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Political Securitisation and Democratisation in the Maghreb:

Ambiguous Discourses and Fine-tuning Practices

for a Security Partnership

by

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March 23, 2004

Abstract

Said Haddadi examines the interaction between security and democracy discourses and their mutually affecting relationship within the framework of the political and security basket of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. In this context, Haddadi places special emphasis on the role that institutions and practices within the EMP may play in contributing to the convergence of security and democracy views between the EU and North Africa. Against this background, this paper assesses the main arguments that underlie the political and security partnership within the EMP. The focus is on the process that led to the EU's 'securitization' of the Maghreb, that is, the EU's prioritization of security concerns relating to North Africa. Haddadi's analysis of the interaction between security and democracy discourses in the EU and in North Africa points to a number of inconsistencies and dilemmas that are not sufficiently addressed by the institutions and practices of the EMP.

Said Haddadi, London

Political Securitisation and Democratisation in the Maghreb: Ambiguous Discourses and Fine-tuning Practices for a Security Partnership

Said Haddadi
March 2004

The bread riots that spread across the Maghreb countries by the end of the first half of the 1980s – as a result of the economic consequences of droughts, the restructuring programmes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the oil crisis – and culminated in the October 1988 riots in Algeria, raised serious concerns in Europe about security and stability in neighbouring North Africa. These concerns were fuelled by the ascent of political Islam and the subsequent outbreak of internecine violence in 1992 and its endurance for almost a decade in Algeria. This situation triggered recurrent speculations about a 'domino effect' that would spread Islamist violence to next-door Morocco and Tunisia, especially considering the fragile socio-political and economic situation in these two countries. Such scenarios have provided firewood for a heightened level of securitisation targeting North Africa and the southern Mediterranean as a whole, a securitisation discourse that presented the region as a clear and imminent danger to security in Europe (Buzan et al., 1998). At the heart of this security discourse lies the urgent need to ensure political stability and promote democracy as vectors for building a security partnership in the region.

To respond to these security concerns, the EU – at the behest of its southern members in particular – started to rethink its discourse and policies for the region. Such rethinking had already started to take shape with the short-lived Redirected Mediterranean Policy (RMP) in 1989. With the violence then simmering in Algeria and its crossing to Europe to take place in France in December 1994, the need to revamp policies towards the Maghreb and, in particular, to consolidate the discourse on security, democracy and human rights became critical. The outcome of these security worries was a major revamp in the EU policies toward North Africa and the 'upgrading' of its relationship with the region to the level of a partnership, as embodied in the Euro-Maghreb Partnership of 1992 (European Commission, 1992). Yet, though the Euro-Maghreb Partnership idea died out as originally proposed, its spirit of democracy

promotion and political dialogue, as conditions for peace, lived on in the principles of the political and security chapter of the Barcelona Declaration establishing the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) in November 1995.

Within the framework of the EMP's political and security basket, this chapter examines how security and democracy discourses interact and affect one another; it also considers the role the institutions and practices put forward to implement the EMP's agenda play in the convergence of the views on security and democracy entertained by the EU on the one hand, and North African governments, on the other. For this purpose, this chapter is divided into four sections. Section one briefly describes the context that has triggered the securitisation of North Africa and the proposals put forward to tackle security and ensure stability in the region. Section two outlines the main political and security partnership arguments and their content. Section three looks into the interaction between security and democracy discourses, highlighting the gap resulting thereof. Finally, section four examines the extent to which the EMP institutions and practices can bridge the gap between security and democracy, discussing the factors that contribute to or preclude developments in this direction.

Political securitisation and the stabilising importance of democracy

The socio-economic and political realities of the 1980s in North Africa stripped the post-independence nationalist discourses of their legitimacy and exposed the failure of the North African regimes to keep or deliver on their post-independence promises. The decline in oil and phosphate revenues in 1986 coupled with the IMF's structural adjustment programmes generated greater difficulties for the Maghreb governments and uncovered their inability to sustain their colossal administrative apparatuses and public services through thick and thin. Faltering and debt-burdened economies, together with political authoritarianism and demographic growth, provided, it seemed, the perfect recipe for socio-economic and political frustration. This tense environment forced an upsurge of internal demands for political liberalisation and external pressures asking for the establishment and respect of democratic institutions and the rule of law.

Faced with these demands and the pressures of the democratic 'wave' that has pervaded since the end of the Cold War and the changes that swept Eastern Europe in 1989, the Maghreb countries, likewise, witnessed a series of controlled moves towards political overture. Tunisia and Algeria stepped into some sort of political party pluralism. In Morocco King Hassan II initiated a phase of political liberalisation as a first attempt for the introduction of 'alternance' in government. In addition to seeking to secure enhanced cooperation with the EU at the regional level, the Maghreb countries, together with Libya and Mauritania, signed the Marrakech Treaty establishing the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in February 1989. This was partly prompted by the need to conciliate tensions between Morocco and Algeria in respect of the Western Sahara conflict, but in great part to respond to the rise of the Islamist challenge and concert regional security efforts to tackle it. Notwithstanding these reforms, the North African regimes did not succeed in creating genuine political pluralism nor in blocking the ascent of the Islamist contestation that was challenging them.

The significant breakthrough occurred only with Algerian President Chadli Benjedid's *fuite en avant* as he went ahead with introducing further economic and political reforms, despite the internal resistance of some FLN (Front de Liberation Nationale) members (Roberts, 1992: 449). With the adoption in February 1989 of a new constitution that abandoned the commitment to socialist ideology, but, more importantly, replaced the old one-party system by a multi-party one, Algeria appeared, to many, to be making the most convincing moves toward genuine political liberalisation in the Arab world. These reforms received a welcome response inside and outside Algeria and gave birth to a number of so-called political parties headed by historic figures. The Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) emerged as the strongest party, enjoying a good national organisation and a wide and effective network of mobilisation.

The municipal elections of June 1990 – the first multi-party elections since the independence of the country in 1962 – confirmed the FIS's status; the latter scored 54 per cent against 34 per cent for the historic FLN. Despite changes then made to the electoral law in April 1991 aiming to forestall the (probable) victory of the FIS in subsequent elections, the latter registered a sweeping win in the first round of legislative elections in December 1991, with the FLN incurring further losses in its support base. The second

round of legislative elections was scheduled for 16 January 1992. It never took place, however. Faced with these electoral results and the FIS's growing signs of outspoken antagonism towards the army,[1] the military stepped in on 11 January 1992, five days before the run-up to the second round, cancelling the elections, forcing Benjedid to resign as president and, subsequently, replacing him by a Haut Comité d'Etat (HCE), a collegial presidential structure. They also outlawed the FIS and arrested its leaders one month later, and declared a twelve-month state of emergency. The disruption of Algeria's most democratic process by the army plunged the country into the chaos of a bloody political violence verging on civil war and the western Mediterranean in fears that the violence could spread to neighbouring North African and European countries.

Despite the lack of known regional cooperation amongst Islamists in the Maghreb, their manifest national 'jealousy' and the national historical perspective of their struggle against their respective regimes (Leveau, 1993: 188; Roy, 2001),[2] the victory of the FIS was precipitately heralded as the dawn of Islamist states in the Maghreb, and the outbreak of violence in Algeria only contributed to exacerbate the security discourse that characterised the late 1980s. The political violence in Algeria was trumpeted, both by the media and in official discourse, as the start of a 'domino effect' that would change the familiar, albeit domestically volatile, political scene into an unknown and less predictable Islamic fundamentalist landscape. The authoritarian bent of the North African regimes nurtured fears about the rise of destabilising factors in the region – the October 1988 riots in Algeria were widely interpreted as a rehearsal for revolution (The Economist, 15 October 1988). These feelings of fear and uncertainty were further reinforced when separate armed incidents took place in Marrakech in August 1994 and at Tamerza on Tunisia's southern border with Algeria in February 1995. The crossing of the Algerian violence to take place in France in the form of GIA-linked terrorist incidents between 1994 and 1995 only intensified this feeling of insecurity and underlined the urgency to tackle the security threats emanating form North Africa.

On the other hand, the absence of real democratic political openings has also been perceived from the European side as a major obstacle to the construction of peace and stability in the region. In the face of the lack of genuine multi-party political culture or democratic practices and institutions, Islamist groups have often been viewed by various

observers as the only possible alternative to the incumbent North African regimes. The royal succession in Morocco was awaited with special apprehension because of King Hassan II's long and strong-fisted reign and the socio-economic difficulties of the country. None the less, after the death of Hassan II in July 1999, the vicissitudes of political life under the reign of his son, Mohammed VI, have continued to raise causes for concern, despite the country being seen, at least from the standpoint of the EU, as having made significant steps towards the building of democracy and democratic institutions, in comparison to its North African neighbours. Even the arrival in 1998 of the socialist opposition to government for the first time in Morocco was often interpreted as leaving room for the Islamists alone to pose as the real opposition on the Moroccan political scene. The increase in the parliamentary seats of the (moderate) Islamist Parti de Justice et Développement (PJD) following the September 2002 elections has consolidated this interpretation, especially after the refusal of the PJD to participate in any government coalition so as not to compromise its status as an opposition party (Willis, 2004).

Turning to Tunisia, despite the economic and social take-off in the country since the arrival of Ben Ali as President in November 1987, Tunisia's political liberalisation has suffered a dramatic setback (Hibou, 1999), while Ben Ali's power hold has grown considerably and future constitutional reforms are on the way to allow him to run for a fourth presidential election as the leader of the presidential party, the Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (RCD) (*L'Intelligent/Jeune Afrique*, 7 November 2001). The high percentage of votes obtained by Ben Ali in the 1999 presidential election (99.4 per cent) and by his party, the RCD, in legislative elections (91.5 per cent), were viewed both inside and outside the country not as a triumphant victory of the incumbent president or his political party but as a flagrant sign of the exclusion and cooptation of opposition parties.[3] Indeed, intermittent bouts of human rights violations and intimidation of opposition members continue to take place (Amnesty International, 10 June 2003).

In Algeria, Bouteflika's presidency in April 1999 brought a relative degree of stability to the country after several years of violence. The signing in the same year of an amnesty programme (the 'civil concord') allowed for the integration of the Islamist radicals and sought to promote reconciliation in society. None the less, the frustration and disillusionment of the population persists as the country continues to face surges of

residual Islamist violence and urban riots. This frustration was translated in the historic low turn-out (of 46 per cent) registered during the legislative elections of May 2002. This low turn-out coupled with the abstention from participation of several opposition parties, eminent national political figures and civil society activists in Kabylia led to the resurgence of the former single party, the FLN, as the main party, scoring an absolute majority of 199 out of 389 seats in the Algerian National Popular Assembly. Despite these developments and a growing disinterest in political participation amongst the population at large, the preoccupation with the rise of a radical Islamist threat still continues. Though the FIS leader, Abassi Madani, and his deputy, Ali Benhadj, were released, respectively, from house arrest and prison in July 2003 after serving a 12 year sentence, they were totally banned from all political activities, including voting, political expression or participation (BBC, 2 July 2003). This expresses the authorities' ongoing worries about the political support the two leaders might still attract in the run-up to the presidential elections of April 2004.

The fear and uncertainty surrounding the ascent of Islamists, together with the ambiguity of their discourse – ambiguous not so much in terms of their fundamental opposition to the existing regimes as in terms of its relation to Western countries once they attain power – have put a premium on the importance of political stability as a vector for ensuring security. Building security and peace in the region has been encouraged through European and other initiatives aiming at political reform and instilling practices of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Conscious of the Algerian experience and wary of the 'Islamist risk' that the promotion of political liberalisation can bring with it, gradual political opening and a multi-level dissemination of democratic values and principles have been considered by the EU as a valuable means to circumvent the adverse consequences of political overtures.

The lack of democracy, the perceived Islamist potential to fill the political vacuum, the involvement of some North African nationals in 9/11-related terrorist activities (e.g. Hamburg cell) and the Casablanca bombing of May 2003, have all underlined the urgent necessity to tackle issues of security and democracy in North Africa. The complexity of this agenda lies in the difficulty to balance between the discourse on securitisation and that on democratisation. This is largely underpinned by

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the reaction to Islamism being caught between two extremes. On the one hand, there is a democratic risk that the North African regimes are to take in allowing for a free and fair participation of the Islamists. On the other hand, there is a risk to democracy that fears of the Islamists 'instrumentalising' democracy and then 'hijacking' it after getting to power generate. In face of this, what has the EU proposed to tackle this security/democracy situation and how are its proposals being adopted and adapted by the North African regimes?

The framework: the political and security dialogue and its content

In line with the democratic peace argument, the establishment of a political and security dialogue between the EU and the Maghreb countries started to be seen as an important means for promoting political reforms and, eventually, guarantee stability and security in the region. The entering into force of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 and the establishment of a European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) contributed to enshrine the promotion of human rights and democratic practices more markedly as a cornerstone and instrument of the EU's external relations and as an integral part of its development and cooperation policies towards third countries (Clapham, 1999: 632-36). In a wider European perspective, EU financial assistance and economic cooperation with third countries have become conditional on respect for democratic practices and the building of supporting institutions. These elements have been increasingly introduced as both condition and objective in most agreements with third countries. Civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been deemed by the EU as credible partners with which to conduct cooperation for the implementation of such goals.

Aware of the tensions building up in the Maghreb as a result of political sclerosis and economic difficulties, the EU (together with individual EU member states) started to encourage political liberalisation and democratic norms and practices as a major element of its political and security cooperation with the Maghreb countries as early as the late 1980s, and increasingly so afterwards. Respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law were clearly introduced as a new element into the idea of the Euro-Maghreb Partnership between the EU and Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. These

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principles have lived on in the Barcelona declaration and its ensuing Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements (EMAAs). If the aims of earlier policies were developmental in nature, the concept of development in EMP policies was no longer an end in itself but became inextricably linked to building peace and stability: multi-dimensional frameworks designed to link economic, political, social and security objectives within a comprehensive whole superseded former bilateral and sectoral policies. Respect for democratic principles and human rights and the promotion of the rule of law have been put forward as an integral component of this cooperation. The new generation of EMAAs now clearly contain in Articles 3, 4 and 5 provisions for the establishment of a political and security dialogue that is based on the promotion of respect for democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law as essential components of the association agreement.

A number of other measures and instruments were adopted or introduced to strengthen security and political partnership. With the initiative to establish a Charter for Peace and Stability, the aim was to reinforce and give a concrete purpose to the political and security partnership. The Charter has so far faced a number of difficulties and has become dependent on the situation in the Middle East. Though work on its draft continues, its ratification remains postponed *sine die*. Set aside the Middle East Peace Process, the Charter is now confronted with the post-9/11 policies to tackle terrorism as well as post-Iraq war and their delaying implications for progress of negotiations in the political and security spheres.

None the less, the 'war on terror' has contributed to reinforce and speed up security and police cooperation in the aftermath of the September 11 events. Indeed, shortly after the attacks, the Mediterranean partners met to reaffirm the relevance of the Barcelona process, agreeing to promote cultural understanding through the creation of the Euro-Med Foundation but also, and more important, to find ways of launching a regional cooperation in the area of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA). This cooperation was clear in the French and Spanish assistance given to the Moroccan authorities following the Casablanca bombing in May 2003. Furthermore, the Valencia Action Plan in 2002 included elements to enhance political and security cooperation between the EU and its Mediterranean partners. It covered cooperation to reinforce political dialogue and consolidate partnership building measures, to tackle terrorism and work towards respect

for human rights and democratic values. Also through its new 'neighbourhood policy' the EU stresses the importance of consolidating security cooperation through defining a new range of policies based on shared values such as liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law.[4] In addition to deeper economic integration, the neighbouring countries are encouraged, amongst other things, to intensify cooperation to prevent and combat common security threats and enhance better practice and political involvement in conflict prevention and crisis management and promote human rights and democratic practices. In other words, the EU is seeking to promote security community practices on its borders.

Despite the above agreements and measures taken in order to promote democracy and 'desecuritise' the political situation in North Africa, and after more than a decade of political cooperation between the EU and the North African regimes, the socio-political landscape of the Maghreb has not significantly altered. Nor has the security situation changed considerably. The underlying elements of the regimes are still in place and are, in some cases, even strengthened. Political isolation and repression of elements of the opposition and the exclusion or cooptation of Islamist forces exist with variable degrees throughout the region. Though civil society has progressed considerably (in number) during the 1990s, its role still remains hampered by a variety of institutional and constitutional constraints. Moreover, security in the region remains precarious largely because of the continuous fear of an Islamist ascent and socio-political instability. This is particularly evident in the reaction elections in the region attract especially at the international and regional level. If elections are viewed domestically with disinterest as a result of long years of rigging and disillusionment, they are often viewed from Europe with a sense of insecurity and an apprehension of what they may bring about.

The political and security chapter is what distinguishes in essence the EMP from previous European initiatives for the Mediterranean, and, therefore, its success is often perceived as a yardstick for the overall progress of the EMP as a whole. If the principal elements of the economic chapter of the Barcelona Declaration have been set in details together with their schedule, this has not been the case in respect of the political and security chapter. The signing of the EMAAs between the EU and the North African countries could be seen to suggest a general agreement on *what* needs to be done within

the political and security remits. However, there seems to be ambiguity and misunderstanding on *how* this is to be carried out and, more important, on the speed with which it is to be undertaken.

A security-democracy gap or the realm for ambiguity?

For the above democracy and security agenda to be implemented within the framework proposed, a number of supportive discourses, institutions and practices need to be put in place and developed to deliver it. As previously mentioned, securitisation and democratisation discourses are advanced in relation to North Africa (and the Mediterranean at large) as legitimising forces for the implementation of the EMP agenda. In theory, these two discourses are put forward as complementary, mainly because of the political and security culture prevailing at the level of the EU. The general premise is that the promotion and support of democracy, human rights and the rule of law will bring about political stability and economic development and lead, eventually, to the establishment of a security situation conducive to the building of a 'security community' in the Mediterranean region. However, a closer look at how these two discourses interact within the Barcelona Process gives a picture of two discourses that are often in competition with one another. There seems to be a divergence between democracy and security and, on certain occasions, the two discourses appear even mutually exclusive. It is important, therefore, to understand how the discourses on security and democracy in the Maghreb and the EU interact and affect each other within the EMP context.

The security discourses surrounding the EMP have been its main floating board since the signing of the Barcelona Declaration in November 1995 (Spencer, 2001). This security aspect together with the imbedded comprehensive and complementary nature of the EMP's three chapters is indeed what distinguishes the Barcelona Process itself from previous European initiatives for the Mediterranean. Paradoxically, this focus on security is what is at the same time holding back full political liberalisation in the Maghreb and seems to jeopardise the very security the EMP seeks to establish. Because of the need for economic liberalisation to accommodate the requisites for the creation of a Mediterranean free trade area (FTA), there are fears of the adverse political consequences economic

liberalisation can have on the Maghreb. These fears appear to be the outcome of a flawed logic as far as the Maghreb is concerned: numerous studies have repeatedly shown the lack of causality between economic liberalisation and political overture in the region (*inter alia*, Murphy, 2001; Dillman, 2002). Therefore, fears with regard to the consequences of full political liberalisation have only perpetuated the *status quo* and encouraged façade pluralism. The Algerian experience, for instance, has been used as an example to warn against uncontrolled political liberalisation.

Moreover, despite joint fears about the consequences of full political liberalisation, security lacks a common meaning. In North Africa, security is strongly linked to questions of national security and regime stability and seen in terms of further access to EU markets as a basis of socio-economic development. On the other hand, in the EU security is conceived mainly in terms of the promotion of regional stability through encouraging human rights and democratic practices, governance and the rule of law. The 9/11 has contributed to bring the security discourses of the Maghreb and the EU closer together, especially through enhanced cooperation in the field of JHA. The Maghrebi regimes used the 9/11 attacks to condemn terrorism in general, but also to highlight the EU's lack of understanding and appreciation towards their own fight against 'internal terrorism'.[5] Some of them used these events to eschew real political and structural problems and stress a 'conspiracy theory' that was mounted by external elements against some incumbent regimes in the Maghreb (Martinez, 2003: 11-12). On the whole, the 9/11 events might have brought about a rapprochement between the EU and North Africa on *what* constitutes a threat to security. This however does not necessarily mean a further agreement on *how* to tackle these security threats and what practices need to be promoted in order to do so.

The security worries plaguing the Mediterranean have largely shaped the discourse on democracy promotion in the Maghreb. The need for security has given birth to EU projects calling for 'change within continuity' and 'dynamic stability' – projects which translate a cautious yet ambiguous approach to security and democracy promotion in the region. In characteristic fashion of semi-authoritarian regimes (Ottaway, 2003), this ambiguity gives the North African leaders flexibility to foster democratic principles without taking them beyond the discursive level and to selectively adopt only changes

that do not jeopardise their position, if not consolidate it. With the relative exception of Morocco, the objective of state-managed political overture in the Maghreb has so far been to give opposition groups a venue to let off steam and allow for their political participation. However, this overture has remained controlled and limited in order to preclude factors that might undermine the ultimate power of the regime. Thus, the EU's softly-softly approach and the ambiguity of its discourse on democracy has often been exploited by less open governments, leading to further suppression of political freedom and the delay of sensitive and genuine reforms, especially following the events of September 11 attacks and the 'legitimized' pretext to fight terrorism.

Moreover, besides their ambiguity, EU projects to promote democracy in the Maghreb remain limited in scope. They do not tap into deeper structures to enable qualitative and substantive reforms. The meaning of democratisation the EU promotes appears to be confined to human rights issues and the rule of law (meaning more transparency). This is so for a number of reasons. First, the EU is still too cautious, worried to keep the EMP afloat with all the initial partners aboard and persistent in its attitude of 'change within continuity'. Second, emphasis on the establishment and consolidation of the rule of law seems in line with the need for more transparency, which will encourage European investment in the region and enhance economic development. Third, focus on human rights issues gives credibility to the EU's democracy efforts before its citizens.

These remarks should not be seen as a criticism of the slow, softly-softly approach of the EU. However, even slow and cautious approaches have to embark upon and encourage reforms in the underlying institutional and constitutional structures responsible for the lack of democracy in the Maghreb. For instance, the conditionality clause, which has been confined to the 'realm of rhetoric', could be used to push forward for substantial qualitative changes that would foster some convergence in the democracy and security agenda between the Maghreb and the EU. Limiting democratisation to these efforts permits the EU to circumvent those issues that have a direct involvement in the region's sensitive political agenda or that might have institutional and constitutional leverage with serious consequences for democracy. True, EU projects for democracy promotion have contributed significantly to the growth in civil society. However, the

political load in the Maghreb is too heavy to carry for the civil society active there. This civil society is not powerful or experienced enough to affect serious constitutional or institutional changes. Nor does it have enough political leeway to do so; it is either too close to the regime and manipulated by it or too politicised and fragmented to push collectively for change. Notwithstanding its role, its efforts cannot, however, compensate for disorganisation at the party political system and weak parliaments.

Thus, securitisation in the region together with the discourse and practices supporting it tends to undermine the democratisation agenda, and ultimately the very security goals it is trying to achieve. This is so largely because of the primacy of security issues in politics but also because of the ambiguity of the discourse on democracy promotion. The democracy promotion has fallen short of its own rhetoric once faced with its own consequences (e.g. the rise of Islamist movements) or conflicts with security interests. Thus, concerns about security contribute to blocking the launch of genuine political reforms that are in turn a necessary condition for ensuring peace, security and stability. In this sense, democracy and security have become mutually dependent: for security to be established it needs genuine political reforms but these reforms are more likely to take place only and only when they do not constitute a threat. Indeed, less threat has made some political reforms more possible in Morocco than in Algeria or Tunisia. The existence of a large political opposition in Morocco, for instance, has allowed the Islamist PJD to participate and compete in the elections without generating threats of a landslide Islamist victory. Nor does the PJD itself want to win any such victory as it refrained from filing their candidates in all constituencies during the September 2002 legislative elections (Willis, 2004). The PJD's tendency to accommodate and assuage national fears of its development have been more pressing during the September 2003 local election, bearing in mind the Casablanca bombing and growing allegations about its links with other radical movements within the country.

As such, beyond ambiguous references and rhetorical declarations, there is a serious lack of clear discourse to initiate and support policies that are conducive to the construction of a security partnership. The interaction between security and democracy discourses has consequences on and implications for the institutions and practices put forward to implement their agenda. Discourses can have a cognitive as well as a

normative function in providing framework and guidance to support policies and practices for implementing them (Schmidt, 2000: 280-81). Therefore, discourse ambiguity affects the efficiency of these institutions, delays their proper functioning and confuses practices. None the less, if discourse can frame policies and practices, these policies and practices could, in a mutually constitutive manner, inform a change in the discourse. That is, policies and the institutions and practices through which they are being implemented can feed back into the discourse itself thereby affecting a transformation in the desired direction. As such, institutions and practices have the power not only to transform discourse but also to create a certain convergence by reducing misunderstandings and constructing a common social reality. What are then the EMP's institutions and practices and how can they effect and shape such change?

Institutions and practices

Institutions and practices are of great importance in influencing state behaviour (Botcheva and Martin, 2001) and clarifying the discourse and frameworks for action, the aim being to bring closer together different social realities and their supportive discourses and practices. Through institutions and learning practices, different discourses can converge to produce a common social reality owing to 'cognitive evolution' – this being a process that accounts for the diffusion, institutionalisation and learning of norms which help converge the interests of governments towards similar, compatible interpretations of the material reality in which they interact (Adler, 1997). The working of 'cognitive evolution' and the impact of institutions are exercises with long-term consequences. None the less, it is reasonable at this stage to enquire into the strength of the institutions and practices put in place for the implementation of the EMP's political and security agenda and their ability to enhance the convergence of the security and democracy discourses into a sustainable security partnership.

The EMP Institutions

The EMP's agenda as outlined in the three constitutive chapters of the Barcelona Declaration is discussed at both bilateral and multilateral/regional levels, each having separate institutional arrangements. In respect of its regional institutional structure, the

EMP is governed by the Euro-Mediterranean Conferences which convene at the level of Foreign Ministers and other sectoral ministerial conferences and meetings of senior official experts and civil society members. The EMP has also a permanent Euro-Mediterranean Committee of Senior Officials which works as a steering body and whose role is to follow the regional aspects of the Barcelona Process. This Committee is chaired by the EU Presidency and consists of the 12 Mediterranean partner countries, representatives from the EU presidency troika and the European Commission. In addition to multilateral conferences, the EMP's regional cooperation is also implemented through regional programmes in accordance with the main objectives of the three chapters of the Barcelona Declaration. Furthermore, to improve the working of the Euro-Mediterranean Committee, the Valencia Action Plan proposed re-examining its structure so as to ensure enhanced involvement of the southern Mediterranean partners in the elaboration, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes, actions and projects agreed upon during the Ministerial Conferences. The establishment of an informal Euro-Mediterranean working group has also been suggested. Additionally, provisions for the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary forum were made in the Follow-up to the Conference Document, encouraging links between parliamentarians, regional and local authorities and the social partners. After two Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary Forums, the Valencia Action Plan has called for the institutionalisation of the Forum through the establishment of a Parliamentary Assembly that is to meet once every year.

At the bilateral level, relations between the EU and each Mediterranean partner country are now governed by the EMAA. By virtue of the association agreement, institutional provisions are made for the creation of two common bodies for monitoring the implementation of the partnership priorities. These are the Association (ministerial) Council and the (senior official) Association Committee. The Association Council is chaired in turn by a member of the Council and a member of the signatory government and meets once a year to examine any major issues arising within the framework of the Agreement and any other bilateral or international matters of mutual interest. It consists of members of the Council and members of the European Commission as well as members of the signatory government. The Association Council has the power to establish an Association Committee in order to implement the Agreement. This

Committee is chaired in turn by the representative of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and by representative from the association government. The Association Committee has the power to set up specialised sub-committees or working groups with the aim of intensifying bilateral cooperation and holds responsibility for monitoring them. In this context, the Commission Delegations abroad play an important coordinating role, especially following reforms to the structure of the Commission's External Relations and the deconcentration of its responsibilities.[6]

The entry into force of the association agreement between the Maghreb countries and the EU has contributed to enhance the political dialogue and its institutionalisation.[7] It will also help to develop those areas that could yield more results at a bilateral level. A look at the sub-committees and working groups created for this purpose is quite telling. In the case of Morocco – the country that has the highest number of sub-committees and working groups – these sub-committees cover a variety of issues related mainly to the economic and financial chapter and other issues deemed urgent by members of the Association Council under the socio-cultural chapter. These include sub-committees and working groups on migration and social affairs; the internal market; industry, trade and services; transport, environment and energy; research and innovation; agriculture and fisheries; and justice and security. Most of these sub-committees are recent and were created only during the third Association Council in February 2003. The area of concentration for each sub-committee or working group suggests the same cautious attitude that is expressed in the discourses about security and democracy and that continues to dominate cooperation between the Maghreb countries and the EU.

Practices, interests and constraints

The above regional and bilateral institutional arrangements put in place for the implementation of the EMP provide, in theory, a good opportunity for dialogue and cooperation in order to fine-tune the security and democracy practices and the discourse supporting them. These institutions constitute a platform for interaction and a venue for the dissemination of norms and the marketing of various discourses. When considering their long-term potential to effect change (even through what appears now to be inherent or acquired deficiencies), they have the power to disseminate norms that are considered

essential for the whole EMP enterprise to succeed. They also constitute a place where different practices are confronted with each other and where normative power is enacted. Because of its nature as an actor with tremendous civilian power, the EU has the capacity to disseminate human rights, democratic and governance norms in the Mediterranean and support their implementation with economic incentives and political conditionality. The dissemination of such norms has markedly been at the root of the EU external relations with third countries since the beginning of the 1990s. Norms such as peace, liberty, rule of law, democracy and human rights have nothing European about them. What makes such norms less contentious is their universality: most of these norms have already been accepted by Mediterranean countries as part of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. They become more significant in the context of the EMP because the EU is directly linking them to the construction of a regional identity around the Mediterranean.

Indeed, the 'neighbourhood policy' clearly seeks to enlarge the EU's zone of peace to eastern and southern neighbours. To do this the EU uses a number of economic and political incentives. The use of the EU's normative power in eastern European has been supported by promises of membership. In the Mediterranean, this normative power is consolidated by incentives ranging from to 'more effective political dialogue to 'perspective of integration into transport, energy and telecommunication networks'. In other words, for the *bons élèves* of the EMP, the incentives will be as great as to share, in the words of Romano Prodi, 'everything except institutions'. To enlarge its zone of peace, the EU intends to do this through adopting 'Action Plans' to work with every individual partner in defined areas.

Whether the EU normative power would be of significance without the economic incentives and opportunities the EU presents is difficult to prove. Admittedly, the economic stakes and incentives involved in the successful implementation of the economic chapter of the EMP are tempting and have provided a launching pad for the Barcelona Process. However, shortly after the signing of the Barcelona Declaration, the political and security chapter has proven difficult to manage and is one of the chapters where little progress has been made. In constructing any policy project or program, policy-makers and elites are often faced with interests and constraints which combine to give priority to certain issues but prevent others from appearing on the political and

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security agenda. As discussed above, the discourses on security and democracy in the western Mediterranean, when they do not diverge, remain ambiguous. This is because the prevailing security cultures differ from the EU to North Africa and even between North African countries themselves. These security cultures frame and largely define the security discourse that is put forward to support a certain security agenda and to preclude another from developing.

Most of the issues discussed so far on the agendas of the EMP's bilateral and regional institutions still eschew sensitive security and political reforms. This is motivated by a number of reasons. In general, there is the importance of short term interests that dominate politics. There is also a persistent worry in the EU not to upset partner countries and to keep all initial EMP members on board. Moreover, fear and uncertainty about the result of proactive actions and programmes often act as major constraints. What is more, the economic benefits to be reaped from the construction of an FTA in the Mediterranean are considerable and tend to discourage actions that would disrupt its scheduled development or lead to socio-political instability and violence that would jeopardise it altogether. Therefore, interests in political stability to guarantee economic gains appear to constrain the introduction of genuine reforms with serious consequences for the political and security chapter.

Moreover, where political and security issues are discussed, serious doubts are cast on their practical results. For example, preliminary studies into the role of the Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum raised serious reservations about its role and points to inherent difficulties related to the legitimacy of its southern members. Another difficulty was seen to reside in the status of the representatives sent to the Forum. The tendency from the EU side is to send low profile personalities, especially from northern EU members (Stavridis, 2002). Representatives from the Mediterranean side are often mouthpieces of their respective government. Therefore, though one might accept the important of these institutions as providing venues for dialogue and socialisation through norm-diffusion, their impact remain limited to economic issues and contingent on the development of working groups and sub-committees that are empowered to work toward dispelling the ambiguity surrounding the discourse on democracy and security. Until this is done, the security and political chapter will suffer from lethargy and setbacks.

Conclusion: an emerging security partnership?

All on all, owing to difference in the security culture prevailing in the EU and North Africa, securitisation and democratisation have unsurprisingly been perceived differently. If in the EU democratisation has often been considered a major vector for the construction of peace and stability, in North Africa it, as presented by the EU, has been perceived as a major destabilising factor, often an intrusion in internal affairs. With the unfortunate, violent outcome of political liberalisation in Algeria, the strength of the democratisation discourse has been diluted, giving room for security worries and the consolidation of the security discourse. These security worries have so far hampered progress in the EMP's security and political dialogue. Because of the ambiguity and cautiousness surrounding security and democracy discourses, even the institutions and practices that are put in place to implement policies are not serving their full function and are being limited to and criticised as 'talking shops'.

On the whole, the ability of the EMP bilateral and regional institutions to overcome these constraints depends on the ideational (both cognitive and normative) merits of the discourses and policy programmes of the EMP representatives but also on their interactive ability to communicate and coordinate these discourses amongst themselves as well as to their general public at large (Schmidt, 2000: 287). What these institutions allow at the moment is for interactive practices with the potential to diffuse but also fine-tune discourses in favour of the construction of prosperity, peace and stability in the Mediterranean and the building of a security community. However, in relation to democracy and security, these interactive practices are limited to discussing divergent standpoints without first agreeing on a common strategic language. Therefore, further dialogue to dispel ambiguity and stress a common language is called for. Indeed, during these discussions it is possible to use rhetorical actions (i.e. the strategic use of norm-based arguments) in order to push forward for a convergence of norms such as respect for democracy, human rights, governance and security. These norms should be able to go beyond the promotion of the rule of law and human rights to stress the

importance of and need for genuine institutional and systemic reforms that would guarantee full political liberalisation and democratisation.

In addition to official bilateral and regional interactive practices, the contact between the various Maghrebi and European civil society members and their increasing involvement in cooperative security issues (Lannon, 2002) constitutes a good base for the diffusion and promotion of democratic norms and practices at the local level. The construction and the consolidation of such networks are essential for the marketing and dissemination of norms and the promotion of norm-conforming behaviours that would ensure and encourage convergence towards full security partnership. Unless the EMP political and security practices are penetrated formally by institutions and informally by civil society members, its current institutions will have little to bear on the security and democracy dialogue, and the EMP itself is likely to suffer, despite the consensus amongst its elites, in its ability to mobilize people from both sides. With repetitive forums of little or no concrete result on security and democracy, the discourse on the construction of peace and security will tend to be perceived from the population in the south as political stagnation by other means. The political and security cooperation between the EU and the Maghreb countries appears at the moment to be a 'security complex-community', where major disagreements on security issues leading to enmity are being progressively reduced between the partner countries but where a system of common values is not (yet) being reached.

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Notes

1. For example, provocation came in January 1990 from the FIS number two leader, Ali Benhadj, who, dressed in military uniform, organised a march to the Ministry of Defence asking for ammunition to go and fight on the Iraqi side. The second incident was an Islamist attack on a military post in Guemmar (El Oued) in November 1991.

2. For instance, when the leader of the Tunisian *al-Nahda*, Rachid Ghannouchi, was sojourning in Algeria between 1990 and 1991, the FIS did not associate him to their cause nor recognise his moral authority as the leader of the Tunisian Islamist group. His expulsion from Algeria also passed as a non-event amongst the Algerian Islamist groups. Another sign of this nationalist jealousy has been manifest in the way in which Islamists and their followers refer to themselves or have been referred to. In Tunisia, Ghannouchi spoke of 'l'armée des vaincus de Bourguiba' (Burgat, 1996: 49); in Algeria reference has been to the 'orphans of Boumedienne' (Zoubir, 1996: 15). Indeed, national reference has remained dominant. For instance, the FIS's call has been around the recurrent theme of 'l'unité de la nation', a theme that is very much reminiscent of the FLN's ideological discourse after independence. As Benjamin Stora has written, 'les militants du FIS se posent ainsi en véritables héritiers d'un FLN débarrassé de toute idéologie externe.' (Stora, 1994: 93).

3. Opposition parties in Tunisia are elected by a government decree that provides them with a quota of 20 per cent (that is 34 seats) whatever the result of the legislative elections.

4. See "Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: proposed new framework for relations with the EU's Eastern and Southern Neighbours", COM (2003) 104 final, Brussels 11.3.2003.

5. The September 11 attacks were evoked, for instance, by Algerian General Mohamed Touati to condemn political opposition and seek appreciation of the political violence Algeria suffered for a decade, see 'L'Algérie n'intégrera aucune coalition anti-terroriste', *L'Intelligent/Jeune Afrique/*27 October 2001.

6. Within the spirit of strategic thinking and efficiency of delivery, the European Commission introduced new reforms to its representative bodies abroad by transferring its management responsibility in respect of assistance projects at the local level to its Delegations abroad. A Memorandum proposing the creation of a single department for managing Delegations' staff was approved in July 2002; it gave clearer duties to the Delegations and a new career structure for its employees (European Commission, 2 July 2002). The overarching aim is to guarantee quicker and proficient delivery of EU assistance and to play a growing role under the CFSP. The deconcentration of responsibilities to the Delegations in Morocco and Tunisia has begun as part of the first phase. As such, the European Commission Delegations in these countries have started to be involved in the drafting of programming documents.

7. Until the entry into force of the EU/Algeria Association Agreement, political dialogue takes place on an ad hoc basis, through twice-yearly meetings at ministerial level. The last meeting, in the Troika format, took place on December 5, 2001.