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AFRICA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN EVOLVING SECURITY DYNAMICS AFTER THE ARAB UPRISINGS

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Andrea Dessì,² Dario Cristiani,³ Wolfgang Mühlberger,⁴ and Giorgio Musso⁵

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¹ This study is based on research completed in January 2014, and does not reflect subsequent developments.

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FOREWORD

ANDREA DESSI

Security Redux

Three years since the Arab uprisings, security has again emerged as the dominant analytical framework through which events in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region are being judged and interpreted by the outside world. The initial optimism that many had welcomed the spread of popular protests with in 2011 is steadily being replaced by a more somber realization that the slow, and in some cases non-existent, pace of socio-political reform in Arab transitional countries is creating a breeding ground for resentment amidst the flourishing of sectarianism, extremism, and political violence across the Arab world. The hopes and ideals that had sparked the toppling of long-standing authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya — summarized by the slogan *bread, dignity, and social justice* — seem like a distant memory as the promise of a new “Arab awakening” collides with the harrowing scenes coming from Syria’s civil war, a deep political and security vacuum in post-Gaddafi Libya, and tentative, but growing, signs that Egypt might well be headed toward a prolonged period of domestic turmoil.

To make matters worse, the string of terrorist attacks carried out in countries across North Africa and — most recently — in Kenya and Nigeria, have reaffirmed the persistent threat posed by various extremist movements whose transnational nature and loose affiliation with continue to represent a fundamental security challenge for regional governments and the transatlantic community alike. While the appeal of al-Qaeda’s radical ideology was widely believed to be receding in the wake of the Arab uprisings, today the tide appears to be turning. Syria has replaced Iraq as a major training ground and magnet for extremist groups, while across North Africa, a growing number of jihadist movements are taking advantage of the general confusion, lack of security, and political or constitutional crises in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya to reassert their activities and expand their reach

southwards into Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad in the African Sahel region.

From the perspective of the United States and Europe, powers that under the umbrella of NATO directly contributed to the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, attention has shifted from those countries directly affected by the Arab uprisings to a wider appreciation of the regional dynamics unleashed by these transformations. In this context, security concerns — whether they be related to terrorism, immigration, energy flows, political Islam, or the prospect of a gradual “Somalization” of an important Mediterranean country like Libya — have no doubt returned to dominate transatlantic dealings with this extended geographical area. The threat perception has been further increased by the declining ability of transatlantic powers to influence events in the Arab world and by the growing realization that the policies of regional states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and Egypt are advancing independently from — and often counter to — those of the United States and Europe.

In light of these developments, this study takes stock of the current security dynamics across the Southern Mediterranean and African Sahel since the advent of the Arab uprisings. In so doing, it widens the scope of analysis from a purely North African focus to a more in-depth understanding of the profound links connecting the Mediterranean, Africa, and the wider Arab world. By focusing on three specific components — the African Sahel region, post-Gaddafi Libya, and Egypt’s African policy under the Muslim Brotherhood — the study will shed light on the deeply intertwined nature of the security threats that have arisen across this area and the impossibility of decoupling events occurring in the Maghreb from those taking place further south in the African Sahel region.

While indeed always present, the deep links connecting Africa with the Southern Mediterranean have been clearly reaffirmed in the wake of NATO's intervention in Libya, which paved the way for a renewed transatlantic engagement in the Southern Mediterranean and, subsequently, in the African Sahel region. The Libyan campaign immediately gave rise to Western fears that instability and violence in Libya, coupled with the threat of migration flows, arms smuggling, and a possible disintegration of that country, could eventually have disastrous repercussions further south, especially in the Sahel region. Indeed, the collapse of law and order in Libya set in motion a chain of events that contributed to the expansion of jihadist movements into the Sahel and, most notably, to the destabilization of Mali, in turn leading to the more recent French-led intervention in that country in early 2013. Conversely, however, instability, lawlessness, and the rise of extremist ideologies in the Sahel, and especially in the Mauritania-Mali-Niger region, have also posed a fundamental security challenge to North African countries such as Algeria and Morocco and serve as a destabilizing force that could radicalize and undermine the delicate political transitions underway in Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt.

While the transatlantic powers — France in particular — have demonstrated a willingness to act militarily in order to respond to short-term security threats in both North Africa (Libya) and the Sahel (Mali), more long-term assistance in the post-intervention phase has been lacking. Today, neither government in Libya nor Mali enjoys a complete monopoly over the use of organized force or is capable of extending central authority over large expanses of their national territory. This situation is creating a dangerous political and security vacuum on Europe's southern doorstep, which is promptly being exploited by a whole range of extremist movements and criminal networks. If left to fester, this lawlessness could spread, contaminating and

destabilizing an expanse of land that stretches across the African continent from Mauritania on the Atlantic Ocean through Libya, Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, and finally Somalia in the Horn of Africa, with potentially disastrous consequences in both the humanitarian and security realms.

Security concerns tied to terrorism, arms smuggling, and the collapse of law and order across Libya are analyzed here in detail as are their effects on the Sahel region and on the delicate political transitions underway across North Africa. Each author completes his analysis by advancing a series of policy recommendations on ways to improve U.S. and European policies toward this wider geographical area, remedy some of the shortcomings of the past, and highlight certain priority areas for action that demand a more concerted, ambitious, and long-term commitment by the transatlantic community.

The African Sahel

Chapter one of the study focuses on the complexity and underlining causes of instability that have characterized the Sahel region both past and present. A fine line is drawn between the socio-economic, environmental, and political causes of this instability and the more visible security threats tied to jihadi terrorism and the presence of deeply rooted criminal networks throughout this area. The analysis therefore highlights both the historical roots of this instability and the more recent evolution of these threats in the wake of the Arab uprisings, drawing a link between NATO's intervention in Libya and the subsequent French mission in Mali. The author highlights how the traditional, security-first policies adopted by the transatlantic community since September 11, 2001, have done little to address the underlining causes of instability — among them socio-economic marginalization, environmental degradation, and weak state authority — that have long plagued this geographical space. In order to be effective, such policies should be accompanied by a wider strategy

to de-escalate tensions among regional players — Morocco and Algeria in particular — in order to favor regional cooperation in the security and intelligence fields. Most importantly, however, such policies cannot focus solely on the security realm and should also extend to long-term financial and technical assistance for the building of institutions across Sahelian states, increasing socio-economic development as well as responding to the effects of environmental degradation and food insecurity. Ultimately, the prospect of widespread state failure across the Sahel would have dangerous repercussions on the entire African continent, potentially rolling back some of the limited security achievements reached not only in countries such as Tunisia, Algeria, Mali, Chad, and Niger, but also further afield in Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, and Egypt.

Post-Gaddafi Libya

Chapter two zeroes in on Libya since the overthrow and killing of Colonel Gaddafi in October 2011 to focus on the monumental challenges facing the country in the domestic security realm. Nowhere are Western concerns more pronounced than in this major Mediterranean country, which is the primary departure point for migrants attempting to reach the shores of Southern Europe and an important energy provider for the EU. The weakness of the Libyan central government, whose authority barely covers the capital, and the absence of the state's monopoly on the use of force are highlighted as the top challenges facing the Libyan transition. Special attention is dedicated to the panoply of different, and often competing, militias that sprung up across the country during the revolution and that, following the collapse of the Gaddafi regime, have begun competing to secure influence and economic privileges in the new Libya. The challenge is compounded by the growing influence and spread of jihadi ideologies across the country and the resulting proliferation of bombings, targeted killings, and attacks against

both foreign and domestic targets in many parts of Libya. Transatlantic powers bear certain responsibilities for the current state of affairs in the country and yet, to date, Europe and the United States have not done enough to support Libya post-intervention. Given the high stakes involved both for the immediate region and the wider international community, a close analysis of the highly complex domestic security setting will yield important insights into the challenges facing post-Gaddafi Libya and help identify priority areas of action for the transatlantic community. Ultimately, warns the author, Libya's fractured security makeup is breeding popular resentment against the central authorities in Tripoli as well as a growing disillusionment with politics and the wider process of democratic transition.

Egypt's African Policy under the Muslim Brotherhood

The third and final chapter of the study focuses on the Africa policy of Egypt's first Islamist government in an effort to determine whether political Islam was deployed as a diplomatic tool to advance and improve Egypt's influence in the continent. In this context, the evolving relationship between the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP) — itself a political expression of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) — is dissected in detail in light of the fears coming from different quarters that the new-found ideological affinity between the two ruling parties might set the stage for an emerging "Islamist axis" along the Nile river. Concerns in this regard were furthered by reports of Iran's increased ties with Sudan and growing activism across Africa. The MB's handling of the Nile dossier, traditionally a number one foreign policy priority for Egypt in Africa, is analyzed in detail, particularly in relation to Egypt's and Sudan's opposition to any revision of the water shares allocated to countries along

the Nile. Overall, due to his short time span in power, dire domestic challenges, and the necessity of not alienating the West, Morsi's ascent to power did little to change the fundamental contours of Egypt's Africa policy, much less introduce an Islamist "coloring" to Egypt's foreign policy goals. In this context, and following the abrupt overthrow of Morsi by the Egyptian military in late June 2013, the transatlantic community should focus on pressuring Egypt not to stray from the army's so-called "democratic road map" and insist on the transparency and inclusiveness of any new transition. The protests that spread across Sudan in late September 2013 reminded the regime and observers alike of the degree to which those same socio-economic causes that sparked protests across North Africa in 2011 are also present in that country. Prolonged turmoil in Sudan would have worrying consequences for Egypt, South Sudan, the Horn of Africa, and the wider continent, creating conditions similar to those currently plaguing Libya, the wider African Sahel, Somalia, or Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. Such a scenario must be avoided at all costs. The announcement by Sudan's President al-Bashir of his intention not to run in the 2015 national elections should be welcomed as an opportunity for a new transatlantic engagement with the country that aims to foster regional cooperation on such contentious issues as the Nile Valley, conflict in the Darfur region, and the independence of South Sudan.

Challenging Regional Rivalries, Fostering Socio-Economic Development

The multiplication of closely interlinked security concerns that have arisen throughout Africa, the Mediterranean, and the wider Arab world pose a fundamental challenge to regional governments and the transatlantic community alike. The security vacuum in Libya, combined with the weak state structures that characterize countries in the African Sahel region and the presence of

deeply rooted jihadist groups in nearby countries such as al-Shabab in Somalia or Boko Haram in Nigeria, means that criminal networks of smugglers and jihadists enjoy relative freedom across this area as well as a wealth of potential technical and logistical support for their subversive activities. This makes efforts to curtail their influence all the more complex, especially in light of the traditional interstate rivalries that continue to plague this expanse of land and prevent the articulation of common approaches and cooperation against these threats. While indeed of grave concern, one potentially positive trend related to these emerging security dynamics is that they affect *all* states in the area. The emergence of shared concerns tied to security could therefore set the stage for a growing appreciation of the benefits brought by increased regional cooperation, in turn helping to build trust and overcome some of the traditional rivalries that have long hampered state-to-state relations.

While the transatlantic community's ability to influence events in this part of the world has no doubt declined since the Arab uprisings, Europe and the United States still retain significant weight in the technical, military, and economic spheres. Regional cooperation in the security and intelligence fields should be promoted, as should the domestic counter-terrorism capabilities of states, but such policies should also be accompanied by a more long-term approach to strengthen the socio-economic and political standing of these states. Ultimately, it is grievances tied to marginalization and the lack of opportunity that guarantee fresh recruits for extremist groups active across this area. In the long-run, therefore, socio-economic development and the buildup of transparent and legitimate institutions capable of securing the rights and aspirations of the populations of this area will be the key to defusing many of the security concerns that have (re) surfaced across this extended geographical space since the advent of the Arab uprisings.

1 THE SAHELIAN CRISIS AND THE ARAB SPRING

DARIO CRISTIANI

The Sahel: A Space of Transition

The Sahel as a geopolitical space is structurally unstable. The best word to describe the Sahel in its multiple aspects is “transition.” It is a space of transition ecologically, but also politically and culturally. From a geographical point of view, it stretches from Senegal and Mauritania on the Atlantic coast of Africa to Eritrea on the Red Sea, dividing the Sahara to the north and the tropical savannas to the south. Sahel means “coast/frontier.” Indeed, this territory is an exemplar frontier, dividing two more or less defined geopolitical and cultural macro-blocks. Historically, it was a buffer zone, dividing the so-called “White” Africa — the Maghreb — from the “Black” sub-Saharan Africa. Concerning religion, the Sahel marks a boundary between Muslim-majority areas to the north and the Christian-majority areas south of the Sahel. Ethnically, the Sahel is rather fragmented: it is an area where races intermingle. Arabs, Tuaregs, and black African ethnic groups like the Fulani, the Songhai, the Hausa, and a multitude of other groups populate these lands. Sometimes, racial divisions have contributed to conflict in Sahelian countries, as in Sudan and Mali, or stratification, as in Mauritania.¹

Conceptually, heterogeneity, disorder, and complexity — rather than homogeneity, order, and simplicity — can be considered the three characterizing features of this space. The complex geophysical environment made it historically hard to establish an effective control over these territories. It is a space of movement and encounter; borders are porous and ill-defined, and indeed this is the region of nomadism *par excellence*. The formal and modern national borders of the states, established in the colonial era, represent only a cartographic reality. Weberian state control is generally weak or non-existent

and the cohesiveness of societies, which are often only formally national, is low. In its more concrete power dynamics, the territory is actually controlled by those living on the land. Tribal networks, local identities, and loyalties represent the actual socio-political backbone of this space and are much more important than the many central governments whose influence is frequently limited to the capital.²

Various forms of resistance to the central authorities’ attempts to achieve a complete control of these areas still exist, challenging the already weak structures of these post-colonial states. After September 11, 2001, the Sahel turned into a major hotspot for asymmetric threats: smuggling, human trafficking, terrorism, latent ethnic conflicts, the presence of rebel groups, hunger, food insecurity, and environmental degradation.³ Before September 11, this region was substantially ignored from a global geopolitical perspective. Aside from French involvement, which rests on historical and cultural links associated with its colonial past and the complementary role of this region in the wider power dynamics of competition in North Africa, the relative geopolitical value of the region was extremely weak. However, the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington changed the perception of Americans, and, in a way, of Europeans as well. This pushed both actors to engage the region more intensively.

Yet, years later, the results still appear particularly deficient. The United States perceives this region primarily or almost entirely through the prism of terrorism. For instance, September 11 changed

² The “parasovereignty” concept associated with the process of administrative decentralization of the Malian state in the 1990s is a good example of the weight of localism in the region. See George Klute, “De la chefferie administrative à la parasouveraineté régionale,” in André Bourgeot (ed.), *Horizons nomades en Afrique sahélienne. Société, développement et démocratie*, Paris, Karthala, 1999, pp. 167-181.

³ Alain Antil, “Le Sahel: une zone grise aux portes du Maghreb,” in Khadija Mohsen-Finan (ed.), *Le Maghreb dans les relations internationales*, Paris, Editions CNR, 2011, pp. 291-308.

¹ Alex Thurston, “I mille volti del Sahel,” *Limes*, No. 5, November 2012, pp. 39-46.

the perception of some U.S. officials about the situation in Algeria. This laid the foundations for a rapprochement that in turn was also aided by the efforts of Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to rehabilitate his country's image on the international scene. Moreover, the rebranding of GSPC (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédicament et le Combat*) into AQIM (al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) in late 2006 substantially augmented the importance of this region in the eyes of Washington.⁴ Although this change led to significant operational consequences only in 2007 and early 2008, the simple presence of an al-Qaeda-affiliated movement amplified U.S. threat perception. The implementation of the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI)⁵ and the creation of the United States Africa Command

⁴ The GSPC, later the AQIM, are the two most recent major declinations of Algerian jihadist terrorism. The GSPC was a splinter group of the *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA), the most effective violent terrorist group operating in Algeria during the civil war, which was one of the bloodiest conflicts ever witnessed in the region. Throughout the 1990s, the GIA made no distinction between Algerian security forces and the civilian population, and even carried out a series of operations in France. In 1998 former GIA member Hassan Hattab broke away from the organization and founded the new GSPC with the explicit goal of avoiding the unnecessary targeting of civilians. The rise of the GSPC coincided with a dramatic strategic shift. Between the late 1990s and early 2000s, the civil war had slowly turned from an all-out conflict into a low-intensity insurgency, as the Algerian authorities carried out a series of high-profile arrests and successful military operations while offering an amnesty to the remaining jihadi fighters. In 2003, Hattab was ousted and replaced first by Nabil Sahraoui and then, after Sahraoui's death in 2004, by Abdelmalek Droukdel. In 2007, the GSPC officially rebranded itself as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), thus marking its affiliation with global jihadist strategy and tactics. In the wake of this, AQIM carried out some of its most devastating attacks in April and again in December 2007, striking at the heart of Algiers and causing dozens of casualties. These attacks underlined AQIM's new tactics, as the group used suicide bombings in a similar fashion to insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq.

⁵ Known also as the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership, this was a plan by the United States to fight terrorism and assist regional governments in strengthening their capacity to control effectively their national territories in trans-Saharan Africa. It is an inter-agency plan, as it combines civil as well as military elements in its implementation.

(AFRICOM)⁶ are the two most important U.S. initiatives in the region. Both seek to counter terrorist threats and support regional countries in their efforts to increase dialogue and coordination in the security field.

The approach of the European Union (EU) followed more or less the same general pattern in terms of the time frame for new initiatives, although with some significant differences. In more substantive terms, the EU's approach toward the region was and remains largely shaped and dominated by France. That is primarily due to France's colonial past and its knowledge of the territory, which is characterized by intricate social and political dynamics. In a way, French activism is also one of the underlining reasons for the eruption of this *cycle of crisis* in the Sahel. In the wake of the rather muscular approach adopted during the Arab Spring, Paris was the most vocal European actor advocating a military intervention against Gaddafi and one of the leading countries in terms of direct military engagement in Libya. The war in Libya, indeed, turned into a major element triggering a wider dynamic of crisis in the Sahel, at the core of which is Mali and its implosion under the joint effects of a Tuareg rebellion and the penetration of narco-Jihadist groups.⁷

From Benghazi to Gao: The Arab Spring and Regional Instability

The 2011 Libyan crisis soon emerged as a major catalyst for wider dynamics of insecurity across North Africa, encompassing not only the countries

⁶ Established in 2007, AFRICOM is one of nine Unified Combatant Commands of the United States Armed Forces with headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany. It has responsibility for military operations and military relations with 53 African nations except Egypt. As of October 1, 2008, it has responsibility over the TSCTI. See <http://www.africom.mil>.

⁷ Dario Cristiani and Riccardo Fabiani, "From Disfunctionality to Disaggregation and Back? The Malian Crisis, Local Players and European Interests," *IAI Working Papers*, No. 13|08, March 2013, <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iaiw1107.pdf>.

of the Maghreb but, above all, their southern Sahelian neighbors. The disintegration of the Libyan state created a *power vacuum* that was soon exploited by regional terrorist groups and criminal networks. Libya's inability to secure its 4,000 kilometer-long Saharan borders and Gaddafi's weapon arsenals triggered flows of weapons heading both westward and eastward. Several countries had to face social crises triggered by the inflow of refugees fleeing Libya and heading to surrounding states whose stability was already precarious, such as Niger. Further aspects that demonstrate the adverse regional effects of the Libyan crisis are:

- the return of heavily-armed tribal fighters to their countries of origin after the Libyan conflict;
- the psycho-political concerns of some other regional countries, such as Algeria, regarding the intervention of European countries on the soil of a neighboring country; and
- the impact of the collapse of Gaddafi's Jamahiriya on wider Africa, a continent particularly dependent on Libya in economic as well as diplomatic terms.

In the Sahelian strip, the Libyan revolution had especially severe consequences in terms of rising insecurity and the deterioration of the already structurally fragile political and economic balances of the area. The strategic links between the war in Libya and the deterioration of the security environment in the Sahel is thus evident. For geopolitical reasons, Libya has always been an important player in this space.

However, Libya's role became more relevant following Gaddafi's Pan-African shift in the early 1990s,⁸ which was part of a wider change in Libyan

⁸ Hussein Solomon and Gerrie Swart, "Libya's Foreign Policy in Flux," *African Affairs*, Vol. 104, No. 416, July 2005, pp. 469-492.

foreign policy following the end of the Cold War.⁹ In the Sahel, Gaddafi played a stabilizing role in terms of diplomatic engagement and economic presence. Although Libya and Mali do not share direct borders, Gaddafi's intense relationship with Mali explains why the Libyan war had a direct impact on the deteriorating security situation in the latter country. Although not *sufficient*, the end of Gaddafi's rule was *necessary* in triggering the Malian crisis, since Mali's security and economic dependence on Gaddafi was substantial. The Malian economy has been largely supported by Libyan money, and Gaddafi, through his instrumental patronage of the Tuaregs, played a fundamental role in brokering the peace agreements between the Malian and Nigerien governments and the Tuareg rebels that were signed in the Libyan oasis city of Sabha in October 2009. As such, Gaddafi's downfall represented a major element triggering the dynamics of regional crisis now engulfing the Sahel since many Tuareg fighters, some of them part of the Libyan army, fled Libya and returned to Mali with weapons, training, and money.¹⁰

The Sahel after the French-Led Intervention in Mali

The Libyan civil war, the destabilization of Mali, and the French-led intervention in that country have considerably changed the strategic profile of the Sahelian region. As such, all the countries of the strip were later affected by the consequences of this reshuffle. Among the countries of the Sahelian strip, Niger is by far the one suffering the worst consequences of the intervention. Limited resources and the significant presence of Tuareg groups

⁹ George Joffé and Emanuela Paoletti, "Libya's Foreign Policy: Drivers and Objectives," *Mediterranean Paper Series*, October 2010, <http://www.gmfus.org/archives/libyas-foreign-policy-drivers-and-objectives>.

¹⁰ "Des centaines de combattants touaregs pro-Kaddafi rentrent au Niger et au Mali," *Jeune Afrique*, August 30, 2011, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20110830085808>.

within its borders pushed Niger to maintain a cautious approach *vis-a-vis* the crisis. This explains the relatively low diplomatic profile adopted by the Nigerien government, which remained focused on its domestic problems. Reducing the risk of a Tuareg rebellion in its territory was the primary concern.¹¹ Ultimately, the authorities welcomed the French intervention as an effective way to resolve the crisis — and prevent the granting of Tuareg autonomy in Northern Mali — and Niger supported Paris with about 500 soldiers,¹² despite the possible domestic consequences.¹³

However, the twin terrorist attacks in Niger claimed by the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA)¹⁴ and a group led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar¹⁵ demonstrated how the country remains vulnerable to jihadist activity. The French military intervention in northern Mali resulted

¹¹ “Issoufou veut l’union nationale au Niger, en pleine crise au Mali voisin,” *aBamako.com*, December 18, 2012, <http://news.abamako.com/h/9863.html>.

¹² They were part of the ECOWAS-sponsored and African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA). On July 1, 2013, AFISMA transferred authority to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Established by UN Security Council resolution 2100 of April 25, 2013, its focus is on supporting the political process in Mali and carrying out a number of security-related tasks. Formally, the mission has been asked to support the transitional authorities of Mali in the stabilization of the country and implementation of the transitional roadmap, focusing on major population centers and lines of communication, the protection of civilians, human rights monitoring, the creation of conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance and the return of displaced persons, the extension of state authority, and the preparation of free, inclusive, and peaceful elections. See <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusma>.

¹³ “Mali: le Niger autorise l’envoi de troupes,” *Le Point*, January 17, 2013, <http://www.lepoint.fr/t/1-1616099>.

¹⁴ MOJWA is a splinter group from AQIM that became known in late 2011, when the organization claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of Italian and Spanish aid workers near Tindouf, Algeria. Its leader is the Mauritanian-born Hamada Ould Kheiru.

¹⁵ Signatories in Blood is a splinter group from AQIM founded by Belmokhtar in late 2012 as a result of his difficult relations with AQIM’s leadership.

in a regional dispersion of militant groups. Most importantly, it has totally disrupted the trafficking of drugs, weapons, and migrants in the region, dismantling the networks operating through this area and pushing traffickers to find new routes. These routes consequentially moved to other countries to carry out their mix of smuggling and minor jihad. AQIM and all the other local jihadist groups are actively involved in this trafficking. As such, their movement also changes according to the redefinition of smuggling routes.¹⁶ Niger has thus turned into a battleground and transit route for regional jihadists and criminals. This was further reinforced by the shift in the gravitational center of Sahelian jihadism. Chaos in Libya, especially in the south, has allowed jihadist groups to increase their presence there, using this space as a platform to launch attacks throughout the region.

In the case of Niger, insecurity is also augmented by its border with Nigeria. In the past, Boko Haram members escaping Nigerian security forces allegedly crossed borders, moving into Niger.¹⁷ The jihadist presence in Nigeria affects Niger’s security through another channel as well: the current violence in northern Nigeria is pushing people to seek refuge in Niger. In June 2013, the United Nations refugee agency estimated that about 6,000 people had fled to Niger from northeast Nigeria.¹⁸ This stream is only the latest refugee crisis that Niger has faced over the past two years. In 2011, Ivorian refugees fled their country following post-electoral violence. Nigerien workers in Libya escaping the civil war also fled to Niger, while the country subsequently had to face a huge number

¹⁶ Dario Cristiani, “Directions in North African Jihadism in the Post-Mali Conflict Environment,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 11, No. 11, May 30, 2013, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=40959](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=40959)

¹⁷ “Niger’s Growing Jihadist Problem,” *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, June 7, 2013.

¹⁸ UNHCR, *More than 6,000 people flee to Niger from north-east Nigeria*, June 11, 2013, <http://www.unhcr.org/51b73c169.html>.

of refugees following the crisis in northern Mali that broke out in early 2012.¹⁹ Moreover, Niger also suffers from structural problems concerning food insecurity and widespread poverty. As such, these regional influxes of migrants represent a major governance challenge, threatening the capacity and stability of the country.

Finally, the widespread presence of French assets throughout the country, mainly in the uranium industry, represents another element of concern for the government in Niger's capital, Niamey. Following the military intervention in Mali, France once again became a major target of jihadist rhetoric and accusations, as shown by the words of senior AQIM member Abu Obeida Yusuf al-Annabi, who called on Muslims to attack French interests worldwide.²⁰

Besides Niger, the wider Sahelian crisis and the war in northern Mali posed major problems for Mauritania also in terms of domestic stability and its regional role. The peoples of Mauritania and Mali are bound in a net of deep historical, social, and cultural linkages, with the Arab people of Mali considering Mauritanian moors as an extension of their larger tribal community. As such, their security is historically intertwined. The refugee problem is a serious concern for Mauritania. About 70,000 people escaping the Malian war moved to a single settlement in Mbera, in the Mauritanian northeast. Most of them refused to return to Mali, fearing ethnic cleansing and inter-communitarian retaliation. Mauritania is characterized by the presence of long-standing ethnic, racial, and social cleavages. As such, any regional polarization of the fragile traditional and communitarian balances in Sahelian countries risks having an impact on the

social and national cohesiveness of Mauritania by weakening inter-communitarian relations.²¹

Moreover, regional terrorist organizations represent a major concern for Mauritania as well. Over the past few years, the government in Nouakchott has played an important role in contrasting terrorism in the region, particularly under the rule of President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. These counter-terrorist policies have also created some strains between Mauritania and certain countries in the region, such as Mali and Algeria. In the case of the former, Mauritanian and Malian authorities have been at odds regarding their respective policies vis-a-vis the spread of terrorism in the region, with the former adopting a more security-minded approach against the latter's more cautious attitude. In the second case, Algeria did not appreciate the attempt by Mauritania to play a more proactive role in regional counter-terrorist efforts, considering this an encroachment on Algeria's traditional leadership role. During the Tuareg and Islamist uprising in northern Mali, Mauritania swayed between supporting the idea of a foreign-led armed intervention in the country and prioritizing the diplomatic option.²² The government has been reluctant to play any major role in this crisis, mainly because of the domestic problems Abdel Aziz faces and Mauritania's limited financial and military resources. Since the beginning of military operations in Mali, Mauritania has officially supported this intervention, while rejecting the idea of sending troops to its neighbor's territory.²³

²¹ Al-Mokhtar Ould Mohammed, "Mauritania Pays Price for War in Mali," *Al-Monitor*, May 12, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2013/05/mauritania-suffers-war-mali.html>.

²² "Mauritania rules out Mali intervention," *AFP*, August 6, 2012, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5g7RjSm6Thth-m-0RaSzBj9ZWjvpQ?docId=CNG.10ab554f47cde815049e86198d163c9b.1e1>.

²³ "La Mauritanie loue l'intervention et appelle à un dialogue inter-malien," *Alakhbar*, February 16, 2013, <http://fr.alakhbar.info/6045-0>.

¹⁹ UNHCR, *UNHCR Operation in Niger*, December 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/SahelSituation/download.php?id=826>.

²⁰ "France says taking AQIM threat seriously after video," *Reuters*, May 7, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/07/us-france-aqim-idUSBRE9460H320130507>.

Finally, although a relatively distant neighbor, Chad's involvement in the Malian crisis has gradually intensified. Initially, the Chadian authorities were reluctant to take part in the military force that France aimed to assemble in order to tackle the crisis. This diffidence was mainly due to the difficult relations between French President François Hollande and Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno, who later repositioned himself, joining the French-led initiative. Chad became the first African state to commit troops to the stabilization of northern Mali.²⁴ This quick diplomatic reorientation can be explained by Chad's desire to improve its ties with France and to play an increasingly prominent role in the region.

The Sahel and the Maghreb: Between Crisis and Interdependence

The crisis in the Sahel has also had a direct impact on balances in the Maghreb. The two areas are bound in a mutual, although unbalanced, strategic relationship. The Maghrebi system is made up of states that are much more effective and structured than those in the Sahel. Their capacity to manage the challenges coming from their southern neighbors are thus stronger, notwithstanding the fact that the sovereign capacity of Maghrebi countries does diminish going southward. For instance, the ability of Algerian security forces to effectively control Algeria's southern borders and regions remains problematic despite the fact that Algeria remains one of the strongest and most effective states in the entire region. The terrorist attack carried out in early January 2013 in the southern Algerian town of In Aménas serves as a reminder of the difficulties facing Maghrebi countries in their efforts to secure their southern border regions.

²⁴ "Mali. Renforts tchadiens à Kidal alors que les Français s'approchent des otages détenus par Aqmi," *Le courrier de l'Atlas*, February 6, 2013, <http://www.lecourrierdelatlas.com/409706022013Mali-Renforts-tchadiens-a-Kidal-alors-que-les-Francais-s-approchent-des-otages-detenus-par-Aqmi.html>.

Sahelian states, on the other hand, suffer from a much stronger inability to effectively manage the political and security challenges coming from the north. The already mentioned harsh geophysical environment, their loose national cohesiveness, and their inability to exert effective sovereignty over their own national territories all make it particularly complex for them to cope with the security and political challenges emerging in the wider North African region. Moreover, the insecurity of Sahelian states is also amplified by their turbulent southern neighborhood. The Sahelian states are thus also affected by the general instability characterizing central Africa. Their limited national political and economic resources further their inability to respond effectively to these different regional threats.

The presence of such a strip of crisis south of the Maghreb represents a major challenge for the future stability of the entire region and the smooth advancement of their revolutionary transitions. However, at the same time, it also represents an opportunity to foster a more effective and meaningful dynamic of regional cooperation, above all among the two major powers of the North African strategic environment: Algeria and Morocco.

Algeria has been, for its geographical depth, strategic interests, historical past, and military capabilities, the most involved country in the geopolitical dynamics of the Sahel. In the context of the Arab Spring, Algeria was a rather particular case. It was commonly thought that Algeria was among the strongest regional candidates for violent revolution. Yet this did not happen, for a variety of reasons related to peculiar circumstances associated with Algerian history.²⁵ Currently, Algiers is burdened by a series of domestic problems,

²⁵ Louisa Dris-Aït Hamadouche, "L'Algérie face au 'printemps arabe': l'équilibre par la neutralisation des contestations," *Confluences Méditerranée*, No. 81, 2012, pp. 55-67.

speculation about the health of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and a political stalemate associated with the forthcoming presidential elections in 2014. Yet it remains the regional actor with the strongest potential assets to deal effectively with instability in the region, and Algeria could eventually emerge as a primary diplomatic and stabilizing actor in the Sahel.

Historically, Algeria has played a major mediating role in regional disputes, for example in brokering several peace agreements between Tuareg groups and the Malian authorities.²⁶ Nevertheless, it has never attempted to increase its direct influence in the area, a consequence of Algeria's anti-imperialist foreign policy stance, which is a major characteristic of its international posture since its independence.²⁷ Above all, following the decline of the GIA (*Groupé Islamique Armé*)²⁸ and the emergence of the splinter GSPC (later AQIM), the Sahelian space was increasingly perceived by Algerian authorities as a space of opportunity to marginalize its domestic terrorist threat. Indeed, the successful counter-terrorism policies of Algiers pushed terrorists southward, and in the aftermath of the split between GIA and GSPC, the latter progressively shifted its operational base from Kabylia in the northeast of the country to the Algerian Sahara. This geographical shift was then completed under AQIM with a notable operational change, shifting from a pure jihadist movement to a hybrid narco-jihadist organization, thus

completing the "Sahelization" of the group.²⁹ The movement of Algerian terrorists from the north to the south of the country was a major strategic success for the Algerian state, although in the long run, it has represented an element that has strongly undermined the stability of the region. For Algeria, reducing these groups from a national threat to a largely external-based element was nevertheless a major achievement.

In the development of the wider Maghrebi—Sahelian crisis, Algeria was particularly suspicious of any external involvement in regional affairs, sticking firmly to the principle of non-interference. In March 2011, Algeria voted against the Arab League's resolution calling for a no-fly zone over Libya, fearing that it would have been a first step toward the intervention of foreign ground forces and stressing the need to preserve Libya's security and territorial integrity.³⁰ In the Malian crisis, Algiers was initially the main supporter of the diplomatic track, which was also backed by the U.S. government, in opposition to ECOWAS' and France's preferred military option. However, disagreements between the two camps always remained contained, as Algeria never ruled the military option out as a last resort. Indeed, the developments on the ground and the eruption of the crisis in Mali pushed Algeria to shift its historical approach toward external intervention in foreign countries. That was a rather notable shift, showing the capacity of Algerian authorities to adapt pragmatically to major changes. It is, however, likely to remain temporary, not implying any major doctrinal change in Algiers.

²⁶ Pierre Boilley, *Les Touaregs Kel Adagh. Dépendances et révoltes: du Soudan français au Mali contemporain*, Paris, Karthala, 1999, pp. 495-534.

²⁷ Nicole Grimaud, *La politique extérieure de l'Algérie: 1962-1978*, Paris, Karthala, 1984.

²⁸ James Le Sueur, *Algeria Since 1989. Between Terror and Democracy*, London, Zed Books, 2010, pp. 122-168.

²⁹ Dario Cristiani and Riccardo Fabiani, "Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM): Implications for Algeria's Regional and International Relations," *IAI Working Papers*, No. 11|07, April 2011, <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iaiw1107.pdf>.

³⁰ Diaa Hadid, "Arab League asks for no-fly zone over Libya," *Associated Press*, March 12, 2011, <http://arabnews.com/middleeast/article314838.ece>.

Morocco, on the other hand, has always thought of its power projection into the Sahel as a function of its position in the Maghrebi geostrategic environment. As such, the Sahel was considered instrumental in trying to weaken the influence of Algeria in the same area. In strategic terms, the Sahel acquires importance in the eyes of Morocco for its potential for crisis and instability associated with illegal trafficking. The major direct threat for Morocco coming from the Sahel is represented by narcotics, for which Morocco's Mediterranean coast represents the final African terminal before the narcotics are transported to Europe. In the current crisis, Morocco's role has been limited, as Rabat does not share a border with Mali and its financial and military resources also remain limited by regional standards. Morocco, therefore, did not have a very strong influence on regional developments. During the crisis in Mali, for instance, Morocco supported the deployment of French forces by opening its air space, although this decision had only a minor effect on the actual evolution of military operations.³¹

Libya and Tunisia, which are both still engulfed to different extents in their problematic domestic transitions, also played a rather limited role in the current crisis. As noted earlier, Libya was a major Sahelian player under Gaddafi. However, at the moment, its role as a foreign policy actor in the region remains limited for a number of reasons: the inability of Libyan elites to produce a coherent and consistent foreign policy, the ideological reaction against Gaddafi's foreign policy, and the predominance of domestic issues in the current political agenda of the Libyan government. Meanwhile, Tunisia has substantially supported the role of Algeria while formally condemning the

French military intervention.³² The latter decision was instrumental in reducing the potential of a domestic crisis associated with rising domestic jihadism and spillover effects from the regional crisis. Appealing to the Islamist sectors of society by supporting their views on the conflict was a way to reduce the potential of domestic tension associated with a Western intervention against Islamist players in a regional country. Tunisia, however, has tried not to openly antagonize France, which remains its major external supporter.³³

Transatlantic Partnership and the Sahelian Crisis

Initially, the United States was particularly reluctant to be directly involved in the Sahelian crisis.³⁴ In the Libyan conflict, its role was essential. No NATO-led intervention would have been possible without Washington's assent. In the Libyan case, Obama stressed that the intervention was functional to U.S. national interests while also emphasizing that this was not an Iraqi-style mission.³⁵ However, in the Malian crisis, a series of considerations prevented the United States from pursuing a greater, direct involvement. The forthcoming U.S. presidential elections, the economic crisis, and the psychological burden of the attack in Benghazi that led to the death of the U.S. ambassador to Libya all influenced Obama's reluctance to get involved in Mali. Yet, once the French-led military campaign started, the United States markedly increased its role, providing

³¹ "Le Maroc affirme son soutien politique à l'intervention française au Mali," *RFI*, January 26, 2013, <http://www.rfi.fr/node/914666>.

³² "La Tunisie contre l'intervention française au Mali," *aBamako.com*, January 16, 2013, <http://news.abamako.com/h/11367.html>.

³³ Christopher Alexander, *Tunisia. Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb*, London, Routledge, 2010, pp. 89-96.

³⁴ Mark Hosenball and Tabassum Zakaria, "French urgency, U.S. caution collide in Mali operation," *Reuters*, January 26, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/26/us-usa-france-mali-idUSBRE90P04N20130126>.

³⁵ Helene Cooper, "Obama Cites Limits of U.S. Role in Libya," *The New York Times*, March 28, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/29/world/africa/29prexy.html>.

sensitive intelligence and logistical support.³⁶ This was consistent with the wider perception and aims of the United States in the region. U.S. interest in the Sahel covers both security/military and economic interests. Washington perceives this area as being geopolitically vulnerable because of its low demographic density and porous borders, seeing this region primarily as the new front in the global war against terrorism.³⁷ Since 2002, the United States has sought to facilitate cooperation among governments in the region and strengthen their capacity to combat criminal networks, but also to prevent terrorist groups from establishing bases in this region as they succeeded in doing in Afghanistan before September 11.³⁸ As such, terrorism and wider geostrategic considerations drive Washington's policies in the region. This area is seen primarily as a source of potential crisis and destabilization associated with jihadist dynamics. Yet the larger crisis in the Maghreb—Sahelian region, although worrisome, triggered a selective response on the part of the United States. Washington is now seeing the consequences of the overstretch of power during the first decade of the 21st century. Today it is much more selective in choosing where and when to intervene, and it has shifted parts of the burden to its European allies. Intervention is always seen as the last resort, and Obama's foreign policy approach is less muscular than that of his predecessor.

Unsurprisingly, the EU adopted a largely reactive stance concerning the crisis in Mali and, more generally, toward the deteriorating security

environment of the Sahel over the past three years. Despite all the institutional innovations brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, the EU's response concerning the Sahel was characterized by a rather deep disagreement among its member states. In the end, the EU produced a European Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel³⁹ whose conceptual roots can, however, be traced back to discussions on the region launched in 2008 by the French EU presidency. This underlines once again the dependence of the EU on France concerning its policies in the region. Although formally comprehensive in scope, in the end this strategy proved to once again be centered on what has been the EU's major preoccupation concerning the region over the past ten years: the eradication of the terrorist threat. Indeed, the only geographical map included in the European strategy on the Sahel is a map of al-Qaeda activities in the region, a visible example of how the terrorist threat represents the primary EU concern. This approach also emerged in the EU's approach toward the Malian crisis: attention rose only after the north fell into the hands of Islamist groups that were heading southward, triggering the French-led armed intervention. In fact, this can hardly be defined as a European intervention given the weak support for France from other member states. In the wake of French intervention, the EU simply finalized its plans for the launch of a Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) mission to support the training and reorganization of the Malian military on January 17, 2013 and whose declared aims are in line with the guidelines of the EU Strategy for the Sahel.⁴⁰ However, in more concrete geopolitical terms, pushing the jihadist groups operating in

³⁶ Adam Entous, David Gauthier-Villars and Drew Hinshaw, "U.S. Boosts War Role in Africa," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 4, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324539404578338590169579504.html>.

³⁷ Yahia H. Zoubir, "The United States and Maghreb—Sahel Security," *International Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 5, September 2009, p. 989, http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/International%20Affairs/2009/85_5zoubir.pdf.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ European Union External Action Service, *Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*, Brussels, March 2011, http://eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel_strategy_en.pdf.

⁴⁰ Council of the European Union, *EU training mission in Mali established* (5428/13), Brussels, January 17, 2013, http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/134748.pdf.

Mali back to their desert strongholds was the actual aim of the French intervention, an aim shared by all the European countries given that the deterioration of the security environment in the Sahel was perceived as a major and direct security threat to Europe.

Conclusion

The Malian crisis, the geographical core of the current Sahelian instability, has shown a particularly relevant development: a major convergence of interests between regional powers Algeria and Morocco, African actors such as ECOWAS, and external powers such as France and the United States. Although occasional and specific, this convergence could bear some positive effects on the stability of the region in the medium term, like triggering a process of political integration and increasing reciprocal confidence among the major actors of the area. The end of Gaddafi eliminated a major obstacle for a more intense and meaningful process of regional integration in the Maghreb.⁴¹ In this respect, it is significant that, following the regime change in Libya, Morocco and Algeria, whose relations have always been particularly troubled and complex,⁴² began a slow but nevertheless important process of rapprochement.⁴³ Historically, it is clear that the tense relationship between Algiers and Rabat was critical in order to foster — or impede — processes of regional integration and mutual understanding.⁴⁴ That is why these two countries, for geographical,

historical, and demographic reasons, remain the two indisputable linchpins of the region; every attempt at settling regional issues and boosting the stability of the entire area depends substantially on the willingness of Morocco and Algeria to cooperate.

A virtuous process of regional integration in the Maghreb may also have wider benefits for the Sahel. A settlement of long-standing conflicts and the quelling of geopolitical tensions among the two major Maghreb powers will also help the stabilization of their southern neighborhood, since it will likely bring a more coherent and functional division of diplomatic labor among countries interested in these issues. As such, Algeria remains a major cornerstone for the stabilization of the Sahelian region. Its reluctance to engage more proactively in regional affairs may represent an obstacle. However, as demonstrated in the case of the French-led intervention in Mali, Algerian elites can change their stance if specific geopolitical circumstances occur. Over the past few years, Algeria has engaged with some of the countries of the area, for instance in regional counter-terrorist activities, but its actual engagement has remained limited. Moreover, Algeria demonstrated a reluctance to bring Morocco into regional counter-terrorist structures. A rapprochement in the Maghreb will thus also have positive effects in the Sahel, reducing the zero-sum perceptions still informing the regional policies of the major countries of the region. As such, increasing the focus on Algeria as a major cornerstone for the stabilization of the south may prove to be most suitable way to reduce local threats while avoiding a major, direct engagement on the part of European countries and the United States.

For the United States and the EU, what is needed is a substantial shift in focus. The EU is rhetorically committed to adopting a comprehensive approach, but in practical terms, focuses on the issue of

⁴¹ Gaddafi's relations with his Maghrebi neighbors were always particularly troublesome. See John P. Entelis, "Libya and its North African Policy," in Dirk Vandewalle (ed.), *Libya Since 1969. Qadhafi's Revolution Revisited*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 173-190.

⁴² Michael J. Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb*, London, Hurst, 2013, pp. 265-282.

⁴³ Riccardo Fabiani, "Marocco-Algeria: il disgelo è possibile," *Limes*, No. 5, November 2012, p. 175-182.

⁴⁴ Michael J. Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb*, cit., pp. 282-283.

terrorism and security. Another major element of its common strategy should be that of sustaining the territorial integrity of Mali, since the challenges to its national unity have yet to be quelled. Above all, the EU should try to act as a diplomatic facilitator, pushing authorities to engage with all parties in the political spectrum. The pre-electoral⁴⁵ agreement between Malian authorities and Tuareg groups is positive⁴⁶ but is only a first step. The Malian crisis has shown that a much greater preventive strategy is needed to avoid the

deterioration of the security environment in some countries. As such, the EU and the United States should, for instance, more thoroughly support some governments, such as Niger, that are increasingly suffering because of these elements of crisis. Finally, the United States and the EU may also have a say concerning diplomatic dynamics in the Maghreb. The fragile elements of rapprochement between Algeria and Morocco that emerged recently need to be strengthened, as this may bear several positive consequences for the Sahelian region as well.

⁴⁵ In Mali, presidential elections were held on July 28, 2013, with a second round run-off held on August 11, 2013. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita defeated Soumaïla Cissé. Previously, he was prime minister from 1994 to 2000 and president of the National Assembly from 2002 to 2007.

⁴⁶ Signed in June 2013, this was a 12-page preliminary agreement paving the way for government troops to return to the last rebel-held town of Kidal ahead of presidential elections in July 2013. It also recognized the territorial integrity of Mali and providing for disarmament of rebel groups. See <http://peacemaker.un.org/mali-accord-preliminaire-elections2013>. For the joint declaration of the government and the MNLA see <http://peacemaker.un.org/mali-adhesion-accord-preliminaire2013>.

2

LAST EXIT SIRTE: LIBYA'S FRAGILE SECURITY CLIMATE IN THE AFTERMATH OF CIVIL WAR AND INTERVENTION

WOLFGANG MÜHLBERGER

Introduction

The security climate in Libya two years after the end of the “February 17 Revolution” is characterized by three problematic trends: a combination of lawlessness and impunity, continued score-settling, and increased Islamist militancy. Systematic intimidation and the lack of effective rule of law have led to widespread impunity for criminal offenses or terrorist acts. In a parallel process, self-appointed revolutionaries carry out revenge attacks against former Gaddafi loyalists as well as newly appointed security personnel, while tribes repeatedly engage in deadly clashes over old grievances related to land ownership and trans-border trade. In this general atmosphere of insecurity and instability, extremist militants are thriving and carving out their own domains of control and influence.

At the institutional level, the security sector is making little progress to establish itself as guarantor of the state's monopoly on force. This is due to the slow buildup of the army, a dysfunctional police force, and, above all, the deeply fragmented nature of the security apparatus in its post-revolutionary form. It also results from the ad-hoc integration of entire former non-state armed groups (NSAG) in newly created security bodies. Symptoms and the causes of this more-than-volatile domestic setting include the necessarily time-consuming training of new officers to rescind the inverted age-pyramid of the armed forces, policemen who prefer to call the para-state Supreme Security Council for support in case of emergency, and the questionable allegiance of commanders and their units who have nominally been inserted wholesale into new security forces.

As a consequence of this murky constellation, popular distrust in the capability of the security apparatus to assert law and order is on the rise and explains the motivation to stick to widely

proliferated weapons for personal security.⁴⁷ But, more worryingly, newly elected democratic institutions such as the General National Congress (GNC) are identified as the major culprits for this state of affairs. Against the backdrop of an urgent need to reassert public order and safety, the process of consensus-finding or decision-making between political parties is considered a waste of time, and trust in democratic mechanisms to cope with the looming security crisis is dwindling. Emerging calls to put an end to political parties altogether seem a good indicator of the mood in certain quarters.

In response to the problematic evolution of the security landscape, Prime Minister Ali Zeidan reverted to setting up an emergency cabinet in early August 2013 consisting of himself, the minister of defense, the minister of interior (whose seat is vacant at the time of writing), the minister of justice, the foreign minister, and the minister of finance. Furthermore, the GNC empowered Nouri Sahmein, president of the Congress and de facto head of state, to take “all necessary measures to address the crises.”⁴⁸ Noteworthy as it seems, a state of emergency as practiced in neighboring Tunisia and Egypt is not an option since no security apparatus would be capable of enforcing it. This simple fact epitomizes the current conundrum — as well as its potential for further catastrophic evolution.

By highlighting the evolving security situation since the start of the Libyan upheaval and by analyzing the shape, configuration, and clout of the emerging security sector — including official,

⁴⁷ The looting of weapon caches during the uprising resulted in a proliferation that provided fighting units with the necessary munitions but also introduced weapons to households, where they are still kept as a fallback option.

⁴⁸ On August 5, 2013, the General National Congress (Libya's parliament) authorized the president to take urgent measures to uphold security in all parts of the country. Cf. United Nations Secretary General, *Report on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya* (S/2013/516), September 5, 2013, para. 22, <http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=S/2013/516>.

para-military, and non-state armed groups — this chapter will shed light on the detrimental impact that lawlessness and insecurity are having on Libya's post-revolutionary transition. Starting with a short overview of the Gaddafi-era security apparatus, it describes the implications of the civil war and continues with an analysis of the post-conflict setting. Highlighting the risks of a failed-state scenario, the chapter concludes with several recommendations for the transatlantic community.

Gaddafi's Era Security: Anarchy Controlled

At the end of the Libyan uprising in 2011, not only was Colonel Gaddafi lynched by an armed group in Sirte and his relatives either executed (his son Muatassim), arrested (Saif al-Islam), or dispersed to neighboring countries (his daughter, Aischa, fled to Algeria, his son, Saadi, now resides in Niger, and Ahmed Qadhaf ad-Dam, his cousin, fled to Egypt from where he was extradited in late summer 2013), but the entire Jamahiriyya system came to an abrupt, screeching halt. Simultaneously, the shared goal of various militias, namely Gaddafi's demise, evaporated, setting the stage for the next scene, a drama whose unfolding we also witness in the reconfiguration of the security sector.

Gaddafi's idiosyncratic political system flanked by deliberately weak and dysfunctional institutions had been, amongst other outcomes, a provider of relative internal stability through the systematic suppression of dissent or by offering economic or political incentives for co-option. In order to uphold his regime, an elaborate and repressive system composed of a multitude of bodies covering the tasks of the secret police, political police, ideological control (Revolutionary Committees), and a Republican Guard with the sole purpose of

protecting the inner circle (*rijal al-khajma* or *men of the tent*) of power, had been created.⁴⁹

Ever since he achieved power via a putsch in 1969, Gaddafi — hailing himself from the armed forces — grew deeply distrustful of the military. In order to pre-empt any potential threat to his rule, the army was sidelined, weakened, and even sent to war in the far south bordering Chad. Gaddafi employed a whole set of steps and methods to hinder the emergence of a potential power-center. First of all, the purpose of the army was limited to territorial defense and the upholding of national sovereignty. In this way, it was never allowed to become the backbone of the state, unlike the traditional role the armed forces played in neighboring Egypt. He did this by allowing little new blood into the military system, creating an inverted age pyramid of many senior, older personnel and only limited numbers of foot soldiers at the operative level.⁵⁰ Effectively, only the elite units under the direct command of his sons⁵¹ enjoyed substantial military power, were equipped with the best weapons, and trained to counter regime threats, such as the armed upheaval in 2011.

Gaddafi's suspicion of the armed forces grew after the attempted coup in July 1975.⁵² In a move that might also have been a means to deflect the military's might away from domestic affairs and to the international scene, Gaddafi launched a war against Chad. This military adventure, dubbed the "Toyota War," lasted from 1978 to 1987 and

⁴⁹ Amal Obeidi, "Libyan security policy between existence and feasibility: an exploratory study," Paper presented at a GCSP seminar, October 2004, http://budgie3.ethz.ch/gcsp/e-tilljune06/meetings/Research_Seminars/Security-Med/2004/Libya.pdf

⁵⁰ Interview with Major-General Abdelsalim al-Hasi (J3), Tripoli, June 2012.

⁵¹ For example, the 32nd Brigade under Khamis Gaddafi's command.

⁵² See Moncef Ouannes, *Militaires, élites et modernisation dans la Libye contemporaine*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2009.

effectively sapped the energies of the military apparatus, ultimately leading to the exile of Khalifa Heftar, the general in charge of the campaign. Heftar tried a return to Libya after Gaddafi's downfall but his reputation as a CIA affiliate and U.S. proxy stopped him short from re-launching a domestic career.

Even though the army did venture into cross-border conflicts such as the Chad campaign, regular units generally remained sidelined, decentralized, and devoid of the appropriate means and equipment. The explanation for Gaddafi's thirst for weapons, as highlighted by the huge army depots that were ransacked during the 2011 civil war and that would appear to contradict the army's poor equipment, is two-fold. On one hand, they supposedly served as a logistical base for possible military action during a Cold War escalation. On the other, the Revolutionary Committees were the ones in charge of protecting these storage sites, not the regular army.

A plurality of security agencies were set up to provide internal stability by checking on dissent, providing intelligence, fighting Islamist militancy, and ultimately assuring regime survival via broad-based repression. This plethora of domestic security forces can most aptly be described with the term "securocracy." At the core of its functionality was the role of key tribes (the Qadhadfa, the Megarha, and other allies), which were linked to Gaddafi by clientelistic dependence and loyalty in the security apparatus. The intelligence sector in particular functioned according to this kinship mechanism and was based on a high diversification of tasks.

The major threats to stability that the *Jamahiriyya* had to cope with were political opposition (both liberal and Islamist), organized crime, and illegal

migration.⁵³ In particular, the threat of unmitigated migratory flows was skillfully used and abused by Gaddafi as a domestic and foreign policy tool as an exertion of pressure on the European Union and its member states. Political opposition was even chased and eliminated abroad, and regional or tribal grievances were often channeled by a clientelistic system favoring faithful Arab tribes to the detriment of disloyal ones and penalizing ethnic minorities such as the Toubous and Berbers.⁵⁴

Radical and militant Islamists certainly represented the biggest threat to regime stability, a trend that is currently resurfacing, in particular in the restive Eastern Cyrenaica region. They were the most brutally subdued element of Gaddafi's security equation. Even in prison, they were still heavily suppressed, as the 1996 massacre in the Abu Salim prison has shown⁵⁵. Ironically, it was only a few months before the start of the unrest in Libya that a foundation under the aegis of Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam eventually found an agreement with former hardcore Islamist fighters from the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). These jihadists agreed to sign a so-called recantation document (*Muraja'at*), repudiating their violent inclinations and sealing a sort of truce with the regime.⁵⁶ However, with the upheaval turning into a revolution, they also took up arms and freed huge parts of Eastern

⁵³ Hanspeter Mattes, "Challenges to Security Sector Governance in the Middle East: The Libyan Case," paper presented at the DCAF workshop on *Challenges of Security Sector Governance in the Middle East*, Geneva, July 12-13, 2004, <http://www.dcaf.ch/Event/Workshop-on-Challenges-to-Security-Sector-Governance-in-the-Middle-East>.

⁵⁴ Issa Abdelmajid Mansour, "Libye: le chef des Toubous dénonce un 'nettoyage ethnique' au sud du pays," *Jeune Afrique*, March 28, 2012, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20120328150456>.

⁵⁵ For more background, see <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/06/27/libya-abu-salim-prison-massacre-remembered>.

⁵⁶ Victor Kocher, "Bekehrung libyscher Islamisten," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, April 10, 2010, <http://www.nzz.ch/aktuell/startseite/bekehrung-libyscher-islamisten-1.5411412>.

Libya, establishing strong bonds among fellow fundamentalists.⁵⁷

It goes without saying that the downfall of such an elaborate securocracy, combined with systemically weak governance, creates a tremendous vacuum. Its replacement by a system under civilian, democratic control cannot be reduced to a technical exercise or a purely institutional process. Due to the nature of non-state armed groups and their respective stakes involved in post-revolutionary Libya, it turns out to be a delicate and highly politicized topic. The demise of the old system means that new conflicts are looming on the horizon, especially between emerging security structures of the nascent state and increasingly entrenched and assertive militias.

Security Implications of Upheaval, Civil War, and R2P-Intervention: A Crumbling House of Cards

On February 17, 2011, following major upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt, relatives of former Abu Salim prison inmates demonstrated in Benghazi for the release of lawyers who were defending their cause. In particular, they requested the release of Fathi Terbil, who would later become a member of the National Transitional Council (NTC).⁵⁸ The government security agencies, already on a high alert due to events in Tunis and Cairo, reacted with pronounced brutality, leading to the death of dozens of civilians in the following days.

⁵⁷ See Jason Pack and Barak Barfi, "In War's Wake — The Struggle for Post-Qadhafi Libya," *Washington Institute Policy Focus*, No. 118, February 2012, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/in-wars-wake-the-struggle-for-post-qadhafi-libya>.

⁵⁸ Contradictory sources indicate that Fathi Terbil, one of the most prominent lawyers defending the Abu Salim case, had either not been arrested and was engaged in negotiations with A. Younis (minister of interior), O. Ichkel (head of the revolutionary committees), and A. Senoussi (head of intelligence) following the eruption of the demonstrations, or that he had been arrested and interrogated by Senoussi. For the first version see Moncef Ouannes, "Sociologie d'une révolte armée: le cas de la Libye," *African Sociological Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2012, p. 22-39, <http://www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/4-11.pdf>.

The situation quickly degenerated into an armed uprising, with several army units stationed in eastern Cyrenaica defecting following a call from General Abdelfatah Younis (minister of interior until his defection from the regime on February 22, 2011). However, not all defecting soldiers joined the ranks of the emerging militias.⁵⁹ As a consequence of the army's partial disaggregation, several weapons depots were looted, giving rise to uncontrolled arms flows, the effects of which can still be observed well beyond Libya's borders. This trend, coupled with the setting-up of small irregular combat units, eventually led to a full-scale militarization of the conflict, with government forces pitted against various non-state armed groups mainly formed on a restricted parochial level to ensure local security.

As the army split into loyal and defecting units, the role of Gaddafi's elite units rose to the fore. The Khamis brigade (or 32nd armored brigade) was sent to the front lines in eastern Cyrenaica. Generally speaking, the regular armed forces quickly proved to be the ineffective and disloyal hollow shell Gaddafi had progressively created since he ascended to power. Only his elite units, pampered materially and linked to the colonel through kinship or family ties, were willing and able to confront what increasingly appeared to be an existential threat to the regime. On the non-military level, Revolutionary Committees who had been armed for this purpose were called upon to quell any emerging dissent in areas still under the control of the central government. But police offices and buildings of the Revolutionary Committees were increasingly targeted and burned down, leaving the task of ensuring regime survival to Gaddafi's loyal elite brigades.

⁵⁹ Florence Gaub, "The Libyan Armed Forces between Coup-Proofing and Repression," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 5, February 2013, p. 221-244.

A poster at Tripoli International Airport in June 2012 depicting General Abdelfatah Younis after his defection included the motto “Libya will not forget the heroes” (*Libiya lan tansa al-abtal*). Indeed, General Younis was among the first high-ranking army officers who refused to militarily quell the mounting insurrection in Benghazi and Derna, highlighting the tension between regime loyalty and patriotism. In this sense, ironically, he had remained loyal to Gaddafi’s understanding of the purpose of the armed forces as primarily designed to guarantee territorial integrity and Libyan sovereignty instead of supporting regime survival in case of widespread mayhem.

As the fighting turned into a full-fledged civil war in mid-2011, the revolutionaries (*thuwwar*) increasingly organized their structures. Local Military Councils popped up and coordinated the militias’ campaign against the government and its loyal security forces. These councils were usually closely linked to the civilian Local Councils.⁶⁰ Once an international consensus had been established against Gaddafi, the fighting continued in coordination with Qatari and European Special Forces present on the ground, which also provided training, weapons, intelligence, and targeting info.⁶¹ At this stage of the revolution, the decentralized regional fighting units (*katiba or liwa*) were still unified by a common goal: the toppling of the regime, which only occurred after eight months of fierce and traumatizing fighting.

However, facing the multiplicity of militias and regional pockets of fighting spreading over Libya, the NTC — having a relatively narrow power base in Benghazi and eastern Libya — started losing

control of the security situation. This development led to a rivalry between self-appointed and, later on, elected representatives on one hand and the revolutionary fighters on the other. These tensions persist to this day between the GNC, which is trying to establish a centralized authority, and the plethora of militias with diverging interests. Furthermore, this rivalry carries a strong economic component. The military might of some NSAGs is used as a means to extort money from the state, as the higher salaries of militia members versus average police or army salaries clearly indicate.

In addition to the issue of arms proliferation (Belgian FAL rifles are the single most observed weapon),⁶² the military impact of NATO bombardments created a problematic legacy, representing a major public safety issue. Unexploded ordinances (UXO) have been spread in the vicinity of fractured bunkers and threaten the population. Awareness campaigns try to address the issue, and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and NGOs have been engaged in demining and disarming. Another issue linked to unsecured remnants of war is that improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are being built with unsecured munitions.⁶³ This activity is traceable back to the civil war but is more problematic today in light of increased Islamist militancy.

With the end of Operation Unified Protector (OUP) and the civil war, a power vacuum kicked in that led to a makeshift security sector and a pronounced lack of the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of force. From the perspective of the interim government, the situation might also be considered a security vacuum, since the

⁶⁰ See Brian McQuinn, “After the Fall — Libya’s Evolving Armed Groups,” *Small Arms Survey Working Papers*, No. 12, October 2012, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/about-us/highlights/highlight-after-the-fall.html>.

⁶¹ Interviews conducted with European and U.S. military personnel in Tripoli, June 2012.

⁶² See N.R. Jenzen Jones, “The Headstamp Trail: An Assessment of Small-calibre Ammunition Found in Libya,” *Small Arms Survey Working Papers*, No. 16, May 2013, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/about-us/highlights/focus-sana.html>.

⁶³ “Libya Struggles to Clear Explosive Remnants of War,” *IRIN Analysis*, August 6, 2013, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/98532>.

domain is not controlled by the state. From a more constructivist viewpoint, the Libyan security sector is currently a self-supporting system with localized agendas escaping a central command. The lowest common denominator (the interests of small militias or of militia confederations, so called *tajammus*) is ruling instead of the highest *raison d'être*, namely the state's national interest. This situation will not improve until the nascent state gains strength via increased legitimacy. This could happen if a consensus on a constitution is found and elections lead to the creation of a non-interim government. Such an ideal process is limited by the distrust of militias with Islamist backgrounds, for example the Libya Shield Forces, who consider the GNC and the government a nexus of old regime figures and liberals.

Meanwhile the government in Tripoli, whose sway barely transcends the city limits, is, *faute de mieux*, engaged in a policy of appeasement toward the militias instead of pushing for a genuine disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme. The price for this policy, avoiding direct confrontation, is two-fold: it comes at a political cost, namely decreased trust in the ability of elected representatives to handle the security landscape, and, secondly, it undermines the state's capacity to control the various security bodies. The other consequence of legalizing and empowering militias, who follow the individualistic orders of their commanders, is that the ground is being prepared for lawlessness at the expense of the rule of law.⁶⁴ The only way out of this dilemma is the medium-term project of building and training the security sector from scratch, which involves the necessarily lengthy training of new security forces. While the police are making slow progress in this regard, with recruits being trained in Turkey

and recent graduations from the Tripoli police academy,⁶⁵ the military makes rather tepid progress, with fresh cadets trickling in from Sudan and eventually from European partner countries. Yet, a comprehensive security strategy is still missing two years after the end of the civil war and the eventual interception of Gaddafi's convoy in Sirte in October 2011. Repeated announcements by the GNC, such as deadlines for the 'final disarmament' of rogue militias, die away in the general agitation of post-conflict Libya and because of the current government's utter inability to effectively enforce such "final calls."

Post-Conflict Transformation: Overcoming a Catch-22

The aftermath of the Libyan revolution and the regime's fall in October 2011 is characterized by the multiplicity of security — and insecurity — providers, some of which turned out to be genuine spoilers of the political transition by unduly interfering in the democratic process. In addition to their sheer numbers, the heterogeneity of the various revolutionary forces, be they tribal, religious, or motivated by purely political interests, military or civilian-based, domestic or regional, rose to the fore. Rivalries erupted at various levels and along a multitude of fault lines. Despite efforts to gather militias under the framework of umbrella organizations, the fundamental challenge of the non-state orientation of these groupings remains. Even though nominally many militias are respondent to state institutions, i.e. the ministries, in reality they remain loyal to their commanders, thereby reinforcing individual instead of institutional allegiances. This set of elements systematically undermines the emergence of a state monopoly on violence and entrenches the

⁶⁴ International Legal Assistance Consortium, "Rule of Law Assessment Report, Libya 2013," *ILAC Reports*, 1/2013, May 2013, <http://www.ilac.se/2013/05/09/ilac-assessment-report-libya-2013>.

⁶⁵ Ashraf Abdul Wahab, "Over 1,000 new officers graduate from police academy," *Libya Herald*, October 31, 2013, <http://www.libyaherald.com/2013/10/31/over-1000-new-officers-graduate-from-police-academy>.

increasingly perennial character of non-state armed groups in Libya.

The lack of official clout is mainly based on an institutional vacuum and a pronounced political weakness of the interim authorities rather than on a “security vacuum” per se, since most NSAGs actively or passively engage in maintaining a minimum level of public safety and stability. Current observers of the Libyan security sector can witness a competition between those nominally in charge, i.e. the elected government, and those effectively in power, i.e. the militias, represented either by strong single units or teams of *tajammus* or parastatal organizations. Thus, this fundamental governance issue arises from two competing poles, namely legal authority versus effective power. The issue is further complicated by two factors: the role played by political backers of certain ideologically oriented militias, e.g. the intimate relationship between the Libya Shield Force and the Muslim Brotherhood or Islamist groups more generally, and the legalization of militias at various stages of the post-revolutionary period through official decrees.

Technically, in order to reinstate the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of force, militias must undergo — and accept — a DDR program. Whereas demobilization was only informally achieved at the end of combat operations, several initiatives for weapons’ registration and collection led to rather unsatisfactory results. Furthermore, buy-back or collection programs raise the issues of storage or destruction, all of which have not been addressed in a transparent way. Even though the NTC and now the GNC have repeatedly underscored the urgency and top priority of the short-term goals linked to a DDR process, in practice, the authorities have favored an increasingly colorful array of integration and reintegration programs in order to avoid a direct confrontation with gun-carrying elements, being

fully aware of the factual asymmetry of forces and the potential for conflict and escalation.

Four official integrative units have been set up to insert willing fighters into new security structures, which are para-state institutions of a supposedly transitional nature. The largest structure under nominal command of the ministry of interior is the Supreme Security Council (SSC). It regroups dozens of militias, has a power base in Tripoli, and is headed by Hisham Bishr.⁶⁶ The Libya Shield Forces (LSF) is an umbrella organization under nominal authority of the chief of staff that tends to regroup militias belonging to the Islamist camp and enjoys a close relationship to the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood and its political platform, the Justice and Development Party.

A major issue related to the SSC and the LSF in comparison to regular army units or the police is their far better salary level. This raises the question of their effective purpose as well as of corruption, since a total of 8 billion Libyan Dinars have been pledged by the Libyan government for DDR purposes. The use and abuse of the militia-system by influential commanders has evolved into a mechanism whereby money is extorted from the state, weighing heavily on the budget.

The department for Border Affairs and Strategic Facilities, which includes the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG), is directly inserted into the Ministry of Defense. This is mainly a tool of various militias throughout Libya who can thereby control the flow of oil and gas and thus influence the financial assets of the government.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Malthieu Galtier, “Being Hashim Bishr, head of Tripoli SSC,” *Libya Herald*, June 10, 2013, <http://www.libyaherald.com/2013/06/10/being-hashim-bishr-head-of-tripoli-ssc>.

⁶⁷ Jason Pack and Haley Cook, “Beyond Tripoli’s Grasp,” *The Majalla*, October 3, 2013, <http://www.majalla.com/eng/2013/10/article55245761>.

In light of a central government that cannot rely on any functional security body under its immediate command, Prime Minister Zeidan proposed the creation of a new National Guard. Though initially successful, PM Zeidan later repealed the decree and shelved the idea after pressures and criticism. The proposal had been constructive on technical terms but would have curtailed the power of the existing groups and was therefore torpedoed.

The latest SSR proposal is to train a “General Purpose Force” with support from the United States, Italy, and France. Training by U.S. forces will start in Bulgaria and should provide basic training for new army recruits.⁶⁸

In addition to these four major schemes, a couple of other bodies have been set up, only to complete the picture of a fragmented and uncoordinated security landscape. The Joint Force in Tripoli under commander Fitouri Ghuraybi, the Supreme Revolutionary Council under executive director Mohamed Shaaban, the Tripoli Revolutionaries’ Operation Room (linked to PM Zeidan’s abduction in 2013), the Joint Security Rooms in their Misuratan and Benghazi versions, and the Benghazi Security Directorate have all mushroomed and supposedly act as security providers.

As numerous militias have been mandated by the authorities with specific tasks and have been contracted for limited periods, the renewal of their contracts is a steady bargaining issue. In addition, the allegiance question exemplifies the distrust of militias toward PM Zeidan’s cabinet. Despite his own dissidence against Gaddafi, the government of the GNC is considered to be more or less pro-loyalist by many militias. Furthermore, the revolution was, broadly speaking, conducted by the periphery against the center, with comparatively

little militia action in Tripoli proper. Therefore, the majority of the militias who converged in Tripoli at the height of the revolution brought with them their grievances and experience of marginalization and accordingly carry a deep distrust of political activities emanating from the capital.

The fall of the *Jamahiriyya* security system did not only led to a fundamental reconfiguration of the security landscape and a collapse of the state’s security apparatus, but also triggered and catalyzed several conflicts that currently represent, in addition to unresolved institutional issues, the greatest challenge to Libya’s transition. These conflicts repeatedly surface in a violent fashion, representing the central cause for the rising death toll in post-revolutionary Libya.

Several conflicts, mostly of an ethnic or tribal nature, have resurfaced due to the lack of state governance, the proliferation of weapons, and the porosity of borders. The Libyan Far South, i.e. the Fezzan and the Saharan part of the Cyrenaica region, have transformed into a theatre of economic competition for stakes linked to illegal trans-border trafficking activities.⁶⁹ Competition has repeatedly led to armed clashes, often only brought to a stop with the help of army units or LSF fighters flown in from the north or through mediation efforts and settlements under the aegis of elder notables and tribal sheikhs.

Linked to these conflicts is the high degree of border porosity (a traditional issue reinforced through the takeover of border posts by partisan groups linked to illicit trading) and the legacy of Gaddafi’s policies. On one hand, the colonel allowed trans-border activities to the extent that they created income in poor regions and thereby fostered loyalty to the regime. On the other, these

⁶⁸ Benjamin Nickels, “Pitfalls for Libya’s General Purpose Force,” *Sada*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 10, 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=53273>.

⁶⁹ Peter Cole, “Borderline Chaos? Stabilizing Libya’s Periphery,” *The Carnegie Papers*, October 2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/?fa=49727>.

activities were linked to his policies of ethnic engineering, through which he sought to empower Arab tribes (Abu Slimane, Abu Zwayy, Warfalla) to the detriment of local populations like the Tuareg and the Toubous.⁷⁰

Anarchy Supreme? Avoiding a Failed State Scenario

Gaddafi's vision of a state ruled by the masses and the concept of self-controlled anarchy had been extenuated at an early stage of his rule, when he established the difference between the ruling masses and the leader of the revolution. His political system, due to a lack of theoretical foundation and the confrontation with the Bedouin nature of his polity, was therefore deeply schizophrenic and had to resort to fierce oppression of dissent to keep the Jamahiriya afloat. With the end of his 42-year-long rule, the superficial semblance of stability imploded and paved the way for a phase of genuine anarchy, whose dramatic unfolding is still ongoing.

In the third year after Gaddafi's toppling, first signs of an economic toll due to a fragmented, non-state-centered security apparatus featuring mostly distinct localized agendas are crystallizing. It turns out that outsourcing oil field protection to various militias was a strategic blunder. The armed groups in charge have started to discover the leverage of their task by blocking of oil supplies to push very specific and individual grievances, thereby hitting the spine of the state.⁷¹ Revenue from oil and gas exports amounts to 95 percent of state budget income and supplies have been

reduced via labor action to a mere trickle.⁷² If the state wants to keep control of its essential resources and strategic assets, it should ideally replace the militias in charge and call in armed security forces loyal to the state and not to local post-revolutionary militia commanders. However, in the short run, the fledgling state institutions can only give in to the pressures and try to accommodate opposing interests. The inhabitants of Tripoli recently felt the ramifications of para-state militias who primarily follow their own goals and jeopardize public safety. A unit of the SSC kidnapped the daughter of former spy chief Senoussi when she left a Tripoli prison. Consequently, her tribal kinsmen based in the Saharan Sebha area cut off the water supplies to Tripoli by blocking the northward flow of the "Great Man Made River" conduits. The governance weakness, or rather the sheer lack of any effective command and control structures in the security sector, could not have been highlighted more clearly.

Even though several initiatives have been put in place to start training new military and police forces, the results to date have been quite poor. Military training even at the most basic level takes up to three months and should meet certain qualitative criteria. Altogether, training from scratch takes a relatively long period, and alternatives, like enrolling with better-paying militias or the Warriors Affairs Commission scheme, are in abundance. Therefore, talking about civil-military relations at this stage seems superfluous to say the least. The training of Libyan police recruits in Jordan turned out to be a relative fiasco, ending unceremoniously when they either did not show up for the exercise or eventually set fire to Jordanian infrastructure in complaint over delayed flights. The outcome of the ongoing training in Turkey can only be evaluated after its

⁷⁰ Christophe Boisbouvier, "Libye: quand les Toubous se réveillent," *Jeune Afrique*, May 16, 2012, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/JA2678p044-045.xml>.

⁷¹ Saleh Sarrar and Maher Chmaytelli, "Libya Oil Output Decline Threatens Public Sector Pay, MP Says," *Bloomberg News*, September 1, 2013, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-09-01/libya-oil-output-decline-threatens-public-sector-pay-mp-says.html>.

⁷² In particular, the various PFG units have resorted to so-called "strikes" to pressure the government for higher salaries, i.e. a bigger part of the state's resource-based revenue.

termination.⁷³ Certainly, questions as to the vetting procedure and the attitude of the recruits with regards to their future potential role at the service of the Libyan state need to be addressed.

The political process, with its underlying linkages between security actors and ideological groups, represents another challenge to the stability of the country. Even though a Political Isolation Law (PIL) passed the GNC early this year and should represent a legal mechanism to exclude former (high-level) Gaddafi-era public servants, a witch hunt against ex-regime officials, especially those hailing from the infamous security apparatus, is being conducted in the east of the country. The death toll has reached more than 60 and a tendency to broaden the range of soft targets is emerging. Death lists have appeared on the Internet and threaten critics of the Islamists. With the assassination of Abdelsalam al-Mismari, a longtime opponent of Gaddafi's regime who is also critical of Islamist propaganda, terrorism and radicalization is gaining a foothold. Whereas the implementation of the PIL could deprive the bureaucracy of talent and weaken the state, non-implementation will further increase distrust and pit the liberals and former regime personnel against political Islam.⁷⁴

In light of this shambolic situation, engagement of the international community in the field of security and defense reform should be driven by the utmost care to avoid a complete collapse of nascent state structures.

Assessment and Recommendations for the Transatlantic Community

With Libya in the midst of a transition period, the defeated and decimated army is too weak to impose

order or to disarm rogue militias.⁷⁵ In addition, a weak constitution does not facilitate external support since it engenders an institutional vacuum and perpetuates interim counterparts. Even though weak governance does not stop decision-making, it renders the implementation of GNC decrees virtually impossible, in particular if they contradict the interests of entrenched non-state armed groups. Numerous decrees regarding the dissolution of militias or the prohibition to carry guns in public remain unenforced. But until now, militias have remained a local or regional phenomenon at best. Therefore, no militia or *tajammu* is technically a match for the GNC, i.e. the state, since any action would trigger a reaction by other militia conglomerates.

At the same time, supporters of an army under the control of the government face the risk of assassination by one of the rogue militias who believe that their current autonomy is in jeopardy. But only a strong central government (with or without autonomous regions or based on a federal system) can provide public safety, security for institutions, and stability. Since the political process is the pathway of fundamental importance to achieve legitimacy beyond the revolutionary credentials of the *thuwwar*, it should receive due support. The government has to perform and progress with its genuinely political tasks such as the constitution and elections in order to gain credibility, increase legitimacy, and derive leverage against unwilling militias.

Even though Western countries have a massive self-interest in Libya's stability, their post-conflict engagement paradoxically represents a tiny fracture of the proactive and enthusiastic stance taken to support the uprising against Gaddafi. Yet it has

⁷³ The training program takes place at the Adile Sadullah Mermerci Police Center and should create a corps of more than 800 Libyan policemen.

⁷⁴ Nicolas Pelham, "Losing Libya's Revolution," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 60, No. 15, October 10, 2013.

⁷⁵ Hanspeter Mattes, "Schwierige Neupositionierung des Militärs in Tunesien, Ägypten und Libyen," *GIGA Focus Nahost*, No. 4/2013, http://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/system/files/publications/gf_nahost_1304.pdf.

to be acknowledged at this point that efforts to centralize militia control have failed. The Libyan government, realizing that the co-option of militias into the state's security structures inhibits the development of a security sector under democratic and civilian control, is in dire need for external support and has voiced this issue repeatedly. It therefore comes as a surprise that more than two years after Gaddafi's demise, NATO, the single most important military supporter of the uprising, has eventually decided to dispatch security advisors, to be based in Brussels.⁷⁶ The European Union, based on the identification of Libya's border porosity as a major security-related issue, decided to lend more substantial support with a border assistance mission.⁷⁷ But due to security concerns and possibly conceptual weaknesses, the technical assistance tasks of the mission have difficulties with implementation. The UN, without doubt, has played by far the most active role through UNSMIL's activities, including support for the drafting of a defense white paper as well as various DDR and SSR recommendations. On the regional level, players such as the Arab League or the African Union might not be ideal partners for security reform in Libya, since Libya needs training and capacity building support above all. Whereas the Arab Maghreb Union hosted several security summits since the end of the Libyan civil war, the pledges for enhanced regional (Maghrebi) cooperation still await implementation. Beyond regional activities, bilateral security arrangements with neighboring countries such as Algeria and Tunisia rose to the fore based on a shared threat assessment (terrorism). Due to potential regional implications of security threats emanating from

⁷⁶ "NATO to advise Libya on strengthening security forces," *Reuters*, October 21, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/21/us-libya-nato-idUSBRE99K0GX20131021>.

⁷⁷ Myrto Hatzigeorgopoulos and Lorène-Fara Andrianarijaona, "EUBAM Libya: story of a long-awaited CSDP mission," *European Security Review*, No. 66, May 2013, <http://www.isis-europe.eu/node/640>.

a destabilized Libya, the CEN-SAD (Community of Sahel-Saharan States) could turn out to be a useful regional platform to address these issues in a systematic manner and thus be worthy of transatlantic support.

To conclude, transatlantic partners should consider the following seven issues as crucial for security and stability in Libya:

1. Build a civilian and military security sector in line with state interests (non-parochial) and under exclusive government control (economic/salaries, operational/tasks, strategic). Prerequisite: a national security strategy, including a plan for SSR, the reorganization of the domestic/internal intelligence apparatus, and the repeal of ministerial empowerment of militias.
2. Balance the urgency and significance of the matter (point 1) with the transitional character of Libyan institutions, i.e. keeping in mind the mutual interplay and interdependence of institution-building, national reconciliation, and SSR, therefore prioritizing the neutralization of the most noxious elements, i.e. Islamist militants.
3. Consider the variety of militias in terms of origins, tasks (during the civil war and currently), composition, economic base, and interests in order to determine a prioritization and timeline for their disarmament/dissolution, to adapt the DDR method accordingly, and to single out ideological, Salafi-jihadi groups.
4. Break the backbone of the autonomy of the fighting units, including the SSC and the *Dera'* (Libya Shield). Halt state subsidies, adapt the level of salaries to other state bodies, and criminalize and inflict penalties for illicit financing activities.

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| <p>5. Coordinate international SSR/DDR proposals and efforts. this role to be filled either by UNSMIL or a relevant government entity, which could later logically evolve into a central coordination body for Libya's security sector.</p> <p>6. Streamline security sector-related activities between ministries, i.e. define clear responsibilities, based on a white paper.</p> | <p>7. Focus on counter-radicalization and counter-terrorism activities in parallel to the buildup of a streamlined, hierarchical, and accountable security sector.</p> |
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3 TROUBLED WATERS: EGYPT'S AFRICAN POLICY FROM THE ISLAMISTS TO THE MILITARY

GIORGIO MUSSO

Introduction

We in Egypt and Sudan are integrated, and you will find enemies for this integration.”⁷⁸ With these words in a Khartoum mosque during his first official visit to Sudan in April 2013, Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi hinted at the worries raised among a number of external observers about the tight relationship between Egypt's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and Sudan's National Congress Party (NCP), both political expressions of the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*). Such an “Islamist axis” along the Nile has, however, proven to be short-lived given Morsi's ouster just a few months later, raising questions about the repercussions of the Egyptian crisis on its southern neighbor and, more broadly, on Egypt's role in Africa.

The suspension of Egypt's membership in the African Union (AU) following the military overthrow of the elected president can be interpreted the signal of a tough stance on behalf of the pan-African body. However, such procedure follows an established AU practice toward unconstitutional changes of government, which led to the temporary suspension of Madagascar, Niger, the Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau, and Mali in the last four years alone.⁷⁹ The strict application of this mechanism has to do with Africa's increasing intolerance of military interventions in politics as well as the persisting *esprit de corps* shared by the continent's top leaders.

This chapter develops a geopolitical analysis of Egypt's African policy since the January 2011 uprising through a series of concentric circles: Sudan, the greater Nile Valley, and the whole

continent. From the onset, Cairo's African policy has been eagerly observed by other key actors in the region, namely the Gulf states. The final section analyzes implications for Egypt's evolving relations with the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf.

When considered in the context of Egypt's traditional regional and international posture, the one-year rule of Mohammed Morsi and the FJP may appear to be a short parenthetical. However, the first Islamist president of Egypt was both faithful to his country's tradition of external activism and tried to initiate a gradual foreign policy recalibration. With respect to Africa, Morsi and the FJP proclaimed with much fanfare their desire for a “comeback to Africa,”⁸⁰ a dimension allegedly neglected under Mubarak. This refocusing on Africa was initially due to Egypt seeking a solution to the dispute over the Nile waters but also aspired to go well beyond that, especially in the field of economic cooperation.

The endemic instability currently affecting North Africa, the Middle East, the Nile Valley, and the Sahel belt presented Morsi with many opportunities to exercise his foreign policy skills — or lack thereof. Morsi's first test came with Ethiopia's announcement of the construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam. The project's diversion of the Blue Nile threatens to reduce the water shares of downstream countries, including Egypt. Secondly, the Israeli “Pillar of Defense” operation in Gaza in November 2012 and Cairo's successful mediation of a ceasefire — conducted in tandem with the U.S. Department of State — put the Egyptian president in the international spotlight, prompting *TIME* magazine to emphatically label Morsi “the most important man in the Middle East.”⁸¹ These two

⁷⁸ Quoted in Abdelmoneim Abu Edris Ali, “Egypt, Sudan plan to double trade, Morsi says,” *AFP*, April 5, 2013, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hqLW1ebXnSKVzjkhX-HevUyZHwI-A?docId=CNG.33763e54284a113d6595cfd39fd29640.3c1>.

⁷⁹ Azad Essa, “Q&A: What does AU suspension mean for Egypt?,” *Al-Jazeera*, July 6, 2013, <http://aje.me/12rCpH5>.

⁸⁰ Egypt State Information Service, *PM: Egypt can control budget deficit, increase growth rates*, October 10, 2012, <http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Templates/Articles/tmpArticles.aspx?ArtID=64423>.

⁸¹ A close-up portrait of Morsi with the aforementioned title appeared on *TIME*'s cover on December 10, 2012.

issues had important repercussions on the domestic front. After the Gaza negotiations, Morsi tried to exploit the huge popularity he gained to pass the controversial November 22 decrees, granting his office immunity from the courts. This action gave rise to a new wave of popular protests that ultimately led to his deposition in early July 2013. At the same time, his poor management of the Nile dossier, which peaked shortly before Morsi's ouster, was widely perceived as further proof of the Muslim Brothers' inability to rule the country. Given the intense interplay between foreign and domestic politics, an understanding of the foreign policy of the short-lived Islamist government may offer interesting insights into the dynamics that led to the present dramatic stage in Egypt's post-revolutionary transition.

The common analytical thread that runs throughout this chapter is an effort to understand how the ideological orientation of the government has influenced the pursuit of "realist" goals in the international arena. To what extent has Egypt's foreign policy under Morsi and the FJP been the product of ideological affinity or "Islamist diplomacy"? From this perspective, which dynamics of continuity and change can be detected? Will the military-civilian transitional regime currently ruling the country try to reverse the course of the Islamist government's foreign policy? These are some of the research questions that the paper tries to tackle with the aim of providing transatlantic decision-makers with useful insights on how to deal with a complex system of interlinked and particularly volatile regional crises stretching from Mali to Iran.

Brothers, not Twins

The "green tide" that has followed popular uprisings in North Africa has given the Sudanese regime — weakened by the secession of South Sudan and worried about the possibility of a democratic contagion — an opportunity to seek new legitimacy

by presenting itself as a pioneer of an Islamic renaissance that seemed to be forthcoming and lasting. Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir was among the first leaders to pay an official visit — in September 2012 — to his Egyptian counterpart, while Morsi waited almost a year before going to Khartoum, an unusually long time for an Egyptian head of state. By seeking a full endorsement from Egypt, al-Bashir was looking for an ally in his effort to delegitimize the International Criminal Court (ICC), which in 2008 issued an indictment for his arrest for war crimes allegedly committed in Sudan's Darfur region. On a broader level, Sudan, which is experiencing a dire economic crisis after the loss of the South in July 2011, is eager to attract Egyptian private investments in agriculture and industry.

On the Egyptian side, engagement with Sudan remained focused on the traditional themes of Cairo's relationship with Khartoum: the unity of the Nile Valley and the quest for lands and water. At the same time, given the overall regional political context, the self-defined "revolutionary" government in Egypt had no interest in being too closely associated with an authoritarian and militaristic government that represented the *ancien régime*. Moreover, Morsi was conscious that many Egyptians looked to Sudan as a worrying model of Islamic governance and hoped the FJP was not going to follow the same path.

Notwithstanding these differing approaches, the common ascendance of the two ruling parties immediately translated into a renewed activism along the Cairo-Khartoum axis. In mid-March 2013, an FJP delegation visited Khartoum and signed a cooperation agreement with the NCP. Most importantly, the visit of the then FJP chairman, Saad al-Katatni, to Khartoum anticipated the Egyptian president's visit, before any official communication by the Egyptian Foreign Ministry or the presidency. It seemed that

“Islamist diplomacy” provided closer channels of cooperation between the two governments. Official state institutions responsible for foreign policy-making were bypassed, so representing one of the many cases of the Brotherhood-versus-“deep state” conflict. Nonetheless, the *entente* between the two ruling parties produced little more than rhetoric. In fact, no breakthrough on the contentious issues still separating the two countries will be remembered among Morsi’s few accomplishments.

Prominent among these issues is the long-standing dispute over the Halayeb triangle, an area on the Red Sea coast north of the 22nd parallel, which marks the Sudan-Egypt border.⁸² While Sudan has been waiting for a final pronouncement by the UN Security Council since 1958, the area has been militarily occupied by Egypt since 1995 and even Morsi’s Islamist government was unwilling to reopen the issue.

The second unresolved bone of contention between Cairo and Khartoum regards the Four Freedoms Agreement, which would guarantee Sudanese and Egyptian nationals freedom of movement, residence, work, and ownership in the two countries. Signed in 2004 as a seal of the renewed partnership between Egypt and Sudan, it has never been implemented.⁸³ The stalemate has been created by Egypt’s fear of a mass influx of Sudanese migrants, coupled with Sudan’s wariness of giving Egyptian enterprises unrestricted access to land ownership. Sudan does not want to give its northern counterpart a competitive advantage over other investors, and fears the political repercussions of massive land leases to its former colonial master.

⁸² On Halayeb and the Egyptian-Sudanese relationship in the 1950s and 1960s in general, see Tareq Y. Ismael, “The United Arab Republic and the Sudan,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Winter 1969, pp. 14-28.

⁸³ “Sudan-Egypt relations hit speed bump over Four Freedoms accord,” *Sudan Tribune*, February 25, 2013, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article45646>.

The *impasse* over the Four Freedoms Agreement reveals that a common ideological platform cannot bridge the weight of history, at least not in such a brief time. The Islamist axis did not even manage to drive Sudanese anti-government rebels from Cairo, as witnessed by an official complaint by the Sudanese ambassador as late as March 2013.⁸⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, that Sudan did not publicly protest against Morsi’s overthrow, though its discomfort with the situation was subsequently been leaked out.⁸⁵ Being Islamist seems to have again turned into a liability across North Africa, and the NCP is walking a thin line between maintaining its legitimacy in the eyes of its most ideologically committed constituents and avoiding giving the opposition any pretext to swell its ranks.⁸⁶ The Islamist-military alliance that forms the core of the regime in Sudan has always been tightened by outside pressures, and while Khartoum does not want to give publicity to what is happening in Cairo, it certainly regrets the loss of what could potentially have become a strong ally in the international arena.

Looking at less contentious issues, the real geopolitical obstacle to a full partnership between Egypt and Sudan comes from the fact that the former cannot allow its rapprochement with the latter to turn into an exclusive liaison, as this would

⁸⁴ “Sudan Objects to Egypt’s Provision of Safe Haven to Rebels,” *Sudan Vision*, March 3, 2013, <http://news.sudanvisiondaily.com/details.html?rsnpid=220106>.

⁸⁵ “Sudan reacts uneasily to ouster of Egypt’s Morsi from presidency,” *Sudan Tribune*, July 4, 2013, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article47178>.

⁸⁶ Two facts are noteworthy in this regard. The first is that on June 29 — one day before Egypt’s mass anti-Morsi protests — the largest opposition rally of the last few years was held in Khartoum’s twin city Omdurman, at the behest of the two main Sudanese opposition parties, the Umma and the National Unionist Party, surely disturbing the leaders of the regime. The second is that the most vocal protests in Sudan against the overthrow of Morsi were expressed by Hassan al-Turabi, the ideological forefather of the NCP who was expelled from the party by al-Bashir in 2001 and who has continuously tried to undermine the Islamic legitimacy of the regime.

alienate South Sudan and create disequilibrium in the broader regional balances that define Egypt's strategic interests in the surrounding region and beyond.

The Third Wheel: South Sudan

South Sudan's right to self-determination was recognized by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). Egypt had no active role in the peace process, after a Libyan-Egyptian initiative for peace launched in 1999 — notably excluding the issue of self-determination for the South — had failed due to the opposition of the SPLM/A. It is noteworthy that water resources were completely left out of the CPA negotiations for fear of raising an oversensitive topic.⁸⁷

The inept management of the South Sudan dossier was one of the worst failures of Hosni Mubarak's foreign policy and proved to be a thorny issue for Morsi as well. In the case of South Sudan, Cairo realized too late that the damage had been done and the birth of a new upstream country on the White Nile was unavoidable. Since then, Egypt has worked hard to build a solid relationship with the new state, offering aid and technical assistance. The majority of Egyptian experts on Sudanese affairs plainly admit that the relationship Cairo maintains with Juba is more stable than the one it enjoys with Khartoum.⁸⁸ However, it is evident that South Sudan thinks of itself as an East African state whose strategic interests lean southwards, not northwards. Egypt therefore has to find a difficult balance in its relations with two partners it deems essential

for its security interests, an exercise that is made all the more problematic by the persistent tensions between Sudan and South Sudan.

Mohammed Morsi did not visit the southern capital, but he dispatched a delegation headed by Prime Minister Hesham Qandil to Juba shortly before the announcement of his own visit to Khartoum. While South Sudan and Egypt signed agreements related to health, education, agriculture, and fishing, water figured only as a matter of "discussion."⁸⁹ Egypt's well-known dream is to convince Juba to complete the excavation of the Jonglei Canal, a waterway which would allow the White Nile to bypass the Sudd swamp, where 50 percent of its flow is lost.⁹⁰ Such an achievement, however, seems implausible: on the contrary, South Sudan's minister of water resources and irrigation has affirmed that his government is ready to sign the Cooperative Framework Agreement signed by six upstream countries in Entebbe in 2010 but opposed by Egypt and Sudan, provoking significant annoyance in Cairo.

Troubled Waters

The recent dispute about the management of the Nile waters emerged within the framework of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), an inter-governmental forum created in 1999 to promote dialogue among riparian states.⁹¹ Debate within the NBI soon focused on the drafting of a new treaty regulating access to the Nile waters, replacing the two bilateral

⁸⁷ Salman A. Salman, "Water Resources in the Sudan North-South Peace Process. Past Experience and Future Trends," *African Yearbook of International Law*, Vol. 16, 2008, pp. 299-328, <http://www.salmanmasalman.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/02/SudanWaterResourcesChapterPublishedAYB.pdf>.

⁸⁸ Interviews with Egyptian academics and diplomats conducted by the author in Cairo, January 2013.

⁸⁹ "Egyptian leader pledges investment in South Sudan," *Radio Tamazuj*, March 14, 2013, <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/node/13092>.

⁹⁰ Robert O. Collins, *The Waters of the Nile. Hydropolitics and the Jonglei Canal, 1900-1988*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990.

⁹¹ Nine states are part of the NBI: Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, and Tanzania, while Eritrea has observer status. There is a huge body of literature on the hydropolitics of the Nile Basin. One of the most complete sources is Simon A. Mason, *From Conflict to Cooperation in the Nile Basin*, Zürich, ETH Zürich, 2004, http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/DetailsansichtPubDB_EN?rec_id=243.

accords — the first negotiated by Egypt and the United Kingdom in 1929 and the second by Egypt and Sudan in 1959 — which currently regulate the exploitation of the river's flow. These guarantee Egypt and Sudan exclusive access to 55.5 and 18.5 billion cubic meters of water per year respectively, out of a total estimated flow of 84 billion cubic meters (10 billion are considered lost through evaporation), without recognizing any right in terms of ownership or use for upstream countries. Such an unequal distribution has long been accepted on the premise that Ethiopia, Uganda, and the other sub-Saharan riparian countries can rely on different sources of water supply — rainfall, underground reserves, access to other basins — while Egypt and Sudan are almost entirely dependent on the Nile. Nevertheless, demographic pressure, climate change, and the will to implement hydroelectric projects have contributed to increase the water demand of the upstream countries during the last decades. Cairo has resisted any proposal for a new treaty, but such an inflexible attitude has exacerbated the position of the southern states, led by Ethiopia, bringing the situation to a state of dangerous tension.⁹²

Six riparian countries — Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and, with a short delay, Burundi — have decided to go along with the reform process, signing a Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) in Entebbe in May 2010. The CFA erases the fixed shares provided for by the 1959 agreement, but most of all scraps Egypt of its current veto power on development projects affecting the flow of the Nile.

The latter clause is proving particularly contentious since Ethiopia has started to enact an ambitious national hydroelectric plan whose centerpiece is the 6,000 MW Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

⁹² Around 85 percent of the Nile's flow springs from Ethiopian territory, and in recent years hydropower has become the pillar of the country's development strategy.

on the Blue Nile, designed to become Africa's largest hydroelectric power plant. More than 20 percent of the dam has already been completed, and the project is now reaching the stage requiring the diversion of the river. This was the origin of a bitter diplomatic crisis between Egypt and Ethiopia last June, unintentionally peaking when a meeting between President Morsi and some political figures was broadcast live on national TV without the participants' knowledge. Some attendants openly suggested military actions, sabotage, or proxy war against Addis Ababa, sparking a war of words that was later defused through an official bilateral meeting.⁹³

The Nile dossier was recognized by Mohammed Morsi as one of Egypt's most urgent priorities since the start of his presidency. He visited Addis Ababa twice to attend African Union (AU) summits, a highly significant presence given Mubarak's refusal to return to the Ethiopian capital after suffering an armed attack on the airport road in 1995, allegedly at the hands of Sudanese-supported *jihadi* militants. For his successor, the AU was the right forum to show that a satisfactory solution to the Nile controversy could be the prelude to a renewed and wider Egyptian engagement in sub-Saharan Africa. Though the issue is vital for Egypt, Morsi also tried to exploit it by calling for national unity at a time when the *Tamarrod* campaign, which called for his resignation, was gaining steam. Most opposition leaders did not heed the call, and eventually the improvident management of such a sensitive issue was used as an additional proof of the Muslim Brotherhood's incompetence.

The dispute over the Nile waters figures among the most important priorities for the new military rulers of Egypt and the current transitional government, and despite the frequent war-

⁹³ A good chronicle of the crisis can be found in William Lloyd George, "Ethiopia's Plan to Dam the Nile Has Egypt Fuming," *TIME*, June 28, 2013, <http://wp.me/p1lnq5-nIH>.

mongering rhetoric when talking about the river, Cairo has no realistic alternatives other than negotiating — and compromising.⁹⁴

The balance between upstream and downstream countries has been substantially altered by Sudan's endorsement of the Ethiopian project, breaking a consolidated Egyptian—Sudanese axis that had marked all rounds of negotiations until recently. Once again, Khartoum's about-face is further proof of how national interest displaces ideological affinity when the two collide. In order to diversify its economy to counter the loss of oil revenues caused by the South's secession, the NCP has devised an ambitious "hydro-agricultural mission," which aims to make Sudan once again the "breadbasket" of Africa and the Middle East through the intensive use of dams.⁹⁵ From this perspective, Sudan has an interest in putting an end to Egypt's pretension to holding "historic rights" over the Nile. Moreover, Khartoum hopes to benefit from Ethiopia's new power plants given the two countries' growing energy interdependence.⁹⁶

Egypt's African Policy: Which Comeback?

Since the formation of modern Egypt in the 19th century, the Mediterranean and the Middle East have become the privileged environment of Egyptian foreign policy, while the African dimension was largely limited to the Nile Valley. It was Gamal Abdel Nasser who first envisaged and articulated a purely African policy, which he

developed along three main lines: anti-imperialism, economic cooperation, and countering Israeli presence on the continent.⁹⁷

Africa, however, retained a somewhat subordinate status in Egypt's foreign policy, whose main strategic priorities rested within the Arab circle. With the end of decolonization and the fading of the non-aligned front, Egypt lost most of its political interest in Africa. Since the 1970s, Israel's penetration of the continent was countered by Gaddafi's Libya in a much more radical manner than had been the case with Egypt, while prospects for economic cooperation narrowed owing to the austerity measures imposed on various African countries by the IMF-prescribed structural adjustment programs.

It was only in the late 1990s that the Mubarak regime started to revive Egypt's links with Africa. Trade, development, and cooperation became the cornerstones of Cairo's renewed engagement with the continent, based on a pragmatic economic agenda. Egypt joined the Common Market of East African States (COMESA) in 1998 and the Libyan-inspired Sahel—Sahara Union in 2001. In 2000, Cairo hosted the first African—European Summit on debt cancellation, and in 2002 was among the founding members of the New Partnership on African Development (NEPAD), assuming the direction of NEPAD's agricultural file.⁹⁸ Finally, Egypt — together with Algeria, Libya, South Africa, and Nigeria — accepted shouldering 13 percent of

⁹⁴ Abdelrahman Youssef and Ayah Aman, "Egypt's New Rulers Face Crisis With Ethiopia Over Nile," *Al-Monitor*, July 24, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/egypt-nile-ethiopia-sisi.html>.

⁹⁵ Harry Verhoeven, "Dams are Development': China, the Al-Ingaz Regime and the Political Economy of the Sudanese Nile," in Daniel Large and Luke A. Patey (eds.), *Sudan Looks East. China, India and the Politics of Asian Alternatives*, New York, James Currey, 2011, pp. 120-138.

⁹⁶ Harry Verhoeven, "Black Gold for Blue Gold? Sudan's Oil, Ethiopia's Water and Regional Integration," *Chatham House Briefing Papers*, No. AFP BP 2011/03, June 2011, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/175835>.

⁹⁷ Tareq Y. Ismael, *The U.A.R. in Africa. Egypt's Policy Under Nasser*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1971, pp. 111-122.

⁹⁸ Mohamed Kadry Said, "Egypt's Foreign Policy in Global Change. The Egyptian Role in Regional and International Politics," *FES Briefing Papers*, No. 11, September 2006, p. 5, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/global/03958.pdf>.

the annual budget of the African Union when the latter was assembled in 2002.⁹⁹

These efforts, however, were not matched by an equal revival of Egypt's political influence on the continent, in line with Mubarak's overall low-profile foreign policy.¹⁰⁰ The price Egypt paid for its lack of diplomatic initiative and diminished political influence was the exclusion from two scenarios of primary importance for its interests: the Sudanese and Somali crises. It is not surprising therefore that Morsi's efforts to pick up the lost threads with Africa started from the Horn of Africa. Shortly following the former president's visit to Khartoum, Foreign Minister Mohammed Kamel Amr was in Mogadishu celebrating the reopening of the Egyptian embassy, while a delegation of the Muslim Brotherhood-inspired Somali al-Islah movement was received by the Brotherhood's Supreme Guide Muhammad Badie in Cairo.¹⁰¹

Such a two-track diplomacy involving the Muslim Brotherhood apparatus alongside official inter-governmental channels could have been a sign of the Islamists' willingness to go beyond the mere promotion of an economic agenda in order to pursue a proactive foreign policy united by a common ideology. However, giving foreign policy an Islamist connotation was bound to be a risky

⁹⁹ It should be noted that only 40 percent of the African Union budget is covered by contributions from member states, while the rest is financed by international donors. See "African Union seeks financial independence," *Al-Jazeera*, May 24, 2013, <http://aje.me/18bsPzh>.

¹⁰⁰ The only field to which Egypt appeared strongly committed was UN peacekeeping, though with a total troop contribution often inferior to that of continental competitors like Ethiopia and Nigeria, and even to that of much smaller countries such as Rwanda and Ghana.

¹⁰¹ Abdelrahman Youssef, "Egypt Fights to Reclaim African Role as Ethiopia Gains Power," *Al-Monitor*, April 26, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/04/egypt-africa-role-tensions-ethiopia.html>; Stig Jarle Hansen and Atle Mesøy, "The Muslim Brotherhood in the Wider Horn of Africa," NIBR-rapport, No. 2009:33, December 2009, pp. 38-58, <http://www.nibr.no/pub1244>.

strategy, particularly since Africa seems to have become the latest frontier in the "war on terror." Western and African governments, to different degrees, perceive the surge of Islamism in Africa as a security threat. This opposition is not only limited to the violent manifestations of Islamist militancy, but concerns Islamist political mobilization whenever it is deemed a threat to the established systems of power in the region. Morsi and the FJP acknowledged this risk, as shown by the fact that the president never publicly raised the issue of the condition of Ethiopian Muslims, a controversial theme in the Orthodox-dominated country. In this sense, "Islamist diplomacy" appeared as a new instrument at the government's disposal to pursue standing national interests, rather than a goal (i.e. the often alleged promotion of a transnational Islamist agenda by the Muslim Brotherhood) per se.

Between the Ayatollahs and the Emirs

Most of the worries surrounding the Egyptian—Sudanese rapprochement under Mohammed Morsi concerned the eventuality that an Islamist *entente* along the Nile axis could become a triangle with Iran at its vertex.

The connection between Sudanese Islamists' and Tehran dates back to the early 1980s and consolidated after the 1989 coup in Sudan. This dangerous liaison has resurfaced in recent years, with credible allegations accusing Khartoum of facilitating the smuggling of Iranian weapons to Gaza.¹⁰²

In Egypt, Morsi and the FJP promoted a rapprochement with Tehran after more than three decades of diplomatic freeze. The two presidents exchanged visits, although not organized as official bilateral meetings, and agreed to resume direct flights between the two capitals and ease

¹⁰² Tim Lister and Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, "Smuggling Weapons to Gaza: The Long Way," *CNN's Security Clearance Blog*, November 19, 2012, <http://wp.me/p1xuqq-4NN>.

restrictions on visas. For the first time since 1979, Egypt allowed Iranian warships to cross the Suez Canal.

These notable events notwithstanding, a number of elements still posed serious limitations to a complete thaw between Cairo and Tehran. They range from historical and cultural factors (the Shia character of the Iranian regime) to politically contingent considerations (Iran's continued support for the regime of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria). The biggest constraints are nonetheless of a systemic nature. By aligning with Iran, Egypt would simultaneously endanger its relations with Israel, most Arab governments (particularly in the Gulf), and the United States.

Given the preeminence assigned by Egyptian Islamists to the relationship with the Gulf, the much-displayed *détente* with Iran appears retrospectively to be motivated by well-defined targets, namely, the need to show a more assertive attitude toward the United States and Israel. In this sense, Morsi's rapprochement with Tehran was meant to send a signal to Israel, especially in light of the fact that Tel Aviv has recently signed defense agreements with Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. The latter is a particularly disturbing development for Egypt. The SPLM/A has a long-standing relationship with Israel, and after 2011, the two governments have signed a number of cooperation protocols. Juba considers an alliance with Israel a counterbalance to Tehran's influence in Sudan.¹⁰³

It has not gone unnoticed that Morsi chose Saudi Arabia as the destination for his first official visit abroad, obtaining a \$1.5 billion loan and the

promise of an additional \$2.5 billion.¹⁰⁴ Even more than Saudi Arabia, Qatar emerged as a major ally of Morsi and the FJP. After lending Egypt \$5 billion in the 18 months following the 2011 revolution, Doha promised an additional \$3 billion last April, a breath of oxygen for Egypt's asphyxiated economy and also for Morsi's besieged government.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Qatar took over the moribund Darfur peace process in 2008 and led it until the signing of the Doha Documents for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). Darfur is a security concern for Egypt and its instability may increase in the near future due to the uncontrolled flow of weapons from Libyan arsenals.

Therefore, if a third vertex was to be found somewhere between Cairo and Khartoum, Doha, rather than Tehran, would be the right place to look. After the July military takeover in Cairo, relations between Egypt and Qatar deteriorated quickly, while Saudi Arabia enthusiastically endorsed the Egyptian army's move. Morsi's efforts to gain the confidence of the Saudi leadership and his government's alignment with Riyadh on the Syrian crisis do not seem to have paid off. The new military rulers of Egypt are a much more trusted partner for Saudi Arabia, which viewed the "revolutionary" Muslim Brotherhood's entry into politics with apprehension. General Abdel Fattah al-Sissi and his acolytes are likely to steer Egypt in the direction of the preservation of the regional *status quo*, reversing — particularly with regard to Iran — the timid reorientation initiated by Morsi. Calculated as a tactical move in order to respond to domestic and regional solicitations, the Egyptian—Iranian *détente* became another liability for Morsi,

¹⁰³ "South Sudan signs economic agreement with Israel on 'water, technology,'" *Sudan Tribune*, July 27, 2012, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article43376>; "South Sudan signs oil deal with Israel," UPI, January 18, 2013, <http://upi.com/1332319>.

¹⁰⁴ Alain Gresh, "Les islamistes à l'épreuve du pouvoir," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 2012, pp. 20–21, <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2012/11/GRESH/48337>.

¹⁰⁵ Rob Minto, "Egypt: Qatar loan puts IMF on hold," *FT BeyondBRICS blog*, April 10, 2013, <http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2013/04/10/egypt-qatars-largesse-puts-imf-on-hold>.

fuelling mistrust toward the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf and the West.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

While the short time span between the rise of Egypt's first Islamist president and his overthrow is too short for a general evaluation of the foreign policy orientation of the Muslim Brotherhood and its implementation, some basic trends can be noted from this analysis of Egypt's African policy under Mohamed Morsi.

The main point of discontinuity with the old regime in terms of foreign relations has been the ambition to end Egypt's "withdrawal from history"¹⁰⁶ and bring the country back to a leading role in its traditional "circles" of influence: the Arab world, the Islamic *ummah*, and Africa. This did not seemingly imply a straightforward challenge to the Middle Eastern *status quo* but only an end to Mubarak's inertia on many fronts (Africa being one of these) and the recalibration of other, highly sensitive relations (such as those with Iran). As the Gaza crisis showed, Morsi and the FJP were willing to position their allegedly moderate Islamist government as a mediator between radical and conservative actors in the region. Overall, however, the Islamists' foreign policy was led by "realist" considerations more than it was by ideology. The "Islamist diplomacy" conducted by the Muslim Brotherhood in parallel to the official diplomatic channels appeared to be the instrument chosen by Morsi to overcome resistance within the diplomatic corps, rather than the coalescing of an Islamist international around Cairo. Unsurprisingly, when prominent national interests were at stake, such as in the case of the Nile dossier, the president showed a remarkable degree of continuity with his predecessors, though he ultimately paid dearly

¹⁰⁶ The expression was coined by the dean of Egyptian journalists, Mohammed Hassanein Heikal. Amira Howeidy, "Heikal's dream," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, No. 607, October 10-16, 2002, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/607/eg4.htm>.

for his inexperience, lack of determination, and the murky decision-making mechanisms that characterized his rule.

There is no doubt that Egypt's military rulers will be primarily focused, as Morsi was, on repairing the domestic political front, reestablishing security, and reviving the economy. However, they will be forced to take charge of the most pressing foreign policy dossiers, and particularly the Nile issue. The current state of domestic upheaval, however, puts Cairo in an awkward position at a time when its most vital resource is at stake.

Developments in the Nile Valley, nevertheless, will reverberate well beyond Egypt. It is therefore imperative for transatlantic partners to maintain an active presence in the region, focusing on two key fields: security and regional cooperation. The region is crossed by multiple conflicts, and is going to acquire an ever-increasing importance in the relations between North and sub-Saharan Africa. South Sudan's secession has been the most dramatic sign of a growing cleavage along the Sahel belt that is often framed in terms of identity (Muslims vs. Christians, Arabs vs. Africans, nomads vs. sedentary, etc.) and risks creating a deep fracture within the continent. Recent events in Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and the Central African Republic show how destabilizing such purported identity clashes can become for states whose social composition is inherently plural. Although struggles over the distribution of political and economic resources are often at the origin of such strife, global dynamics connected with the spread of *jihadi* movements and the war on terror unleashed against them have incorporated local conflicts into a new dimension encompassing supra-national interests and actors.

From a broader geopolitical perspective, the Nile Valley is the watershed between two crescents of state failure and *jihadi* activism: the first stretching from northern Mali to the eastern

regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo, passing through northern Nigeria and the Central African Republic; and the second encompassing East African coastal states, Yemen, and the Afghan-Pakistani theatre. The sudden outbreak of hostilities within South Sudan risks becoming the last ring of a long chain of destabilization, allowing local and international organizations with threatening political agendas to thrive.

The killing of a prominent Sudanese Islamist in northern Mali,¹⁰⁷ the arrest of recruits ready to be sent to Mali and Somalia in a Sudanese training camp,¹⁰⁸ and the growing turmoil in the Sinai show that the Nile Valley is still an incubator of *jihadi* activities extending beyond its borders. After more than ten years of the “war on terror,” it is clear that the issue cannot be tackled with security means only, but requires a political approach. The rise of Islamist parties offered an opportunity to channel Islamist militancy through political participation and marginalize the more radical, violent fringes. The ousting of the first Islamist president in Egypt is a serious setback in this regard, and the Algerian precedent is a warning of how the exclusion of the Islamists from the democratic process can empower radicals and marginalize moderates. Without entering into the merit of the Egyptian crisis, it is undeniable that what has happened after June 30 is leading an entire generation of Islamists to feel deeply disillusioned toward democratic participation and the expediency of advancing their own agenda through political means. Up to now, both the U.S. and European governments seem to have been unable to decisively support national reconciliation in Egypt. If the harsh, repressive measures the Egyptian army and the

police are taking against the Muslim Brotherhood push the confrontation to the bottom, there is a high probability we will see outbreaks of Islamist-inspired violence in the region for a long time to come.

The case of the Egyptian Sinai shows the need to go beyond a mere security approach and to have a nuanced understanding of local and regional dynamics at play in each context. The roots of instability in the Sinai are to be found in the situation of political and economic marginalization suffered by local Bedouin tribes and in the continuing Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has turned the Sinai into a safety valve for multiple tensions and a transit point for any kind of goods directed toward the Strip. While it is true that there has been an upsurge in violence after the overthrow of Morsi, it is worth remembering that unrest in the Sinai was the main security concern of the now deposed president during his year in office, a symptom of the lack of control of the Muslim Brotherhood over *jihadi* elements. Labeling instability in the peninsula as an Islamist-originated threat is a distortion of reality, and a further militarization of the territory is only likely to exacerbate tensions. To cool down this strategic hotspot, the U.S. and European governments need to work simultaneously with policymakers in Cairo, Tel Aviv, and Khartoum, hoping that one of them can in turn extend the call to Tehran.

The Sinai dossier is connected with another aspect adding to the strategic value of northeast Africa, which is maritime security in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. A vital hub for world trade, the latter is increasingly becoming a dangerous corridor, with Somali pirates and Bedouin-Islamist militias guarding its southern and northern gateways, respectively.

As for Sudan, transatlantic powers should show a serious commitment to reopening the channels

¹⁰⁷ “Leader of Al-Qaeda in Sudan killed in Mali: reports,” *Sudan Tribune*, February 23, 2013, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article45620>.

¹⁰⁸ “Captured Islamist extremists planned assassination of officials: Sudan’s security chief says,” *Sudan Tribune*, December 5, 2012, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44744>.

of dialogue with the NCP regime as they did ten years ago, when they were crucial in brokering peace between the north and south. The ongoing civil war in Darfur and in the border regions of the southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile, though totally neglected by Western media and policymakers, is a dangerous appendix to the Sahel turmoil and a threat to the maintenance of the hard-won peace along the Nile Valley. With general elections approaching in 2015 and Omar al-Bashir's announcement of his intention not to stand as a candidate, the time has come for constructive engagement with Khartoum, leveraging economic and diplomatic incentives without compromising on issues of fundamental human rights once the ICC-indicted president is out of the picture. On the Southern side of the border, transatlantic governments should continue to support efforts by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to find a political solution for the Southern Sudanese crisis before it spirals out of control.

Finally, the continuing row over water management among Nile Basin countries and the recurrent natural catastrophes affecting the Horn of Africa make this region a potential laboratory for

the solution — or degeneration — of conflicts connected with natural resource management and climate change.

Transatlantic partners should act to foster regional cooperation in northeast Africa as a long-term approach to political stability and economic development. The Nile issue can either become the flashpoint of unresolved tensions or the sounding board of regional cooperation. The European Union, the United States, and many European countries — the Scandinavian states and Germany, in particular — ensured funding for the Nile Basin Initiative since its inception, understanding its value as an exercise of preventive peace-building. Such support should not be interrupted and needs to be accompanied by a political effort to help bridge the cleavage between upstream and downstream countries. Shared water management may provide an opportunity to show the benefits of cooperation in a region where interdependence has always been felt to be a source of mutual vulnerability rather than an opportunity to enhance regional integration, keeping economic cooperation hostage to security imperatives and political conflicts.

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