the centre of gravity of the new assembly remains unclear. Assuming that Jibril emerges as the new national leader,

his major challenges will be to assert central authority, disarm militias and reconcile federalists (particularly in oil-rich Cyrenaica) – but at least, with oil production now almost restored to pre-war levels, he will not have to worry about money.

Next door, Algeria has changed the least of all five North African states. 75-year-old President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, an army-backed, ailing autocrat with no obvious successor, might look marked for the fate of a Mubarak or Ben Ali. But social unrest is tempered by memories of the awful civil war of the 1990s, in which perhaps 150,000 died, and can be assuaged with liberal applications of oil (and gas) money. When the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt sparked sympathy demonstrations, the regime responded by lifting the longstanding state of emergency, and scheduling legislative elections. It also reached out to Europe, inviting EU election observers and revisiting the idea of negotiating an “action plan” for reform with Brussels. But its real level of enthusiasm for change may be indicated by Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia’s description of the revolutions as a “plague” inflicted by Zionists and NATO¹. Only 42 percent of Algerians turned out to vote in the legislative election and re-elected the incumbent coalition of Bouteflika’s FLN and Ouyahia’s RND.

Morocco has also avoided revolution – in part a testament to the popular legitimacy of a centuries-old monarchy. But levels of unrest were sufficient to prompt King Mohammed VI to produce a new constitution, potentially moderating his near-absolute power, which was approved by an implausibly overwhelming majority in a referendum in July 2011. This was followed by elections in November, bringing to power Morocco’s first Islamist government, led by Abdelilah Benkirane of the Justice and Development Party (PJD).

Each of these five stories is different and the ending of each is uncertain. But important common themes have emerged.

¹ Brian Whitaker, “Algerian prime minister calls Arab spring a ‘plague’”, *Guardian*, 9 May 2012, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/09/algerian-prime-minister-arab-spring>

Islamism is mainstream; deal with it

2011 was the year of the Islamists. Successive elections in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco gave victory to Muslim Brotherhood-linked parties. This established an expectation that, when offered a real choice at the ballot box, North Africans would opt (as they did in Algeria in the early 1990s) for Muslim Brotherhood affiliates. But in 2012 the pattern has been different. In both the Algerian and Libyan elections, predictions of Islamist victories were confounded (though in Algeria, where the Islamist parties contesting the election were compromised by past association with the regime, this should not perhaps have surprised). And in Egypt, the six months between legislative and presidential elections saw the Brotherhood's popularity recede.

In part, this is no doubt attributable to a natural post-revolutionary reaction, with excitement giving way to disillusion, and a yearning for the return of stability, familiarity and experience. But it also suggests that, as the Brotherhood's "offer" is exposed to closer scrutiny beyond the "Islam is the Solution" slogan, so increasing numbers of non-Islamists find it less appealing than alarming. In Egypt, the military and former Mubarak adherents have done their best to encourage that alarm – with the Salafis providing plenty of collateral. For Egyptians themselves – Tunisians too, for that matter – have evidently been as surprised as outside observers to discover the extent of support among their compatriots for the most fundamentalist, and intolerant, Islamist tendencies.

For some, this confirms all the gloomy forebodings about the Islamists' conspiratorial and undemocratic agenda (one man, one vote, one time). On this reading, the Arab revolutions will result, at best, only in replacing one form of autocracy with another that is less well-disposed to the West. The facts that the ostensibly otherworldly Salafis in practice chose to enter the political arena (apparently backed by substantial Saudi funds), and that the cautious Brotherhood reversed themselves on their original promise not to field presidential candidates in Egypt, are adduced as evidence of Islamist duplicity.

However, such charges make no allowance for the problems Islamist movements are obviously facing in coming to terms with their new identities not just as social and religious movements, but also as political parties – and political parties now expected to govern. Certainly, there is little that is democratic about their internal organisation – even the moderate Ennahda

was described to us, by one long-time observer, as Leninist in spirit. But underground oppositions do not survive without discipline and secrecy; internal democratisation is now the subject of lively debate within the Islamist parties; and, as Nathan Brown has pointed out, electoral success has “led these movements to embrace democratic mechanisms and politics more generally with wholehearted enthusiasm”.²

The fact, of course, is that no one can be sure – not even the participants – how all this will play out. For arguably the first time in history, the people of the region are getting full visibility of the nature of their own societies and are embarking on the process of working out what their identities are and where the consensus on how they should govern themselves lies. Pessimists will point to developing Salafi militancy over such issues as dress codes at universities even in Tunisia, the most “modern” of the North African states. Optimists will counter that it matters much more that, in the first such test, the Ennahda party has come down firmly against embedding Sharia law in the new Tunisian constitution – and that the Brotherhood seem to holding a similar line, against the Salafis, in the parallel debate in Egypt.

For what it’s worth, our own instinct is to side with those (Brown, Olivier Roy) who argue that Islamists understand that, like it or not, they are now constrained to operate in a pluralistic political environment.³ There is much to be said for taking self-professed Islamic democrats at their word; liberal tendencies within Islamist constituencies will not be encouraged if they are met with pre-emptive hostility and suspicion from the West. Nonetheless, Europeans should also be prepared for the emergence of forms of democracy in North Africa that do not always conform in every particular with their own conceptions.

For all the current uncertainties, it seems a fair bet that the centre of gravity of North African societies is indeed closer to the religious and social conservatism of the Islamists than Western-inspired secular liberalism. Even if such essential democratic features as free and fair elections, an independent

² Sinan Ülgen, Nathan J. Brown, Marina Ottaway and Paul Salem, “The Emerging Order in the Middle East”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Outlook, May 2012, available at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2012/05/24/emerging-order-in-middle-east/awff>

³ Olivier Roy draws a parallel with Euro-communists to point out how movements with no democratic tradition nonetheless find themselves constrained to operate in a democratic environment. See Olivier Roy, “The Transformation of the Arab World”, *Journal of Democracy*, July 2012, Volume 23, Number 3, available at <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Roy-23-3.pdf>

judiciary and freedom of assembly and expression are institutionalised in post-uprisings North Africa, one should not expect the consensus position on gender equality, still less on gay rights, to emerge as one with which the typical European is comfortable. Since they will have little power to affect this, Europeans are going to have to learn to deal with it.

The deep state has not gone away

All the enthusiasm and idealism of the Arab revolutions has not done away with vested interest. And the SCAF's attempts in recent weeks to thwart the elected President Morsi have underlined the determination with which those interests will seek to hold on to power and privilege. From the *Makhzen* in Morocco (the concentration of business interests and economic power around the royal court) to *le pouvoir* (as the deep state is known) in Algeria to the military–commercial complex which is the armed forces in Egypt, the rich and privileged will not hesitate to try to arrest the progress of democracy if they feel their interests too nearly threatened, or to throw it into reverse. In Algeria, indeed, it is by no means clear that the army and President Bouteflika have any real intention, still less a plan, to open up their society.

In due course, new governments will have to break down these citadels of privilege, if genuinely democratic societies are going to result. No democracy can tolerate indefinitely a situation, such as in Egypt, in which the military budget is not even disclosed to the National Assembly, let alone scrutinised by it. (The cool reception of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey by the SCAF in Cairo last autumn may have signified their discomfort less with the Turkish model of mild Islamism in government, than with the Turkish model of bringing the military unequivocally under civilian control and throwing large numbers of generals and admirals into prison.) And in none of the countries of North Africa have the issues of transitional justice and reform of the security services yet been systematically broached.

Handling the gradual dismantlement of the deep state will require skill and patience on behalf of the new governments if there is not to be a backlash – a task that will probably be made more difficult by erosion of their support and by popular disillusionment, as economic problems deepen.

It's the economy, 'abit!

If Tunisia and Egypt led the revolutionary revels, they are also suffering the quickest morning-after remorse. Recent polling in Tunisia reveals that 70 percent of the population feel the country to be more divided than before the overthrow of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, and almost two-thirds describe the situation as “bad” or “very bad”.⁴ The people wanted freedom, but also jobs and a better economic deal. So far, they have had only the chance to choose new leaders through the ballot box – for the rest, it has been disruption and insecurity.

It might have been worse. Only the Libyan and Tunisian economies actually contracted in 2011, and Libyan oil production is, remarkably, almost back to its pre-revolutionary level of 1.7 million bpd. Resumed growth is foreseen for all the North African economies this year and next. (Ironically Europe, which likes to see itself as a source of at least modest assistance, is in IMF eyes primarily a risk – a return to recession north of the Mediterranean would hit the southern neighbourhood hard, through the effect on trade and remittances.⁵)

However, headline GDP figures do not translate directly into the individual's experience: the damage to tourism (in Egypt and Tunisia, both visitor numbers and revenue slumped by about a third last year) has impacted particularly on low-paid jobs. Tunisia suffered 19 percent unemployment in 2011 (worse among the under-30s, who comprise more than half the population, as everywhere in North Africa) – while Egyptians are contending with double-digit inflation. With the problems of regional deprivation scarcely on the radar screens of national politicians, it is no wonder that the sections of the population who actually made the revolutions are feeling frustrated and disillusioned.

Delivering on the economy is thus a huge challenge for new, or even just reforming, governments across North Africa, with no quick fixes available beyond increasing subsidies on fuel and food (8.5 percent of GDP in Egypt in

⁴ Anne Wolf and Raphaël Lefèvre, “Tunisia: a revolution at risk”, the *Guardian*, 18 April 2012, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/apr/18/tunisia-revolution-at-risk?INTCMP=SRCH>

⁵ International Monetary Fund, “World Economic Outlook, April 2012 – Growth Resuming, Dangers Remain”, pp 69 et seq., available at <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/01/pdf/text.pdf>

2010–11, 5.5 percent in Morocco in 2011, according to the IMF) and creating fake public-sector jobs, at considerable risk to public finances. The three oil importers ran current account deficits of between 4 and 6 percent of GDP in 2011. With typical perverseness, the interim rulers of Egypt made matters worse by rejecting IMF macroeconomic assistance until depletion of their foreign exchange reserves to no more than the requirement for the next three months brought them back to the negotiating table.

And the challenge is not just to get back to where things stood before the uprisings, in terms of trade, tourism and investment – it is in practice to undertake a wholesale re-engineering of the North African economies, away from inherently corrupt patrimonial structures which neoliberal reforms have if anything entrenched, to a more sustainable “bottom-up” model that spreads wealth and opportunity more equally. Without this, it is hard to see democracy itself surviving, unless through renewed revolution. But such a re-engineering will take time and meet entrenched opposition. The temptation will be for new governments, unable to command the patience of their peoples, to resort to religious or nationalistic narratives. They will be aware of how many years elapsed during the democratic transitions in central and eastern Europe before an incumbent government succeeded in getting itself re-elected. So it may not be long before the question of whether Islamist governments will allow themselves to be voted out of office is put to practical test.

Security is deteriorating

If political democracy and economic renewal are mutually dependent, then both also require the restoration of law and order. This is a major preoccupation of all the new governments, aware as they are of how important it is for popular reassurance, and for the return of tourists and investment. In Egypt and Tunisia the police and internal security forces, on the frontline of the old regimes’ efforts to crush the demonstrators while the army stood aside, effectively disintegrated as the regimes collapsed. Discredited and demoralised, they are now incapable of providing more than a veneer of law and order.

Egypt faces a particular problem of lawlessness in the (mainly demilitarised) Sinai. As has happened since the dawn of time, the Bedouin have taken advantage of the collapse of central authority. Helping themselves to the armouries of deserted police stations, their brigandage has inflicted severe

damage on Egypt's tourism and gas revenues, as well as creating headaches for Israel through gas supply cut-offs and human trafficking. Extremist groups have also taken the opportunity to establish a foothold there.

Libya, however, remains the major source of regional instability. Power still rests with the heavily armed regional militias. Worse, the revolution abruptly choked off the flow of Libyan money to the south, which for decades had irrigated the Sahel region and beyond with Gaddafi's largesse and the remittances of migrant workers. This stream of money has now been replaced by an outflow of jobless migrants returning home, among them many mercenaries, and of arms and explosives.

These developments have acted as an accelerant applied to the endemic causes of instability in the Sahel: seasonal transhumance and shifts in climate (a bad drought threatens widespread famine at the moment) render borders porous to non-existent; while tribal and ethnic violence and clashes between pastoralists and farmers have been a feature of life since forever. Weak states are unable to control or effectively bribe their peripheries, encouraging such excluded regions to revolt and rewire their relationships away from distant capitals to cross-border neighbours. The Touareg declaration of an independent republic of Azawad in northern Mali, which precipitated a botched military coup in Bamako and then gave way to a takeover by the Islamic fundamentalists of Ansar Eddine, is the most dramatic manifestation of this recent turmoil.

Adding to this mix of endemic lawlessness and Libyan weaponry are the revived activities of the Islamist remnants of the Algerian civil war, now rebadged as "Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb" (AQIM), and of Polisario fighters and other refugees in the camps around Tindouf in the west of Algeria. These groupings are increasingly active in a range of criminal activities, from the kidnapping of westerners to drug smuggling (notably South American cocaine heading from West Africa to Europe).

Perhaps more worrying than any of these developments (Mali is, after all, not a dagger pointed at the heart of anywhere in particular) is the Boko Haram movement in northern Nigeria, whose atrocities seem to serve both an Islamic Jihadist and a northern separatist agenda. Though largely home-grown, the movement clearly has ideological and logistic links, as well as criminal connections, with the armed bands of the Sahel and the Sahara to their north.

Regional cooperation is reviving

This deteriorating security situation is perhaps the single biggest factor behind a new surge of regional contacts and burgeoning cooperation across North Africa. It is of course natural that post-revolution countries should draw together – the more so, as elections bring a number of Muslim Brotherhood-flavoured governments to power or at least to office. Tunisia's new President Moncef Marzouki has toured the region, preparing a summit later this year aimed at revitalising the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the regional grouping of the five North African countries, minus Egypt but plus Mauritania. The five AMU trade ministers have recently met in Rabat.

Most regional activity is, however, security focused, and driven by a shared preoccupation with lawlessness in the south. Even before the Arab uprisings, a developing security dialogue between Algeria and its southern neighbours of Mauritania, Niger and Mali led to the establishment in 2010 of a joint headquarters at Tamanrasset in southern Algeria. The 5+5 grouping (which has long associated the five AMU states with Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Malta on issues of security cooperation, including such activities as training and exercises) has sprung into new life. Meetings have taken place at foreign minister, interior minister and chiefs of staff level in recent months, and a summit meeting is planned for Malta in October. In March, Libya hosted a conference of the interior and defence ministers of 10 North African countries from Egypt to Morocco to discuss improving border security across the region.

All this multilateral activity has been complemented by bilateral diplomacy. Libya and Algeria have shown themselves anxious to resolve the tensions arising from the presence of Gaddafi family members in Algeria, explicitly to facilitate better cooperation on border security. President Marzouki's visit to the newly installed President Morsi in Cairo went so well that he offered the surprising vision that Egypt and Tunisia would soon be as "integrated as the European Union".⁶

Potentially most significant has been some thaw in relations between Algeria and Morocco, whose border has been closed since the Moroccan annexation

⁶ Nada Hussein Rashwan, "Renewed energy in Egypt–Tunisia relations: Marzouki at post-summit presser", *Ahram Online*, 13 July 2012, available at <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/0/47615/Egypt/Renewed-energy-in-EgyptTunisia-relations-Marzouki.aspx>

of the Western Sahara in the late 1970s. Following a resumption of UN mediation in March, new Moroccan foreign minister Saadeddine El Othmani said that Morocco was “desperate” to find a “creative solution”.⁷ Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia was similarly upbeat, observing that “the borders are required to be opened”.⁸ Morocco’s subsequent declaration of lack of confidence in the UN mediator dashed hopes of any early breakthrough.⁹ Nonetheless, this burgeoning of regional contact and goodwill is one of the most positive features of North Africa’s Arab revolutions.

Every day, then, there is something new out Africa. Each new twist and turn allows either optimists or pessimists to substantiate their various theses that the wave of democratisation is losing impetus and can be expected to recede; that the future is bleakly Islamist; or that “democratic transitions” are continuing across the region, despite inevitable bumps in the road. Two things, however, seem clear: first, that it is primarily North Africans themselves who will work out their own salvation or perdition; second, that the uprisings look much less likely to embed European-style democracies across the region than they did in the heady days of 2011. The dynamic of events suggests that the next 12 to 24 months will be crucial. While Europeans are in no position to determine the outcome, neither are they without influence.

⁷ Naoufel Cherkaoui, “Stalemate continues in Western Sahara negotiations”, Magharebia, 15 March 2012, available at http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2012/03/15/feature-02

⁸ “Algeria optimistic about Morocco border issue”, Magharebia, 15 March 2012, available at http://magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/newsbriefs/general/2012/03/15/newsbrief-04

⁹ For more on this, and the role the EU could play, see the box on page X.

Chapter 2

The EU's Faltering Response

Europe's response to the Arab revolutions has been, to a striking extent, EU-led. The initial Brussels reaction to the revolutions in North Africa was unsure and hesitant. When High Representative Catherine Ashton finally appeared in Tunis a month after the departure of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, her offer of financial assistance was so small that one of the new Tunisian ministers publicly condemned it as "ridiculous". But the EU recovered with the Ashton/Barroso Joint Communication of 8 March 2011.¹⁰ As good luck would have it, the bureaucracy had been at work since early 2010 on a revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), so the material was to hand for a policy statement sufficiently comprehensive and coherent to serve as a conceptual framework around which all 27 member states could come together – with Brussels orchestrating.

The essence of the revised policy was summed up in the two slogans "more for more" and the "3Ms" – money, mobility and markets. Implicit in the idea of "more for more" was an admission that the "conditionality" of European help to North Africa of past years had been a sham, covering the reality of complicity with the autocratic regimes – and a promise to apply conditionality properly in the future. The "3Ms" highlighted the three main ways in which the EU would look to assist newly democratic or reforming governments and incentivise their continued progress: through various forms of financial assistance; by offering some limited easing of the restrictions on North Africans' freedom to visit Europe (particularly for study or business) in exchange for better cooperation in clamping down on illegal migration; and by improved access to European markets.

¹⁰ European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "A Partnership For Democracy And Shared Prosperity With The Southern Mediterranean", Brussels, 8 March 2011, available at http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/com2011_200_en.pdf

More detail on the new approach to North Africa was provided in a further Ashton/Barroso Joint Communication in May, which gave the results of the ENP review.¹¹ It announced an extra €1.2 billion of funding for the 16 countries to the EU's east and south which it regards as constituting its "neighbourhood", on top of the €5.7 billion already budgeted in the period 2011–13. Over the same period, the European Investment Bank (EIB) would increase its "lending envelope" for Mediterranean countries by €1 billion, an increase of 20 percent. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) would amend its mandate to allow lending to the south as well as the east; it has recently set up an initial special fund of €1 billion for investment in emerging Arab democracies, as a prelude to an envisaged annual investment rate of €2.5 billion.

In addition, unspent money was consolidated into the €350 million Support for Partnership Reform and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) programme for 2011 and 2012; and a plethora of other funds have either been created (the new Civil Society Facility) or brought to bear (typically involving single figures of millions). Hundreds of extra scholarships have been made available to help Arab students come to European universities. And urgent humanitarian aid has been provided, principally to Libya. Looking ahead, the Commission's latest proposals for the EU budget in 2014–2020 envisage a hefty 40 percent (nominal) increase in neighbourhood spending – that is, up to a total of €18 billion for the east and south together.

In the region, Ashton's "Special Representative", the energetic Bernardino León, has maintained the EU's profile, not least through the device of "task forces" – grand bilateral meetings bringing together not only EU member states but also international financial institutions, big private sector players, and other potentially helpful third parties. The first such event, in Tunis last September, is claimed to have opened the door to up to €4 billion (grants and loans) of assistance to Tunisia over the next three years. A similar event is foreseen for Cairo this autumn.

Egypt was a difficult case while the inept and introverted military authorities remained in charge. But across the rest of North Africa, Europe, as represented by the EU, finds itself in perhaps surprisingly good odour. Of course, Brussels

¹¹ European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood. A review of European Neighbourhood Policy", Brussels, 25 May 2011, available at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com_11_303_en.pdf

has the advantage of not being Paris, or Rome, or Madrid – which is no doubt why the newly elected Tunisian prime minister chose to make it his first overseas destination. Similarly, it was towards Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle that the Algerian regime decided to make its cautious opening – including talk of negotiating a jointly agreed Action Plan for reform, and the invitation to the EU to observe the May elections. The optimist might even detect a degree of “virtuous competition” among the states of the Maghreb for Brussels’s approbation. Seeking European support, whether practical or psychological or as a form of external validation of their efforts, new North African leaders seem to feel that, whatever their doubts about the past behaviour of its member states, the EU as such intends to be on the side of the angels.

Overall, then, Brussels deserves credit for quickly devising and operating an initial response to events in North Africa which has succeeded in keeping the member states on board – France’s acquiescence in Brussels’s takeover of President Nicolas Sarkozy’s Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) project has been striking – and in playing a rather weak hand in such a way as to appear credible to leaders across the Mediterranean. But maintaining that credibility will depend on delivering on promises and commitments. And the full set of documentation released along with the latest Ashton/Barroso Joint Communication on the ENP in May of this year – a blockbusting 300 pages of reports, country assessments and statistics – brings home just how far delivery remains in the future.¹² Although billions of euros are in the pipeline, it seems that the actual extra money going south in 2011 amounted to less than €200 million. An extra €130 million, mainly to Tunisia, was “made available” through the ENP, but, at the end of 2011, €45 million of this sum had not yet been allocated. Beyond that, European financial help comprised €80 million of humanitarian aid and €30 million of uncertain status coming from various other “instruments” (Brussels-speak for “funds”).

If money has been slow to materialise, mobility and markets have fared no better. €15 million of the €130 million noted above was for student exchanges under ERASMUS. But no-one on either side of the Mediterranean is under any illusion that the Mobility Partnerships proffered by the EU amount to much more than devices to secure North African cooperation in restricting emigration. “Visa facilitation” will come only when “readmission agreements” are in place. Actions by the European side to “maximise the positive impact of migration on

¹² “Delivering on a new European Neighbourhood Policy”, 15 May 2012. The full suite of documents is available at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/documents_en.htm#3

development” are left unspecified, and at the discretion of individual member states (which decide individually whether they want to be part of these agreements at all). Little wonder, then, that the Mobility Partnerships envisaged with Morocco and Tunisia have got no further than preliminary “dialogues”, and that Egypt has declined to engage even to that extent.

Meanwhile, on markets, the final agreement in early 2012 of a long-delayed tariff-cutting deal with Morocco on agricultural and fisheries products was a real step forward. But the equivalent agreement with Tunisia continues to languish: the Working Document released with the new Joint Communication envisages only that negotiations should be “well advanced” by the end of 2013.¹³ Progress on markets with the other southern neighbourhood countries is even further off. At the end of last year, the EU proposed Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreements (DCFTAs) to Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco (as well as Jordan), but, according to the Working Document, a “thorough scoping exercise” must take place before negotiations can even begin. And the emphasis found in the May 2011 Joint Communication on flanking, interim moves to provide some early improvement in market access has disappeared. Brussels, of course, is not wholly to blame for this sluggish process – as demonstrated by the difficulties of getting the Moroccan deal through the European Parliament. National interests, especially in the fisheries and agriculture sectors, are fiercely opposed to any liberalisation of trade across the Mediterranean.

In fairness, it takes two to tango – and societies contemplating, undergoing or recovering from revolutions have other preoccupations than engaging with outsiders, however well meaning. Nonetheless, there is a growing mismatch between the urgency and fragility of the situation in North Africa and a Brussels that feels that North Africa is now pretty much “in hand”; that the flaws in the execution of the old neighbourhood policy have been acknowledged and put right; that adequate plans for the future have been laid; and that the revamped approach to this particular part of the neighbourhood must now be allowed to settle into its stride. Fixing this will require a realisation of the limits of the ENP – which, along with its associated “instrument”, is at the heart of the Brussels approach – and a sharper focus on just how substantial is the European interest in doing whatever can be done to ensure that North Africa “comes out right”.

¹³ This Working Document, available at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/pship_democracy_report_roadmap_en.pdf, deals specifically with the southern neighbourhood. It provides a “one year on” assessment of progress with the March 2011 “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity” and includes a forward-looking “roadmap”.

The limits of the ENP

The ENP was born out of the great eastward enlargement of the EU, which was prepared through the 1990s and consummated in the following decade. The 2004 accession of eight new eastern and central European states moved the boundaries of the EU significantly to the east, creating a whole new set of neighbours or near-neighbours. Here was an historic opportunity to bring the states lying between the expanded EU and Russia ever more securely into the EU's sphere of influence.

It was natural that the European Commission chose to apply to this task essentially the same tools and techniques it had long used to prepare candidate countries to join the EU, through a comprehensive economic, political, legal and societal makeover. Gradually, laws and regulations in candidate countries are brought in line with those of the EU; the *acquis communautaire*, Europe's legal and regulatory rulebook, is implanted. The goal of this long, arduous process is to transform the target country into a modern, democratic, "European" state. The idea was that the countries of the new eastern neighbourhood could be similarly helped and cajoled into becoming "more like us".

It is debatable whether this "enlargement-lite" approach still works in the east as the prospect of accession recedes.¹⁴ But it is even more problematic in the south. The earlier Euro-Mediterranean Partnership – or "Barcelona Process" – which was formally subsumed in the new ENP in 2007 had admittedly stagnated. Aimed at encouraging closer understanding and cooperation between the two sides of the Mediterranean and identifying mutually beneficial economic and environmental projects, it had proved little but a talking shop. So something more dynamic and action-oriented was certainly needed. But in extending to the Arab states a new policy conceived for handling the eastern neighbourhood, Brussels simultaneously transferred a set of approaches and assumptions that do not sit comfortably with the very different "neighbours" to the south. And by focusing on the ENP techniques of "legal approximation and regulatory convergence", the strategy also neglects other tools better suited to shaping the sort of North Africa that Europeans would like to see. Thus the EU's ENP-based approach to North Africa misfires in a number of ways.

¹⁴ See, for example, Nicu Popescu and Andrew Wilson, "The Limits of Enlargement-lite. European and Russia Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood", European Council on Foreign Relations, June 2009, available at http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR14_The_Limits_of_Enlargement-Lite_European_and_Russian_Power_in_the_Troubled_Neighbourhood.pdf

It misconceives North Africans' identities and aspirations. Europe's six eastern neighbours all subscribe to at least a partial "European" identity (as, indeed, do the other two regional powers, Russia and Turkey). North Africans, on the other hand, see themselves as Arabs and Muslims who are part of their own regions and communities rather than floating unanchored on the fringes of the EU. Their economic and historical links with the powerful neighbour to the north may be important; but their affinities, and their security preoccupations, are directed much more to their own east and south. Above all, they know that membership of the EU will never be on offer to them, and they would not want it if it were. North African revolutionaries want freedom, dignity and quick economic help, not the European *acquis*.

It is no wonder that the "conditionality" of aid to the southern neighbourhood before the uprisings was a charade. Reform was not the real interest of either side – where was the mileage in North Africans becoming "more like us" if the logical destination of such a process, membership of the EU, was inconceivable? So each side quietly prioritised its core interests: for the North Africans, money and access to "Fortress Europe"; for the Europeans, a stable, prosperous and profitable North Africa – but basically one which could be kept at arm's length. Indeed, in terms of integration with Europe, the Mediterranean has widened since the ENP was conceived: Commissioner Romano Prodi could offer "everything but the institutions" – i.e. the prospect of full integration into Europe's single market, with the "four freedoms" of European integration (free movement of goods, services, capital and people); crisis-racked Europe is no longer ready to be so generous.

It is too bureaucratic. Geared to the goals of societal transformation, the ENP grinds, like the mills of God, slow and exceedingly small. As the new Joint Communication explains about DCFTAs, "the regulatory convergence implied by the DCFTAs in fields as diverse as sanitary and phytosanitary issues, technical regulations, customs procedures, public procurement and competition will require very substantial efforts by the partners to reform their legislation and develop the means to implement and enforce it." So newly democratic countries that thought that they might be rewarded with quick improvements in their access to EU markets were naïve – no short cuts are contemplated.

Nor is this European preference for "slow and steady" confined to the Commission. Under a UN division of labour, the EU assumed the lead last autumn in helping Libya to manage its borders. Yet the "needs assessment"

team was not even deployed till the end of February. Meanwhile, arms and explosives have continued to haemorrhage out of the country, and drugs and troublemakers to trickle in. The 50-strong civilian security advisory mission to Niger under the CSDP took nearly a year to materialise.

As the sense of urgency disappears, so too does the capacity to prioritise. For example, it would of course be lovely if “greater approximation to EU transport standards” results in “an improved track record in road safety”, but the North African revolutions will not stand or fall by this. In the same way, there will no doubt be some benefit from the EU technical assistance project on Integrated Maritime Policy implemented last year with Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia among others, “to help them build their capacity to articulate integrated approaches towards maritime affairs” – but not as much benefit as from, for example, getting a Ro-Ro ferry service reinstated between Egypt and Europe.

In short, this looks like a re-run of the original Lisbon Agenda – taking a relatively simple strategic aim and then so freighting it with subordinate objectives and the parochial concerns of all parts of the bureaucracy that in the end the original impulse is simply dissipated. And with it comes a heavy opportunity cost in terms of human resources: every smart Arab official who takes time out to attend a “dialogue” or to achieve a “better understanding of various complex regulatory issues” is being distracted from the urgent task of rebuilding his/her society and economy.

It underplays the regional dimension. The conceptual model that conceives of the 16 states of the “neighbourhood” as pale moons orbiting in Europe’s gravitational field undervalues the importance of encouraging regional integration, especially in the Maghreb. As we discuss later, this is vital for the economies and security of the countries concerned and could be a high road for European influence. The snifty approach towards North African efforts to revive the Arab Maghreb Union reflected in the latest Joint Communication shows all too clearly the traditional Commission preference for a “hub-and-spoke” model that allows it to deal bilaterally with each of its client states.¹⁵

¹⁵ “The EU is ready to support this and other regional and sub-regional cooperation and integration processes, and to cooperate with the relevant regional organisations and processes ... provided that the Maghreb partner countries demonstrate clear signs of progress in their regional cooperation effort.”

It neglects other tools and others' assets. The preoccupation with deploying the Commission's familiar resources – basically, the “3Ms” – leads to neglect of other tools and approaches which are in many ways more suited to the actual situation in North Africa. Revolutions are human dramas: politics in the raw. Political and diplomatic interaction matters as much or more as the prospect of economic help, but EU diplomats are thin on the ground in North Africa. Similarly, security is a key concern for the countries of the region, but the CSDP lies virtually unused.

And then there are the member states. Those most closely tied to North Africa may be suffering from a temporary disorientation and loss of nerve – but the fact remains that many of them dispose of connections and assets in dealing with North Africa which, taken together and often individually, far outweigh what the “3Ms” can offer. We return to this in the next chapter – and to the pressing need for Brussels now to up its game in reaching out to the member states involved and co-opting their efforts, if it is not to lose its leadership position and end up managing an interesting but hardly central sideshow.

Europe's interests in North Africa

Most importantly of all, the ENP approach seems blind to what is an historic opportunity to advance European interests. Under the ENP logic, “supporting the democratic transitions” is self-evidently the overriding European aim as part of the understood process of drawing the neighbours closer and making them more like us. Invoking European self-interest seems unnecessary and a little indecent – particularly in this season of contrition. What Europeans might want, and how they might shape developments in North Africa for what purposes, is left unformulated.

In part, this is no doubt because a big part of the self-interested case for helping North Africa, the region's economic potential, is hard to pitch to a Europe in crisis, with unemployment running in a number of member states at rates higher than those on the southern littoral. But the reality is that the global competitiveness of European industry may in future years depend on its ability to tap the abundance of cheap labour available so close at hand. This is not necessarily a matter of “delocalising” European jobs. With Chinese labour costs rising, the “relocalising” of light manufacturing tasks once transferred to the Far East is increasingly seen as an attractive option by European industry.

34 The production of parts and components in eastern and central Europe for

Bringing North African sun to Europe

The development of solar power in North Africa, which could bring carbon-free electricity to Europe, might easily be the most important trans-Mediterranean cooperation of future years.

The potential is vast. The Desertec project, backed by a consortium of mainly German companies, dreams of 100,000 megawatts (MW) of solar-generating capacity – enough to satisfy all of North Africa’s burgeoning electricity needs, and 15 percent of Europe’s as well – by 2050, for a €400 billion investment. The (mainly French and Spanish) Medgrid consortium is aiming for 20,000 MW by 2020, with a quarter coming to Europe.

However, there are big technical challenges: Consolidated Solar Power (CSP – based on mirrors and steam turbines, which are potentially more effective than photovoltaic arrays) is still not fully mature; high voltage, direct current transmission lines are only now being pioneered in China. But confidence and industrial interest are sufficiently high for the Mediterranean Solar Plan to be a Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) flagship project – and for the Commission to be funding the early project planning. First up will be a 500 MW CSP plant in Morocco, due to come on stream in 2015/16 (at a cost of €2 billion).

That plant will feed in to both Moroccan and Spanish grids, using the only extant Africa–Europe electricity link, which was installed to enable Morocco to import from Spain. Morocco and Tunisia currently import over 95 percent of their energy needs. Subsidies to shield the poor from global prices are a major drag on national finances. And across North Africa there is already an acute shortage of electricity-generating capacity – it will need, on some estimates, to double by 2020.

The win-win potential is evident: an enormous industrial project and clean energy for Europe; jobs, indigenous energy and a boost to regional cooperation in North Africa. But getting it off the ground will need “framework conditions” which attract private sector investors. Renewable energy investment receives favourable treatment in Europe in the context of the EU’s carbon emission reduction targets.

But just as there is reluctance to see European polluters slipping out of their obligations by planting trees in Amazonia to offset their carbon footprints, so there has been reluctance in Brussels to grant favourable treatment to efforts to bring solar power to Europe across the Mediterranean.

In its September 2011 Communication on “The EU Energy Policy: Engaging with Partners beyond Our Borders”, the Commission hints that it “may consider improving the conditions offered by the Renewables Directive on joint projects with Energy Community member countries and other third countries if this can be done without undermining the additionality and the level of ambition of the targets for renewable energy development in the EU”.

So far, nothing has happened: no doubt climate-change purists within the Commission are digging their heels in. But there could not be a better example of where Brussels needs to take a broader strategic view and overrule parochial interests. Otherwise, this golden chance to provide real support to North Africa, and to boost North–South and South–South co-operation in the Mediterranean, will wither.

the German automotive industry could be a model for a similar “win-win” approach across the Mediterranean.¹⁷

Less controversially, there are now exciting prospects for bringing to Europe carbon-free electricity generated by North African solar power, in serious quantities (see box below). In terms both of achieving climate-change objectives and of diversifying energy supplies, this area of trans-Mediterranean cooperation has huge potential.

¹⁶ European Commission, “On security of energy supply and international cooperation – “The EU Energy Policy: Engaging with Partners beyond Our Borders”, Brussels, 7 September 2011, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0539:FIN:EN:PDF>

¹⁷ As Jean Pisani-Ferry, of Bruegel, has pointed out: “Not only for goods but for services too, Europe needs to promote much more than it has so far the adoption of an outsourcing model in the most labour-intensive segments of the value chain, as Germany has done with great success – and which in part explains its bounce-back in global markets. While this model entails job losses in the North, it also preserves jobs by keeping production sites competitive and creates jobs by paving the way for development of the South.” Jean Pisani-Ferry, “Arab spring: Echoes of 1989”, Bruegel, 22 March 2011, available at <http://www.bruegel.org/blog/detail/article/218-arab-spring-echoes-of-1989/>

Brussels – and, in fairness, most national capitals too – also needs to wake up to the geostrategic significance of North Africa. There is no region in the world more important to Europe than the Middle East – whether as a source of energy, export orders and investment, or as a source of instability and terrorism. Establishing friendly and influential relations with the Arab states closest to us and, above all, with Egypt is a major strategic interest. As the historical Arab heavyweight, Egypt has been punching below its weight for years under the hollowed-out Mubarak state; working with the new Egypt (assuming that the generals allow this to emerge) could make a big difference to Europe’s ability to help solve regional problems such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. This will become even more important as US interest and influence in the region wanes as it pursues energy self-sufficiency and rebalances towards Asia.

In the broader Islamic world, Europe has much ground to make up after Iraq, Afghanistan and the boycott of Hamas. After a decade of misadventures which have fed the “clash of civilisations” narrative upon which jihadis thrive, Europe badly needs to achieve a more constructive *modus vivendi* with the Islamic world – not least given its own large, integral Muslim communities. Building relations of mutual trust and respect with North Africa would be a great start. Under the autocrats, North Africa has been a backwater. But one may expect the countries of the region to play a much more active role in the future in an Organisation of the Islamic Conference and an Arab League which are themselves becoming more important.

North Africa is also, it is worth recalling, African. It will be impossible to deal with the problems of the Sahel – humanitarian, developmental or security – except on a regional basis. As its own ability to influence events – whether as the EU or as individual member states – has declined, so Europe has become increasingly aware of the contribution such organisations as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) can make – in West Africa itself or, as currently, in Mali. So stronger intra-regional cooperation in North Africa is important not just for the region’s economic development but also for the stability and security that Europeans can no longer pretend to supply themselves.

The comfortable assumption that the old colonies across the Mediterranean have nowhere else to go – in other words, that they have no option but to camp outside the walls of “Fortress Europe”, accepting whatever degree of access and interaction Europeans see fit to grant them – is increasingly unreliable in today’s post-Western world. Gulf money – and even talk of admission to the

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – is propping up the monarchy in Morocco and reportedly funding Islamist parties (including Salafis in Egypt and Muslim Brotherhood affiliates in Libya) elsewhere. Nor can the self-exclusion of Russia and China by their support of first Gaddafi and now Assad be counted on indefinitely – as President Morsi’s choice of Beijing for his first visit out of the Middle East serves notice. If Europe does not move to strengthen its ties with the new North Africa, others will.

In short, Europe needs to stop seeing the countries of North Africa as five out of 16 individual supplicants camped outside its walls, which are to be given a helping hand in accordance with the dictates of conscience (“European values”) – and to avoid them making trouble. To the extent that the democratic transitions in these countries succeed, they will evolve from clients to actors, with their own distinct regional identities and influence. In other words, the question is not how we can make them more like us – the question on which the ENP approach is based – but how we can make them partners, friends and allies.

Unless European leaders start to think more carefully about their interests, the new policy the EU has adopted towards post-revolutionary North Africa will be unsustainable. The carrots they offer will be inadequate to meet the expectations of new, or even just reforming, governments. And, as Europe’s economic crisis continues and the excitement of the “Arab Spring” fades, so too will the willingness of member state governments actively to support the Brussels strategy. If Europe neglects other ways to build relationships and influence with the countries of the southern Mediterranean that go beyond the ENP, the stage is set for mutual disillusionment, and reversion to the old dispensation under which the member states delegated to Brussels the role of preaching human rights and democracy while they themselves got on with pursuing their own commercial and security interests.

For years, the member states instrumentalised the EU to provide cover for the pursuit of disreputable and short-sighted national policies to the countries of North Africa. It has been Brussels’s achievement to reclaim a degree of policy leadership in the shocked aftermath of the first Arab uprisings. To retain that leadership and exercise it effectively both in support of democratic forces in the region and of furthering European interests, Brussels must now, among other things, apply itself to orchestrating the member states – to whose positions and preoccupations we now turn.

Chapter 3

The Member States and North Africa

As is now generally acknowledged, European policy towards North Africa in the years leading up to the Arab revolutions was basically a charade. The autocrats pretended to reform, and the EU pretended that its assistance to the southern neighbourhood rewarded good behaviour. In practice, Brussels smiled on those whom individual member states most vigorously sponsored – Morocco (for which a special “advanced status” was invented) and Tunisia in the forefront.

The result was European policy operating across the Mediterranean in two parallel universes – an EU policy (to which, of course, all member states subscribed) that emphasised human rights and progress towards democracy; and the bilateral policies of the southern member states which focused on national interest. Such interest was conceived, naturally enough, in terms of economic advantage – but perhaps even more in terms of keeping North Africa, with its teeming populations and disturbing religion, at arm’s length. As Olivier Roy has summarised it: “The necessity to have an all-encompassing policy of cooperation with the other side of the Mediterranean was understood essentially as a way to deal with security issues, namely immigration, terrorism and the spread of radical Islam.”¹⁸

The Arab uprisings sliced through all this. They seemed to demonstrate that, even in its own security-prioritising terms, the policy of accommodation, of subordinating concern for democracy and human rights to concern for stability, had failed. As Štefan Füle expressed it: “Too many of us fell prey to

¹⁸ Olivier Roy, “Europe and the Mediterranean: When Obsession for Security Misses the Real World”, European University Institute Working Paper RSCAS 2012/20, May 2012, available at http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/21918/RSCAS_2012_20.pdf?sequence=1

the assumption that authoritarian regimes were a guarantee of stability in the region. This was not even Realpolitik. It was, at best, short-termism – and the kind of short-termism that makes the long-term ever more difficult to build.”¹⁹

The strategic shock – reinforced by the coincidence of Europe’s economic crisis, which was simultaneously sapping the self-confidence of most of the southern member states – created the policy vacuum which, as we have seen, the Brussels institutions adroitly filled. But a policy based on contrition – and one that avoids frank acknowledgement of real and enduring national interests – can hardly be sustainable.

Indeed, there are already signs that the European consensus is beginning to unravel. Debates in Brussels on “conditionality” are dividing member states between those that argue that “more for more” should also imply “less for less” (i.e. that if promised reform in Morocco or Algeria turns out to be merely cosmetic, aid to such backsliders should be cut), and those – above all, the southern member states – who want to deal exclusively in carrots (though not, of course, the vegetables themselves). At the same time, the unhappy way in which Brussels puts all “neighbourhood” funding into one pot, and thus creates a zero-sum game between southern and eastern neighbourhoods, inevitably splits the member states into the natural east-prioritising and south-prioritising camps.

In short, the default option is a return to the “parallel universes” of the past – a situation that will be avoided only by creating a much more effective synergy between policymaking at the European and the national levels. To understand how this might be done, it is necessary to take a closer look at just what interests the individual member states have in North Africa, and what means are at their disposal to influence the course of events there.

¹⁹ Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, “Speech on the recent events in North Africa”, European Parliament, Brussels, 28 February 2011, available at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/11/130>

Mediterranean ties

Of course, the member states of the northern littoral are those with the strongest trans-Mediterranean ties – of history, culture and language, and of present-day economic interaction. Nevertheless, the extent to which the southern member states have dominated relations with North Africa – or, to put it another way, the extent to which most other member states have simply and literally overlooked the region in recent decades, focusing their attention instead on the wider Middle East and on sub-Saharan Africa – is surprising. Almost as surprising is the degree to which even among the Mediterranean member states it is only the “big three” – France, Italy and Spain – that have counted, and how among these three France has been the pre-eminent power. The relative absence of other member states from the Mediterranean world is illustrated by the league table of trade with North Africa (see figure 1): the eight “top traders” are the seven Mediterranean states, plus Portugal.

Figure 1

Europe’s top traders with North Africa

(percent of member states’ total trade, 2010)

	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Morocco	Tunisia	Total
Italy	1.55	0.69	2.13	0.28	0.82	5.47
Spain	1.49	0.5	0.82	1.39	0.33	4.53
Greece	0.64	0.77	2.42	0.11	0.11	4.05
France	0.89	0.34	0.68	0.76	0.8	3.47
Portugal	0.52	0.25	0.83	0.44	0.27	2.31
Malta	0	0.18	1.28	0.15	0.17	1.78
Cyprus	0.03	1.04	0.26	0.01	0.09	1.43
Slovenia	0.5	0.27	0.16	0.09	0.08	1.1

Source: Eurostat

Much of this trade, especially in the cases of league-leading Italy and Spain, constitutes fuel imports from Algeria and Libya. The former supplies 15 percent of total EU gas imports, the latter around 3 percent. Most of it comes via four trans-Mediterranean pipelines (two from Algeria to Spain – one directly, the other via Morocco – and two to Italy, one from Algeria via Tunisia, the other directly from Libya). There are spurs to Portugal and Slovenia; interconnectors beyond are poor. So, when it comes to gas imports from the main North African supplier, it is these four Mediterranean member states that are the principal customers (see figure 2).

Figure 2
 EU gas imports from Algeria (terawatt hours), 2010

	From Algeria	Total consumption of gas	Percent
Portugal	26.6	51.6	51.6
Slovenia	3.6	10.5	34.3
Italy	295.7	877.9	33.7
Spain	122	400.1	30.5
France	73.9	549.7	13.4
UK	11.5	1093.2	1.1

Source: Eurostat

For oil, Libya is the dominant supplier from North Africa to Europe. In 2010, Libya accounted for almost 11 percent of the EU’s crude oil imports, compared with less than 1.6 percent coming from Algeria and 0.7 percent from Egypt (see figure 3). The pattern of trade is more dispersed than that of gas, with 10 member states as customers – but Italy is by a margin the biggest buyer, with France second. (Ireland’s relatively high use of Libyan oil is an interesting quirk – perhaps a legacy of Gaddafi’s sympathy for a country often at odds with the “imperialist” British.)

Figure 3
European crude oil imports from Libya, 2010

	Kbpd	Percent of total crude imports
Italy	376	22
France	205	15.7
Germany	144	7.7
Spain	136	12.1
UK	95	8.5
Cyprus	63	14.6
Austria	31	21.2
Netherlands	31	2.3
Portugal	27	11.1
Ireland	14	23.3

Source: IEA

Turning to financial indicators, France is by far the biggest investor (see figure 4). Although there are some gaps in the data (including figures for three countries which the UK deems “confidential”), France’s investment in North Africa and particularly in Morocco dwarfs that of other member states such as Italy, which is a big investor in Algeria and Egypt, and the UK, which is a big investor in Egypt.

Figure 4
Top 5 European investors in North Africa, 2009–10
 (direct investment stocks in million USD)

	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Morocco	Tunisia	Total
France	2771	7055	1195	14,631	1,527	24,960
Italy	2521	4836	249	232	535	8,373
UK	c	6810	c	103	c	6,913
Spain	n/a	1061	660	1573	n/a	3,294
Germany	314	859	886	239	243	2,258

Source: OECD
 c = Confidential
 n/a = Not Available
 Figures for Spain in Libya, and all German figures, are for 2009

France is also by far the biggest aid donor – as with investment stocks, the French numbers exceed those of the other member states (see figure 5).

Figure 5
European donors to North Africa, 2010
 (million USD)

	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Morocco	Tunisia	Total
France	70	140	4	254	127	595
EU institutions	52	137	1	223	92	505
Spain	10	7		91	158	266
Germany	10	104	4	39	24	181
Total EU 26*	115	308	10	420	320	1173
Total (EU 26 plus EU institutions)	166	444	11	644	413	1678

Source: OECD
 * Data for Bulgaria unavailable

Here, it is interesting to note that although Brussels (and indeed member states foregathered in Brussels) tend to behave as though ENP aid were “the only game in town”, the sums involved are less than half those offered by the three main bilateral EU donors (who themselves account for almost 90 percent of European bilateral aid) – and that France by itself was in 2010 a bigger donor than the EU institutions in each and every one of the North African states. Spanish aid to Tunisia similarly outstripped what was on offer from Brussels.

Two other important dimensions of relations between EU member states and North African states are migration and defence and security. Migration, of course, works both ways – there are tens of thousands of French retirees in Morocco, and a substantial Italian community in Tunisia. Tourism, too, has in recent years introduced North Africa to millions of Europeans as never before – half a million Poles visited in 2010. But what really matters in terms of European policy is the existence of major North African communities within the EU member states, not least for the impulse thus given to national governments to view North Africa through the “security and stability” prism – in other words, primarily as a threat, whether in the form of Islamic radicalisation and terrorism in European cities or even as the source of the “human tsunami” which a panicky Berlusconi government predicted in the early days of the Arab uprisings.

Populist fear of Muslim immigration has, of course, spread widely across Europe in recent years. The North African “footprint” in Europe is concentrated mainly in six member states (see figure 6). Eurostat has no data on Germany, but World Bank data confirms that it is up there with France, Spain, Italy and the Low Countries as the main destinations of North African emigrants.²⁰ (No other EU member state features in the top 10 destinations for any of the North African countries except for the UK, the eighth most popular choice for Algerians.)

²⁰ World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAC/Resources/Factbook2011-Ebook.pdf>

Figure 6
 North African-born populations in member states
 (thousands), 2010

	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Tunisia	Morocco	Total
France	1,366	29	2	371	871	2,639
Spain	61	4	–	3	766	834
Italy	–	81	–	83	356	520
Belgium	22	–	–	12	179	213
Netherlands	4	12	1	4	168	189
Total	1,453	126	3	473	2,340	4,395

Source: Eurostat

The popularity of France, Italy and Spain is to be expected, that of Germany unsurprising. The presence of so many Moroccans in the Low Countries may link back to the recruitment of thousands of miners by Belgium after the Second World War, in part to dig the network of tunnels that honeycombs the substructure of Brussels.

Defence and security links are harder to quantify. It is clear that the security services of member states with significant concerns about radicalisation and terrorism have collaborated extensively with those of the old autocracies. But, except in such cases as the alleged UK involvement in the “rendition” of the Libyan Abdul Hakim Belhaj, such collaboration rarely comes to light. More overt defence ties have not been substantial, concentrated mainly on arms sales. France has been Morocco’s traditional armourer (though recently beaten by the United States to a new Moroccan contract for combat aircraft); and in the five years following the lifting of the arms embargo on Gaddafi in 2003, €834 million of European export licences were issued – about a third to Italian companies.²¹

²¹ Simon Rogers, “EU arms exports to Libya: who armed Gaddafi?”, 1 March 2011, *Guardian*, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/mar/01/eu-arms-exports-libya>

The United States has dominated defence links with Egypt, with its \$1.3 billion annual subvention to the Egyptian military – though a projected German sale of two submarines has recently made news.²² Meanwhile, Algeria continues to rely on Russia – almost all of the \$5 billion of weapons it imported between 2006 and 2011 (more than the other four North African countries put together) came from there.²³ However, Algeria, which increased its defence budget by 44 percent in 2011, is currently discussing with Germany a \$14 billion deal for frigates and armoured vehicles, which would be a major departure.²⁴

There are, however, some long-established military-to-military ties across the western Mediterranean, principally through the “5+5” forum.²⁵ The concerns of the North African countries (and, indeed, some of the European ones) over instability in the Sahel have led to reinvigoration of this forum following the Arab uprisings. A 5+5 summit is planned for Malta in October.

Looking back on these data, it is little wonder that the EU should in practice have allowed itself to be “instrumentalised” by a small number of Mediterranean states, to provide rhetorical cover for a policy based on *realpolitik*. The vast bulk of member states simply had no interest (in either sense) in the region. An EU policy that acknowledges, or even defers to, a subset of member states that have interests and connections that others lack is not necessarily a bad thing in itself. Indeed, one that seeks to work against the grain of important national objectives, or fails to co-opt important national assets and leverage, is unlikely to be successful – a lesson for the future. But the question arises of how far the “Arab Spring”, and indeed Europe’s concurrent economic crisis, has reshuffled the European pack.

²² “Berlin rejects talk of Israeli relations hit by submarine sale to Egypt”, 3 September 2012, Haaretz, available at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/berlin-rejects-talk-of-israeli-relations-hit-by-submarine-sale-to-egypt-1.462488>

²³ SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, available at <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/>

²⁴ Ralf Beste, Dietmar Hipp, Ralf Neukirch and Thomas Wiegold, “Tank Deal Reveals New Arms Exports Approach”, Spiegel, 7 December 2011, available at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/contradiction-coalition-tank-deal-reveals-new-arms-exports-approach-a-773931.html>

²⁵ This forum brings together Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania in the south and Italy, Malta, France, Spain and Portugal in the north, to focus particularly on security issues, including joint exercising and the provision of training.

New actors, different dynamics

Three years before the train of events set off by Mohammed Bouazizi's suicide, the then-French President Nicolas Sarkozy attempted to have the "southern neighbourhood" officially acknowledged as the *chasse gardée* of the southern member states. His original scheme for a "Mediterranean Union" excluded non-Mediterranean EU states. The ploy backfired, meeting the opposition of a number of northern member states led by Germany (who forced the "Union for the Mediterranean" compromise, with seats for all 27 member states at the table) – and perhaps predisposing these oppositionists to pay closer attention when the Arab uprisings spread across North Africa.

Certainly, a wide range of previously uninterested member states have reacted with the evident wish to be not merely sympathetic spectators, but actors too. Witness the military intervention in Libya where – despite the German blunder in opting to stay out – northern member states were strongly represented in a coalition led by the UK alongside France.²⁶ The Nordic interest has endured, with Sweden finding \$50 million for a new aid programme for the region, and Denmark and Finland also boosting their humanitarian and development aid. Similarly, the UK has put £110 million into a new Arab Partnership Fund, while Germany has offered an extra €100 million over two years for North Africa, and has converted €60 million of Tunisian debt and €240 million of Egyptian debt into development grants. The Dutch too (despite preoccupation with political Islam, and with protecting their horticultural industry) have promised new help to local NGOs. And, as noted before, these northerners have shown a new determination to press for rigorous conditionality to attach to future EU aid.

In central and eastern Europe, the Arab uprisings evoked memories of 1989, leading to much popular sympathy and a number of governments volunteering to share their experiences of revolutionary transitions. There has been little take-up – and, as combat has resumed in Brussels over the division of spoils between eastern and southern "neighbourhoods" under the new European Neighbourhood Instrument for the years 2014–2020, so the fellow-feeling of these member states for the Arab revolutionaries has tended to fade. There

²⁶ European participation in the Libyan campaign may be divided into three levels of commitment: those who bombed (France, the UK, Belgium, Denmark, Italy – and Norway); those who flew fighter patrols (the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden); and those who provided a naval presence (Bulgaria, Greece and Romania).

has, after all, been generally little contact with North Africa (tourism apart) over the past two decades – less, indeed, than under the old Communist regimes. But Poland has had the Arab states and not just Ukraine and Belarus in mind in its sponsorship of the new European Endowment for Democracy; Bulgaria has persisted in its efforts to share its historical experience of transition through the Sofia Platform, which met twice in 2011; and Romania has boosted its exports to the region.

As these non-traditional players have in their various ways displayed a new interest and involvement in North Africa, so the southern member states have tended to be absorbed by their own economic difficulties. Portugal, sensing commercial opportunity, has set closer economic ties with the Maghreb as a strategic goal for the next four years. But the more general reaction has been introversion, even a collapse of confidence. Thus Greece and Cyprus, despite a traditional political and economic closeness to the Arab world, have been almost wholly absorbed by their own problems – and by growing alarm at the way in which the “Arab Spring” has boosted Turkey’s power and influence in the region. Their hopes are now pinned on the new gas finds off Cyprus, which they see as offering a golden chance, through joint exploitation and energy transit tie-ups, to cement a new strategic alliance with Israel. This seems a bigger prize than anything that could be achieved by courting a newly Turkophile North Africa.

Spain and Italy have also been handicapped in their reactions by their economic ills. Both placed themselves, after some initial hesitation, on “the right side of history”, and both have tried to help financially. The then-Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero contributed €300 million through the EIB and a further €50 million in other aid; and, having rethought its development aid to the region, the government of Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy is expected shortly to detail a new, more strategic approach to democracy promotion. Italy has largely converted over €350 million of Egyptian debt into grant aid. But neither country has been in the mood to throw open its doors to either migrants or exports from North Africa – their MEPs fought fiercely against the modest concessions finally offered to Moroccan agriculture and fish products. (The Spanish are always uncomfortably aware that they are the natural point of entry to the EU for Moroccan immigrants and tomatoes, but that they cannot match the intimacy of French political and commercial ties to the Moroccan royal court.) And the elite relationships of both countries, like indeed France, have suffered where revolutions have severed old networks.

France, of course, was most spectacularly wrong-footed by the uprisings, and by its offer of help to Ben Ali in putting down the initial protests in Tunis. With characteristic audacity, Sarkozy was quick to reposition himself as the revolutionaries' friend, leading the charge in Libya and using his G8 presidency to put together a \$40 billion international aid package at Deauville in May 2011.²⁷ Nevertheless, in Paris, as in Madrid and Rome, a certain loss of confidence has been apparent – exemplified by France's readiness to surrender the European lead on the UfM to Brussels. Conducting interviews in the early summer, we were struck in all three capitals by our interlocutors' insistence that other Europeans, and the EU especially, must now play a bigger role in North Africa. The old security-based fears remain not far beneath the surface of professed welcomes for the revolutions. French, Italian and Spanish officials were quite explicit with us in complaining that their "central and northern European friends" need to take the situation in North Africa much more seriously and get much more involved.

Thus, while strategic shock and economic crises in southern Europe have induced the Mediterranean member states to reassess the benefits of their former monopoly of relations with North Africa, other member states have a new interest in and attention to the region. These developments have helped Brussels lead a generally united European response to the Arab revolutions. Yet emerging policy divisions in debates in Brussels suggest that this convergence remains both partial and unstable. Towards the non-transitional countries of Algeria and Morocco, France and Spain show a continuing commitment to a more directly bilateral approach. French President François Hollande issued early statements affirming the importance he attaches to friendly ties to both these countries, while Rajoy followed tradition in choosing Morocco for his first official visit. Both leaders enthused about the Moroccan king's commitment to reform.

France's position in particular will be pivotal. As we have seen, France is the leading European aid donor to the region (outstripping the EU itself), the biggest investor, and host to the largest North African immigrant population. In Morocco, its position and connections are uniquely powerful, and have not been disturbed by any significant political change. On top of this, the new French

²⁷ In the established tradition of G8 summitry, by the time of the next meeting at Camp David a year later this headline figure had evaporated, leaving just windy platitudes about "commitment to the Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition". See *Camp David Declaration*, Camp David, Maryland, United States, 18–19 May 2012, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/19/camp-david-declaration>. However, France claims that, for its part, it has provided or pledged over €1 billion in early aid.

government has the opportunity for a fresh start, untainted by Paris's earlier collaboration with the old autocrats; and Hollande has made clear his wish to turn the page on 50 years of estrangement from Algeria. But how will France choose to wield its influence?

If, for example, Hollande succeeds in engineering an historic reconciliation with Algeria, will he use the repaired relationship to urge genuine reform on the gerontocracy in Algiers – or just to pursue the traditional defensive, “keep them at arm’s length” agenda? If Brussels, and other Europeans, want France to devote its efforts to the common goal of “supporting democratic transitions”, they will have to do a better job of responding to France’s own concerns (in the present example, by showing some European readiness to act in the Sahel, not just talk about it). More generally, if Europeans are to bring their united weight to bear on North Africa, they will have to make real efforts to converge on shared and balanced strategies, and not just relapse into parallel universes.

Exercising influence

But how much weight can Europeans, severally and collectively, realistically expect to carry in North Africa? We argued in Chapter 2 that Brussels has been institutionally predisposed to overestimate the attractiveness of its “offer” to the “southern neighbourhood” – and there is even less appetite in North Africa in the wake of the “dignity” revolutions for being bossed about by foreigners. Nor does it help that the very term “conditionality” is most normally associated in North Africa with IMF efforts to promote economic reform – that is to say, with a neoliberal economic agenda which, from Rabat to Tunis to Cairo, was seized on by the incumbent regimes to sell off great chunks of the state at knockdown prices to family and friends.

True, the new governments in North Africa are under particular pressure to deliver for their people on the economy. Aid, trade and investment should be more important to them. And, though trans-Mediterranean trade may account for less than 4 percent of the EU’s external trade, the relationship bulks a lot larger when seen from the other shore – the EU accounts for 77 percent of Libya’s exports, 74 percent of Tunisia’s, 59 percent of Morocco’s, 49 percent of Algeria’s, and 31 percent of Egypt’s. Significant remittances also flow back from Europe to North Africa – in the case of Morocco, to the tune of \$6.4 billion a year, or 5 percent of GDP.

This situation would, however, provide Europe with leverage over North Africa only if it were ready to make significant early concessions on trade or migration – which it evidently is not. Nor are ENP aid allocations going to cut significant ice. Libya and Algeria have their own hydrocarbon revenues, and have historically shown little interest in jumping through the hoops of the EU’s neighbourhood policy; they are likely to continue to regard offers of money and wider market access with indifference. Egypt receives more substantial sums, for which its interim military rulers showed a complete disregard as they persisted with military trials of civilians and clamped down on Western NGOs. Indeed, the Egyptian interim government chose not to respond to EU offers of talks on free trade and migration, while the EU was able to disburse only €39 million out of the €144 million allocated in 2011, because of the lack of a partner to undertake funded projects. At this crucial juncture in Egypt’s development, the EU’s ENP offers appeared simply irrelevant to the dominant political forces.

Only in the cases of Morocco and Tunisia – resource-poor, traditionally Europe-oriented – might ENP “carrots” be imagined to make any impact on their leaders’ calculations and decisions. Yet the “transitions to democracy” underway are proceeding in a fashion that manifestly has everything to do with internal political dynamics and nothing at all to do with ENP allocations. When Tunisians decide not to ban alcohol or bikinis, or the Moroccan king quashes the attempt of his new Islamist government to introduce the call to prayer on state television, the calculations are about the sort of societies the local authorities want to maintain, and about the need to continue to attract foreign tourists and investment. Given that the ENP annual aid amounts to 0.004 percent of GNP in the case of Tunisia, and half that in the case of Morocco, and is anyway less than what is on offer from France and other member states, none of this should be a surprise.

If Brussels tends to overestimate its leverage, the same charge cannot be levelled at the southern member states, whose policies have been essentially defensive – like the early English paying “Danegeld” to keep the Viking marauders at bay, their main preoccupation has been to pay the autocrats to keep the energy taps open and the migration taps shut.

It is now time for a more optimistic view, and a reclassification of a changing North Africa as opportunity more than threat. Whatever concerns Europeans may continue to harbour about how Islamists in government may treat their own people, old anxieties about sponsorship of radicalisation and terrorism should clearly now be discarded.

The notion of “energy dependence” should similarly be up for re-examination. Of course, European energy companies have established trans-Mediterranean relationships that they are anxious to preserve. But the statistics above (see figure 3) cannot support any idea that Europe collectively, or even the main buyers among the member states, are in any sense “dependent” on Libyan oil in what is essentially a fungible global market. The new Libya anyway needs its oil revenues for reconstruction, and will naturally favour adjacent markets.

Gas might at first seem a different story, given the extent to which pipelines tie customers to suppliers, and the big proportions of their needs that Italy, Spain, Portugal and Slovenia obtain from Algeria (see figure 2). Yet, as has been much debated in relation to European gas imports from Russia, this sort of customer/supplier relationship cuts both ways. In any case, whatever the position in the past, the balance of power today looks set to shift to the customer: in the words of a recent report from the Congressional Research Service, “since the advent of shale gas in the United States, the world appears to be potentially awash in natural gas”.²⁸ At a time when Algeria is massively increasing its spending on social subsidies and on defence, and more and more liquefied natural gas (LNG) is traded globally, there seems little need for Europeans to view this connection as a vulnerability.

In short, Europeans may not be able to “lever” North Africans: but neither is the right posture a defensive crouch. And events are offering Europe new avenues of influence, and opportunities to exercise it, to which it should be alive. For, for all its past failings, Europe still has plenty of “moral” influence at its disposal. The old colonial powers may have been compromised by their collaboration with the old regimes – but ties of language and culture remain strong. Newly democratic or even just tentatively reforming regimes clearly value Brussels’s seal of approval. And some of Europe’s new actors are raising their profile too. For example, the role of Germany’s political institutions in Cairo and Nordic diplomats and NGOs across North Africa have enhanced their countries’ reputations. And, where old networks have been severed, new connections have taken their place: some member states have established diplomatic lines to the Muslim Brotherhood; two former members of Ireland’s Libyan émigré community were included in the country’s interim government; and so on.

²⁸ Michael Ratner, Paul Belkin, Jim Nichol and Steven Woehrel, “Europe’s Energy Security: Options and Challenges to Natural Gas Supply Diversification”, Congressional Research Service, 13 March 2012, available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42405.pdf>

None of this may amount to “leverage”. But it certainly constitutes the potential for influence. And some of the opportunities now presenting themselves to Europeans to shape events in North Africa and build closer ties cry out to be exploited – as with the provision of macroeconomic assistance, or the region’s security preoccupations. Sometimes the attainment of influence can be planned, as in the context of aid programmes. Sometimes it will be an unsought, perhaps even unwelcome, by-product – for example, it will be difficult for Germany to proceed with its big arms deal with Algeria without securing some further commitment to reform. But it will be there to be used; in a region where European values and interests are so heavily in play, the role of sympathetic bystander is not good enough.

To exercise their influence to good effect, however, Europeans will have to avoid the pursuit, as in past years, of conflicting and mutually undermining strategies. Powerful though Brussels may be, more of the cards are in member state hands. The parallel universes of the past must be replaced with effective teamwork between Brussels and national capitals, based on a shared idea of the sort of North Africa that Europe would like to help shape, and of where European priorities should lie. In the final chapter, we offer some specific proposals.

Chapter 4

How Europe can do better

We have argued that Brussels did a good initial job in rallying the member states round a respectable policy response to the Arab revolutions – but that this consensus is now fraying. To maintain a unified and effective European position, Brussels needs to adapt its approach in three main ways. First, it needs to work more actively to bind in the member states, encouraging them according to their different interests and assets to support shared policies. Second, it must allow for the reality that important national stakes in North Africa have not simply evaporated during the last 18 months. Third, in deploying its own instruments, it needs to recognise institutional bias towards treating the North African countries as “neighbours” to be transformed into little Europeans. In short, it must be less technocratic and more political in its approach – which, given the nature of the beast, is a big ask.

The member states must play their part too. Their default option, if they do not like what Brussels is up to, is to lose interest and/or to revert to national policies that can hollow out the declared EU policy, to leave little more than a façade – as per Europe’s dealings with North Africa prior to the uprisings. So the newly interested non-Mediterranean member states have a duty to remain engaged, challenging both Brussels institutions and their southern partners as necessary – while the southern states must be frank with their partners about the constraints and demands of their specific national interests, but also raise their sights above the short-term realpolitik of the past.

In the following sections we set out what this should mean in practice, in some of the key policy areas.

From “more for more” to political strategies

In theory, European assistance to the southern littoral has always been “conditional” – that is, subject to progress on jointly agreed “action plans” for democratic reform. In practice, however, the autocrats got what it suited the southern member states to see them get. So it was necessary and right that a central part of the EU’s response to the Arab revolutions should be a shared determination to apply conditionality properly in the future. But, as the debates among member states in Brussels are now beginning to reveal, the problems are more deep-seated than just the spirit in which the policy is operated. The very idea that Europe can best influence developments in North Africa by conditional application of the “3Ms” – that is, by fine-tuning the quantities of aid and degrees of access it grants to its southern neighbours based on regular assessment of their “progress” – has some major flaws.

For one thing, formulating the “ask” is fraught with difficulty. Clearly, Europeans should not again be satisfied with the occasional piece of electoral theatre; the aim must be something closer to what Catherine Ashton has termed “deep democracy” including free and fair elections, the rule of law, security sector reform, freedom of expression and other human rights.²⁹ It is hard to argue with the desirability of any of these aims – yet the risk is that they translate into an unprioritised laundry list of actions which, as past experience has demonstrated, smart Arab “partners” will find all too easy to game if they want to.

Then there is the practical problem that effective aid programmes simply cannot be turned on and off like a tap – and that it may even be self-defeating to try to do so. If a democratic transition falters or goes into reverse, it is not so much the regime responsible that will be affected by a cutback in ENP assistance as the economically and politically disadvantaged sections of society whom the aid is primarily intended to support. So a number of southern member states are resistant to the proposition that “more for more” should also imply “less for less”.

²⁹ In the Joint Communication of May 2011, “deep democracy” is said to include “free and fair elections; freedom of association, expression and assembly and a free press and media; the rule of law administered by an independent judiciary and right to a fair trial; fighting against corruption; security and law enforcement sector reform (including the police) and the establishment of democratic control over armed and security forces.” See “A New Response”, n. 11 *supra*, p. 3. In February 2012, Catherine Ashton and Stefan File sent an unpublished letter to EU Foreign Ministers on the operation of conditionality that added “the respect of other human rights” to this list.

Spreading the net of desired reforms so wide also risks turning “conditionality” into a programme of societal transformation – always a temptation, as we argue in Chapter 2, for the operators of the ENP. Applying conditionality based on respect for human rights is particularly problematic. As we noted in Chapter 1, the societies of North Africa have largely revealed themselves as conservative and unreceptive to European notions of secularism – if that is to be interpreted as keeping religion out of politics. Islam concerns society in all its aspects, including governance and government. And conservative Islam has attitudes to such issues as gender equality, blasphemy and homosexuality that are strongly at variance with modern European norms. Any European attempt to make such matters the subject of “conditionality” in their aid-giving would certainly be contentious, and probably unproductive.

Ultimately, however, the real problem with the idea of “doing conditionality properly in future” is that the carrots on offer under the “3Ms” are simply not big enough to constitute real leverage – especially in the post-uprising environment. As we argued in Chapter 3, neither the member states nor indeed Brussels is without influence. But attempts to bribe North Africans to behave as we might wish did not work in the past, and are even less likely to work now. Conditionality makes sense as a way of channelling extra resources to those countries that are genuinely reforming, but it cannot bear the full weight of Europe’s hopes to influence the course of developments in the southern Mediterranean.

So what would work better? The answer is essentially to broaden the approach from a Brussels-led, ENP-based, technocratic process of assessment to a more strategic policy which:

- focuses on a narrower set of benchmarks;
- seeks to exercise influence less through an ongoing assessment process than at key junctures;
- brings to bear other incentives beyond those of the ENP;
- differentiates between the countries of the region not just in terms of their “democratic progress” but in terms of their different receptivity to European influence;
- acknowledges the reality of member state interests to the extent necessary to ensure that the key players support the collective approach not just in Brussels but in their bilateral dealings too.

Tempting though it is to try to chase down all the aspects of “deep democracy”, Europe should focus its attention on the core elements of political legitimacy – in other words, the degree to which the countries of the region offer political systems that are accountable and responsive to their populations as a whole. The EU’s approach of “rewarding” reform will be most acceptable where it seems to be aligned with local aspirations, rather than trying to second-guess what those aspirations should be.

The “more for more” calculus should therefore focus on the non-negotiable aspects of a legitimate democratic political system – including political accountability, freedom of expression and an independent judiciary. That is not of course to say that Europeans should give up on what they conceive as universal values. But the way to promote, for example, gay rights or the abolition of the death penalty is to help those constituencies in local society which are already pressing such agendas, through the traditional methods of EU civil society support and the new European Endowment for Democracy.³⁰

The concept of political legitimacy should also inform the junctures at which Europeans seek to exercise influence. One such moment is likely to arrive this autumn in relation to Egypt, which urgently needs billions in macroeconomic assistance as its foreign exchange reserves evaporate. The original plan, based on the assumption that the SCAF would honour their promise to bow out mid-year, was for an autumn “task force” event, with the EU coordinating the requisite international rescue package as its centrepiece. The SCAF, of course, did no such thing; but, now that President Morsi has apparently succeeded in ushering the top brass offstage, the plan is presumably back on – and the EU should be thinking hard about how best to exploit the moment.

Europe has not handled Egypt well to date. Brussels has been much too quiet about the SCAF’s violations of human rights and the summer’s attempted “judicial coup”. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton took a political risk when she spoke out in Cairo on 14 July in support of “the full transition to civilian rule with all that entails”, and “the military’s return to a purely national security role”.³¹ But she had taken a stand on the right side of the argument

³⁰ For more on these points, see Susi Dennison and Anthony Dworkin, “Europe and the Arab Revolutions: A New Vision for Democracy and Human Rights”, European Council on Foreign Relations, November 2011, available at http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR41_HUMAN_RIGHTS_BRIEF_AW.pdf

³¹ “Egypt: the battle for civilian rule”, Guardian, 15 July 2012, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comments/free/2012/jul/15/egypt-battle-civilian-rule-editorial>

and, as it now seems, of history; and it was a pity that Catherine Ashton failed to match her clarity when, visiting the beleaguered Morsi five days later, she opted to stick to the safer ground of urging “inclusivity”.

It is impossible to predict how Egyptian sands may shift over the coming weeks. Morsi’s next problem may be with the Mubarak-era judges in the courts. But it is important for the EU both to accept that he was voted in as president in genuine elections (as were the Muslim Brotherhood in the earlier national assembly elections), and to consider how the offer of macroeconomic assistance could be exploited not just to lecture Morsi but to help consolidate legitimate, civilian, democratic government.

Similarly, policy towards Morocco needs to be driven by a political strategy, not a box-ticking technocratic assessment process. The country, after all, presents a dilemma. It is efficiently run, and the king evidently enjoys popular legitimacy. His recent political reforms seem encouraging. Yet it is not obvious that they will in practice do much to dilute his effective political control – and the power of the *Makhzen* is steadily growing as the king tightens his grip on the key levers of the economy.³² Meanwhile, the country languishes at 130 out of 179 in the UNDP’s Human Development Index. If Europe is serious about the “fight against corruption” as a key element of “deep democracy”, then it should not close its eyes to a concentration of wealth and economic power in the palace which Tunisia’s Ben Ali might have envied.

This does not mean that the right response is a difficult debate in Brussels over whether Morocco deserves “more for more”, or “less for less”, under the ENP. Rather, what is required is agreement among the key European actors – Brussels, Paris and Madrid most obviously, but some of the newly interested northern member states as well – about the priority reforms on which all could agree to collaborate in pushing the kingdom. Measures to free up the business environment and introduce real competition into public procurement might be particularly relevant – and would certainly get local support from a private sector that has been progressively squeezed to the economic margins by the present king. But the key point is to avoid two parallel European universes, one centred in Brussels where the application of relatively small incentives to

³² See, for example, Catherine Graciet and Eric Laurent, *Le Roi prédateur* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2012). The authors identify King Mohammed’s often dominant business interests in the banking, insurance, agriculture, energy, telecoms and other sectors.

“democratic reform” is discussed, and another in national capitals where real national interests, and much more substantial influence, resides.

The same goes for Algeria. Since the uprisings, the regime has paid some attention to Brussels. But the ENP is not going to determine the country’s trajectory – which, to the extent that it is subject to outside influence at all, is much more likely to be affected by developments in Franco-Algerian relations as President Hollande moves to overcome 50 years of estrangement. More interesting than current European debates about the sincerity or otherwise of the regime’s flirtation with reform is the question of what kind of balance France will in the future strike between encouraging democratic reform and prioritising its security concerns. As suggested in Chapter 3, if Brussels and other partners want France to behave as a team player, they will have to be ready to make France’s concerns at least in part their own.

In all these cases, the need is essentially the same. Brussels needs to look up from the minutiae of the ENP and work with key capitals (Paris, Rome, Madrid, Berlin – and perhaps also London and the newly interested Nordics) to establish shared political strategies that strike a realistic balance between the overarching aim of “supporting democratic transitions” and the persistence of some important national interests, and which bring to bear a wider range of assets and influence than the ENP commands. And, self-evidently but vitally, national capitals need to keep pushing for collective political strategies that they are ready to back with their own assets and influence.

Promoting regional integration

Autocrats favour closed societies. And the autocrats of the southern Mediterranean have certainly created strikingly compartmentalised states, with remarkably little regional interaction. As the recent African Development Bank’s study “Unlocking North Africa’s Potential through Regional Integration” notes, “the level of intra-regional trade in North Africa is one of the lowest of any region in the world”.³³ The Mediterranean world is structured on a north–south cardinality; in the absence of adequate east–west transport

³³ African Development Bank, “Unlocking North Africa’s Potential through Regional Integration”, August 2012, available at <http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Unlocking%20North%20Africa%20RI%20ENG%20FINAL.pdf>

and energy infrastructure, Morocco imports electricity from Spain while the Algerian-Moroccan border remains shut.

As noted before, one of the hopeful by-products of the past 18 months has been the burgeoning of regional contacts, including efforts to revive the African Maghreb Union (AMU), which has received a sniffy response from Brussels. Closer regional integration is key to North Africa's prosperity. The African Development Bank study puts the economic cost of this lack of integration at up to 3 percent of GDP and a slew of other studies confirms the potential.³⁴ The economies of North Africa badly need to exploit the complementarity of energy-rich Algeria and Libya, labour-rich Egypt and Morocco, and skills-rich Tunisia.

Encouraging mutual economic opening will also help embed democracy. High levels of protection have bolstered the deep state, as autocracies have controlled plum import concessions from the presidential palace, and European companies have often found themselves allowed to invest only on condition of taking a (nominated) local joint venture partner. Dismantling such systems of patronage and clientelism needs to be recognised as vital to the success of the "Arab Spring" as the dispersal of political power. Regional security can also be assured only on a regional basis – as the governments of North Africa now clearly recognise.

Fostering regional integration should therefore be a key priority for Europeans, not just because a stable, democratic and prosperous North Africa would be nice to see, but because it will be in Europe's own economic and security interests. And, critically, it also offers a whole range of activity in which Europe has particular assets and expertise to offer – and therefore a chance to build its influence in the region by interacting with local governments in ways less patronising and more constructive than checking their democratic progress against action plans. In order to promote regional cooperation, Brussels should prioritise four axes of effort, co-opting relevant member states.

³⁴ See, for example, Mohammed Hedi Bchir, Hakim Ben Hammouda, Nassim Oulmane and Mustapha Sadni Jallab, "The Costs of non-Maghreb: Achieving the Gains from Economic Integration", African Trade Policy Centre, November 2006, available at <http://www.uneca.org/atpc/work%20in%20progress/44.pdf>; Adeel Malik and Bassem Awadallah, "The Economics of the Arab Spring", Oxford Centre for the Study of African Economies, Oxford and Jeddah, December 2011, available at <http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/pdfs/csae-wps-2011-23.pdf>. Malik and Awadallah state that: "We argue that overcoming regional economic barriers constitutes the single most important collective action problem that the region has faced since the fall of the Ottoman Empire."

Offer institutional support

The EU should show active interest in the idea of a revitalised AMU, engaging with its Tunisian sponsors to offer advice and assistance, and offering the perspective of an EU/AMU institutional relationship. (Europeans might also think about aiming for an “AMU/EU/Egypt” forum.) To give this substance, the EU might also reallocate a proportion of planned ENP aid to the five North African countries (roughly €550 million per year between them) to regional programmes, i.e. involving cross-border cooperation between at least two of them. North African partners should be invited, and helped, to develop proposals for funding. This would be relatively small beer compared with the scale of project envisaged under the UfM, but it would be a useful and earnest signal of EU support for regional collaboration.

Push major integrative projects

The UfM has yet to win many friends. Its initiation was mishandled, creating unnecessary friction between member states – and productive work had scarcely begun when the uprisings supervened, and Egypt, the southern co-chair, found itself *hors de combat*. Too many in Europe’s capitals have been content to see the demise of what was widely viewed as a Sarkozy vanity project. But the basic concept was and remains a good one. Major regional projects should be undertaken on a variable-geometry basis, involving states from both Mediterranean shores in such areas as sea pollution, maritime and land highways, civil protection, higher education and research, and business development. With the European lead now transferred from France to the EU, and the EIB ready to provide half a billion euros of financing, the EU should push to get business going again.

Schemes to develop North African solar power are particularly promising (see box on page X). Despite its oil and gas reserves, North Africa as a whole is woefully short of electricity-generating capacity. Europe is struggling to meet its own targets for renewable energy under its strategy to combat climate change. Thus there is an opportunity for real mutual economic benefit and for the promotion of regional integration – if only the European Commission authorities who set the framework conditions treat the issue with sufficient urgency and flexibility. Germany could be a major player here, along with the southern member states.

Rethink trade relations

“Markets” are potentially the most influential of the “3Ms”. The ability to grant or withhold access to the largest market in the world is arguably the cornerstone of the European Commission’s power, particularly in relation to Europe’s neighbours. And the scope for mutually beneficial trade across the Mediterranean is self-evident, with the southern littoral states badly in need of investment and services (especially related to business and infrastructure) to help them modernise, while enjoying comparative advantage – space, climate and low labour costs – in various agricultural and light manufacturing sectors. The old Barcelona Process aimed for a web of bilateral trade agreements across the sea leading, it was originally hoped, to a pan-Mediterranean free trade area by 2010.

In practice, when the Arab revolutions began, only four of the five southern Mediterranean states had free trade agreements with the EU in place (Libya having declined to engage). All of them were so “shallow” that they did not mark any significant advance over the lowest-common-denominator standards of the World Trade Organization’s body of rules and treaties. Little wonder, then, that trade across the Mediterranean accounts for less than 4 percent of the EU’s external trade – and that much of that is fuel imports from Algeria and Libya.

As noted above, the failure to develop a more dynamic trade relationship has not been solely the result of EU protectionism; it also suited the Arab autocrats to run closed economies. But now, given the imperative for new governments on the southern littoral to increase growth and jobs, boosting EU–North Africa trade is rightly seen as a key part of how Europe must respond to the Arab revolutions. Brussels has offered to begin negotiating Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) with Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt (as well as Jordan).

The DCFTA approach stems from the recognition that trade is often impeded less by the tariffs and quotas that “shallow” agreements seek to address than by less obvious “non-tariff barriers” such as technical or sanitary standards – which can be invoked, with greater or lesser degrees of legitimacy, to keep unwanted exports out. In essence, the concept is that totally free trade – the sort of freedom that the EU aims to achieve within its own single market – will only happen when a level playing field has been established and been seen to be established. Free exchange will not work if those feeling the pressure of

competition are able to claim that more attractive suppliers are cutting corners on health or safety, or to benefit from subsidies or other hidden economic advantages.

However, as outlined in Chapter 2, this approach requires a massive and protracted effort: just negotiating a DCFTA with Ukraine, never mind implementing it, took five years. North African governments cannot wait this long to deliver economic improvements to their electorates – especially when they have no guarantee that the ultimate reward of full entry to the EU's single market will be on offer when and if they finally succeed in achieving the transformations required. As Iana Dreyer puts it in a compelling recent study published by Notre Europe, “for the EU to continue to export its rules ‘wholesale’ without guarantees to its partners that they will be integrated into the Single Market will be economically costly, politically contentious and probably materially impossible”.³⁵ Quicker fixes – new trade agreements that improve on the status quo but avoid the depth, complexities and inevitable delays of DCFTAs – might well better serve the real needs of the southern neighbours.

Second, such bilateral deals will do nothing to promote intra-regional trade. On the contrary, they will reinforce the classic Eurocentric hub-and-spoke model in which all roads lead to Brussels and, by encouraging some economies to move closer to Europe faster than others, may actually inhibit regional integration.

One alternative advanced by some experts such as Sinan Ülgen is a customs union – or, more precisely, the opening of the successful EU–Turkey Customs Union to include North African states.³⁶ The arrangement with Turkey is more limited than the EU's single market, but according to Ülgen it has nonetheless played a key role in the economic transformation that has taken place in Turkey since it began in 1995 – partly by providing access to European markets for Turkey's manufacturers, and partly by improving the competitiveness of the Turkish economy as lower external tariffs forced Turkish manufacturers to compete globally. Inclusion of the North African states in this arrangement could do the same for them – as well as providing the framework within which their intra-regional trade could most easily grow.

³⁵ Iana Dreyer, “Trade Policy in the EU's Neighbourhood. Ways forward for the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements”, Notre Europe, 10 May 2012, available at <http://www.notre-europe.eu/en/axes/europe-and-world-governance/works/publication/trade-policy-in-the-eus-neighbourhood/>

³⁶ Sinan Ülgen, “From Inspiration to Aspiration: Turkey in the New Middle East”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 2011, available at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2011/12/06/from-inspiration-to-aspiration-turkey-in-new-middle-east/82sv> (hereafter, Ülgen, “From Inspiration to Aspiration”).

A customs union is no panacea. When it includes a behemoth such as the EU, it in practice requires other partners to delegate their trade policy to Brussels and adopt the EU's external tariffs. But, as the Turkish experience has shown, the advantages can be dramatic. And the loss of sovereignty involved will in practice be less than that of having to adopt the *acquis communautaire* wholesale under a DCFTA. These are complex questions. But the key point is that rather than proposing DCFTAs to North African states on a "this or nothing" basis, the EU should at least discuss with them, and with Turkey, the relative merits of alternative approaches.

Tackle the Western Sahara dispute

Achieving a settlement of the Western Sahara dispute, or at least finding ways to move the dispute out of the way of restoring more normal relations between Algeria and Morocco, is fundamental to any major breakthrough on Maghrebian integration. For decades, the particular interests of France and Spain in maintaining close ties to the Moroccan royal court and in fishing rights in the seas off the disputed territory have led the EU to keep its head down and hide behind the UN's efforts at mediation. It is now time for Brussels to explore with Paris and Madrid, and perhaps with Washington too, how an EU effort at mediation could be launched with those capitals' support (see box below).

Getting into the security game

As noted earlier, security issues are up there with job creation as the main preoccupations weighing on the minds of the new authorities in North Africa. If the EU cannot do as much as it would like to on the latter, it could certainly do much more to help on the former. The military remains the arbiters of power in North Africa – whether as facilitators of the revolution in Tunisia, as overseers and intermittently subverters of the transition in Egypt, as alternately feuding and cooperating militias in Libya, or as the power behind the throne in Morocco and Algeria. This situation will not change overnight; and meanwhile the militaries are important points of influence that Europeans must make it their business to access.

Resident defence and security attachés in the EU delegations would be a small first step – the military are a clannish lot and prefer to deal with their own. But

Western Sahara: time for the EU to front up

For decades, the EU has kept its head down on the Western Sahara conflict, hiding behind UN mediation efforts and deferring to the interests of Mediterranean member states. Europe's claim to have learned its lessons from the Arab revolutions requires that it now front up on the issue – a major barrier to regional integration in the Maghreb.

Morocco moved into the Western Sahara in the late 1970s after the departure of the Spanish. Both the UN and the EU regard the occupation as illegal. Though Morocco has successfully contained the Polisario insurgents (supported by Algeria), the territory remains impoverished, a drain on the Moroccan economy, and bitterly divided: clashes between native and Moroccan immigrant communities in 2010 left tens dead and hundreds wounded. And thousands of refugees remain in camps across the border around Tindouf, contributing to Sahelian instability.

For years, the UN has called for a referendum to allow Sahrawis to determine their own future. But, after extensive population movements, this is not straightforward. Meanwhile, Spain and France have favoured their Moroccan client over the dour and introverted Algerians – and other member states have allowed them to dictate EU policy. Even after the Arab uprisings, France has been forthright in joining the US in characterising the Moroccan proposal to make the territory autonomous but keep it under Moroccan sovereignty as “the only realistic proposal on the table”. Spain in particular has other fish to fry.

Under a four-year agreement struck in 2007, the EU has paid Morocco €36 million a year for fishing rights in Western Saharan waters – Spanish fleets hold 100 of the 119 licences. Last December, the European Commission's plan to extend this arrangement was upset by the European Parliament, which pointed to the illegality of harvesting (or stripping, according to environmentalists) the resources of an occupied territory without any evidence that the money paid to the occupying power, Morocco, has been used to benefit the territory or

its peoples. The Commission was subsequently mandated to negotiate something more defensible with the Moroccans.

If Europeans wish to be taken seriously in their claim that, for the future, their policy towards their southern neighbourhood will have less to do with cosying up to autocrats and more to do with supporting democratic developments, they must now change their approach to the Western Sahara conflict. There is an even greater need for a new approach, since hopes of a breakthrough earlier this year evaporated when Morocco declared that it no longer had confidence in the UN mediator, who had expressed concern for the human rights situation in the territory. Thus the EU's UN alibi has been removed.

France and the US may be right to describe the Moroccan autonomy plan as a “serious and credible basis for a solution”.³⁷ Certainly, the viability of an independent Western Sahara must be doubtful. But the time has come for the EU (whose aid to Morocco now runs at almost €200 million a year) to agree a joint position that goes beyond support for UN efforts and is unequivocal on the need for Western Saharans to have the final say on their own future. Now that Algeria and Morocco are disposed to normalise relations, there is a real chance to resolve this issue, or at least to get a negotiating process underway.

they are also a suspicious lot whose trust is hard to win – and can only come by working constructively with them on something they find important. The situation in the Sahel provides the EU with the perfect entrée. It is debatable how far Europeans should follow the US in seeing this predominantly as a problem of “terrorism”. But Europe undeniably has a stake in the region's stability, which is fast becoming a home to drug and other traffickers, to serial kidnappers, and to movements that are wrecking EU development efforts, generating humanitarian crises, and even, at one remove, destabilising Nigeria.

³⁷ See “US, France Voice Support for Autonomy Plan on W Sahara, Praise Morocco Human Rights”, Morocco On The Move, 12 March 2012, available at <http://moroccoonthemove.wordpress.com/2012/03/12/us-france-voice-support-for-autonomy-plan-on-w-sahara-praise-morocco-human-rights/>

Between them, Europeans have more men and women in uniform than anyone else in the world except China. They spend more on defence than anyone but the Americans. They have spent over a decade developing the CSDP, and refining ideas about how armed forces can be deployed to keep the peace, bring security and foster development. Individual member states are already engaged in training and exercising with Maghrebi armed forces through the “5+5” forum. Ministers of both Maghreb and Sahel countries are constantly meeting to work out how to cooperate on their common problem – the AMU foreign ministers spent another two days on the security agenda in Algiers in July.

It is an extraordinary waste of the CSDP’s potential that thus far the only security dimensions to the EU response to the Arab revolutions (apart from the small but constructive initiative to supply the Arab League in Cairo with an operations room) have been the much-delayed border security needs assessment in Libya and an equally delayed civilian advisory mission to Niger. An effective CSDP programme of support to the states affected by the Sahel issue would do much to compensate for the paucity of EU economic help and tackle a security situation about which Europeans should be concerned for their own sakes.

A CSDP programme of assistance could also open doors to an even bigger prize. Security sector reform – helping ease the military out of politics, rebuilding the discredited internal security services – is one of the biggest challenges that new governments in North Africa will in due course have to tackle. They will be torn between the awareness of a need for outside expertise and sensitivity over involving foreigners in such a delicate area. But if Europeans have earned trust by providing effective assistance on border security and the problems of the Sahel, they might be invited to help. If promotion of European interests and values requires influence, and influence requires access and intimacy, then there could be no more promising evolution than that – or, indeed, one more important to ensuring successful democratic transitions.

Exploiting the CSDP has been a blind spot of EU external relations in recent years – and Catherine Ashton and her European External Action Service (EEAS) are anyway overstretched. She should therefore appoint a three-star European general as her Special Security Representative to the southern Mediterranean – a military counterpart to Bernardino León – with a brief to get to know the military actors in the region and their concerns, and to design an appropriate CSDP programme of assistance. Within Europe, his first port of call should clearly be the member states already involved in the 5+5.

Europe should also sound out President Morsi on whether it can do more to help in the Sinai by building on the border-monitoring presence it had maintained at the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt (EUBAM). Both parties, after all, share the objectives of easing the blockade of Gaza, while at the same time preventing extremists from exploiting new opportunities to attack Israel or to destabilise the Sinai. That latter objective is of course also shared by Israel, the US and even Hamas. The risks of increased involvement in the Sinai would be considerable, but so too would be the gains – assuming that Europeans retain any real interest in engaging with the Middle East other than as a spectator.

Doing diplomacy

Human contact is vital. Only megalomaniacs can conduct revolutions without feeling the need of reassurance, support and perhaps occasional advice from neighbours who persistently make plain their goodwill – and, so far, the Arab revolutions do not seem to have thrown up another Gaddafi. So European diplomacy must be present, visible and active – and ready to treat the countries of North Africa wherever possible as adult actors rather than immature clients.

The prickliness of the Egyptians is there for all to see. But even seemingly more pliable leaders such as those in Tunisia will come to resent a relationship confined to regular insertion of European thermometers to take their democratic temperatures and assess their entitlement to “more” of the “3Ms”. President Marzouki’s plans to revive the AMU should therefore be seized on by EU diplomats and leaders as an opportunity to engage – to discuss his plans with him and see what Europe can do to help. And the EU needs to make it clear to Egypt’s new leaders that it sees them as pivotal actors and indispensable partners on a slew of issues from the Israeli–Palestinian conflict to the Nile basin.

Conversely, the EU should seize the opportunity to thicken its dialogues about North Africa with other key outsiders, notably the US, Turkey and the Gulf states. The relationship with Washington is, of course, already intimate. But, especially if Mitt Romney wins November’s presidential election, Europeans will have a job on their hands to persuade the US that not every Islamist is a jihadist, that Egypt is not looking for the first opportunity to renounce its peace treaty with Israel, and that drone strikes are not the necessary answer to all problems in the Sahel. Conversely, there are things even the EU might learn

from the US free trade agreements with Jordan and Morocco – and a joint effort at mediating the Western Sahara might be something worth exploring.

With Turkey and the Gulf states, a real dialogue on North Africa would bring the added bonus of adding a strategic dimension to relationships too often trapped on difficult bilateral ground. The relevance of the “Turkish model” to post-revolutionary North Africa is widely acknowledged, but, as Sinan Ülgen points out, this can mean the democratisation of an introverted, patrimonial economy as well as the co-existence of Islamic government and democracy.³⁸ In fact, much of Turkish assistance to the North African states focuses on such areas as regulatory and competition authorities and the opening up of public procurement. The need to talk to the Turks about a customs union alternative to DCFTAs has already been highlighted; the democratisation of North African economies might be another shared agenda.

As for the Gulf, Europeans are naturally ambivalent about the purpose and effect of the large sums of Saudi and Qatari money allegedly flowing into the region: hopeful that this will mean the sharing of the burden of macroeconomic assistance; fearful that it could have “counter-revolutionary” intent or be directed at promoting the more extreme of the Islamist movements. Of course, Saudis and Qataris have their own agendas and are looking to buy influence. But the motivation may be defensive as much as evangelical. There is also mutual rivalry between these two major donors: the Saudis largely back Salafis; the Qataris, hosts of the prominent Muslim Brotherhood cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, support Brotherhood affiliates.

There is everything to be said for the EU engaging with these important actors in the region, whether severally or in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in search of intelligence both about the region and about their intentions; to identify opportunities for cooperation; and as part of the sort of strategic dialogue which the EU, for many other reasons, ought to develop with the Gulf. There has long been an annual EU–GCC ministerial meeting; the decision at the most recent one to get senior officials to draw up plans “to help ensure our relationship becomes even more strategic, even more dynamic”, as Ashton put it, sounds like a step in the right direction.³⁹

³⁸ Ülgen, “From Inspiration to Aspiration”.

³⁹ Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton following the 22nd EU–GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting, Luxembourg, 25 June 2012, available at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/131194.pdf

Of course, all this cannot be done without adequate resources. Ashton, Füle, León and others have been individually active and effective – but there is no substitute for presence on the ground. Yet, 18 months after the start of the uprisings, the EU delegations remain essentially project- and budget-management organisations, running Commission programmes. The reinforcement of a handful of political officers is wholly inadequate, either to produce the sort of authoritative reporting that is the essential basis for shared assessments and shared policymaking among member states or to establish the right personal links with the emerging new players, whether in government or in broader society.

It is hard to believe that the EEAS, resource-constrained though it is, could not have done a better job of redeploying its own personnel. And there is no shortage of bodies in other parts of Brussels – it is perverse to hoard the resources required to write 300-page annual reports on the progress of the Neighbourhood Policy, or wise strategy documents for the Sahel, at the expense of putting people on the ground. If need be, diplomats should be sought on loan (“seconded national experts”) from the member states; and the local resources of the member states should be harnessed by copying from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem the successful innovation of commissioning joint EU heads of mission reporting. If member states are reluctant to loan scarce diplomats, they would certainly be ready to supply the defence and security attachés that are so obviously needed and periodically mentioned as desirable but are not yet a reality.

Such efforts to borrow member state resources would also support the wider imperative for Brussels to work more closely with the member states as part of a strategy of co-optation. It will act as an antidote to the complaint increasingly heard in European capitals that there is inadequate communication from Brussels. The MENA director in a major European foreign ministry, invited to suggest how Brussels might raise its game, gave as his immediate response that “it would help if they ever called me”.

Investing time and effort in keeping the member states on board will not be the first instinct of the hard-pressed EEAS officials. But the investment could pay off in terms of an amplification of effort – and is simply essential if a coordinated European approach on North Africa is to be maintained. The alternative will be reversion to “parallel universes” – the all-too-familiar pattern whereby the member states see Brussels as a place for trade, aid and the drafting of communiqués, but prefer to do real policy, and pursue their real national interests, on a national basis.

Conclusion

We have argued that, in the immediate aftermath of the Arab revolutions, the EU did well to pull together a coherent European response with which the member states were content to fall in. But we have also argued that this response is not sustainable. Brussels prefers to conduct the EU's external relations with money and other economic inducements; but Europe's own economic crisis has blunted these traditional tools. And, lumping together the 16 states on Europe's periphery as "the neighbourhood", Brussels has failed to register how its traditional approach to neighbours – to try to make them "more like us" – simply misses the mark in relation to a North Africa whose countries neither are nor ever will be candidates for EU membership.

If this analysis is right, it suggests that the EU needs to adjust its mindset – not least to move beyond the necessary but insufficient idea that the goal of European policy should be "to support democratic transitions". Altruism, and the urge to export European values, needs to be complemented by greater attention to European interests, which potentially go far beyond merely avoiding trouble from the south.

So Brussels needs to engage more actively with the member states, and especially those whose interests are most closely involved – that is, Italy, Spain and in particular France. It should do so partly because it is here that the temptation to revert to prioritising the short-term and commercial over the longer-term and strategic will be most keenly felt; and partly because the economic levers favoured by Brussels are inadequate for the job.

If Europe is to be able to exercise influence in North Africa, Brussels and the key national capitals will need to adopt the same or at least complementary strategies, and bring to bear the resources of member states whose leverage exceeds that of the ENP. Failing that, we may again find EU and national

policies operating in parallel universes. The moment is fragile, and the need for Europe collectively to raise its game is urgent. To fail to do so would be to miss an historic opportunity to shape the North Africa we want – that is, one that is democratic, prosperous, stable, friendly and useful.

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