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The EU in Libya, one year on

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In early 2011, as events in Libya and the Arab Spring were unfolding, three sets of partly complementary arguments could be advanced to frame a possible European Union (EU) intervention in the Libyan uprising.

First, an intervention was seen as an opportunity for the EU to assert itself as a strong player in its neighborhood. A substantial section of the discourse around the EU role in the Libyan crisis focused on the fact that the crisis was, as Belgian scholar Sven Biscop put it, "a textbook example of a situation in which Europe, through the European Union, should have taken the lead and proved that it is an actor worth noting". This should have happened despite the fact that, as is well known, Libya was the only Arab Mediterranean country that had not joined the EU's Neighborhood Policy; hence such projection of influence should have been displayed through some type of involvement in a military operation. Therefore, from this perspective the task of the EU was particularly ambitious: displaying its power and relevance in a regional crisis and doing so without relying on the economic and political 'sticks' that were available *vis-à-vis* other Mediterranean partners.

Secondly, the handling of the crisis revealed the continuing centrality of principal-agent relations within the EU framework. In this sense, it showed that the "principals" – i.e. EU member states' governments – had the power to either involve or bypass EU institutions at their will or, in a best case scenario, set EU policy priorities on the basis of their own foreign policy goals. This was suggested by the apparent sidelining of EU institutions in the key phases of the decision-making process that led to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 and the NATO-led air campaign. In this context it was thus no surprise that the EU was the only major regional organization involved in the crisis that did not host a major multilateral summit, as opposed to both the African Union and the Arab League.

Finally, the Libyan crisis showed a EU desperate to catch up with the events in the Arab Spring. Therefore a potential involvement was also seen as functional to not losing grips with the events unfolding in the Mediterranean region. From this angle, it was even possible to suggest that, by early March 2011, the EU needed to play some diplomatic cards in *whatever* new crisis would have erupted in the Mediterranean region if it wanted to make up for its inaction during the Tunisian revolution, and its hesitations during the Egyptian one; the fact that the next major episode of the Arab Spring unfolded in Libya and not elsewhere might have been, from this perspective, a rather marginal detail.

Each of these perspectives corresponds to a different model as to how the EU behaves, or should behave, in dealing with the Arab Spring – respectively, as a *leader* in its neighborhood, as a *follower* of its member states, and as an institutional actor attempting to *salvage* its position and reputation when faced with a complex and unanticipated set of events. One year after the beginning of the war, what do EU initiatives in each of these realms tell us about its ambitions?

The first argument is the easiest to assess, also because, by its very nature, it focuses on actions and initiatives taken in the short term as an immediate response to the events on the ground. In this sense, there is no doubt that the performance of the EU was poor, as throughout the crisis the EU was sidelined by the United Nations as the leading diplomatic actor and by NATO as the coordinator of the military campaign. Nothing conveys the sense of the EU's struggle to stretch its operational ability to match its normative ambitions better than the ill-conceived and ill-fated EUFOR Libya initiative – the attempt

to deploy a EU-led military operation in Libya in early April 2011 which was met by insurmountable diplomatic, logistical and operational problems, and which was described by some as an "April fool".

However, the EU did perform much better as a follower of its member states. Southern European member states identified early in the crisis one specific priority for EU institutions: managing the substantial influx of illegal migrants through the Mediterranean. This perspective explains effectively why, in the division of labor across major multilateral bodies involved in the reconstruction process after the conflict, the EU took charge of border controls and, in the Foreign Affairs Council Meeting on 10 October 2011, listed this as its first "key field" of action in the country before other activities more consonant with its alleged normative vocation, such as fostering "civil society and women's rights".

A longer-term perspective also confirms that it was not too off the mark to see the EU being worried about salvaging its position in the midst of the Arab Spring. One potential proof could be found in the fact that the EU hastily re-elaborated its strategies as events in Libya were unfolding by issuing two programmatic documents on 8 March and then on 25 May 2011. If we take into account the fast pace of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolution, however, the timing of such strategic rethinking is not particularly surprising. More interesting is perhaps the sense of distributive justice that emerges when considering the aid allocations to its three southern neighbors involved in the Arab Spring – Tunisia, Egypt and Libya itself – which were allocated in 2011 respectively €160, €132 and €156 million. Considering the different demographic features of these countries and the substantially different implications that these three revolutions had on each country, these allocations seem to reveal that the main rationale of EU grants was largely conservative and focused on the internal consistency of EU policies and did not necessarily represent a willingness to show leadership and take political risks.

As a whole, if the Libyan crisis provided the EU with an opportunity to prove itself an "actor worth noting", that opportunity was largely lost. While the efforts to reconsider its strategic stance *vis-à-vis* its southern neighbors were certainly noteworthy, the EU acted throughout the crisis as a follower not just to its member states, but also to other multilateral organizations. This experience will certainly spur a deep reflection on the credibility of the EU as an effective actor in foreign policy, and on the operational and ideological limits of its "normative" mission.

Why has the Arab Spring not 'hit' Algeria

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The Arab Spring has not 'hit' Algeria. The situation in the country is characterised by local social unrest and strikes; however there is no nationwide demand for regime change. The extreme violence of the 1990s, oil money that is used to pour oil on troubled social waters, and a split elite with the factions holding each other in check are the stabilising factors in what is an unstable situation.

Everyone talks of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, yet no one talks about Algeria. The country is invisible in the international media. This is because the Arab Spring did not sweep through Algeria like a whirlwind even though the country is plagued by the same problems as the other North African countries: high youth unemployment, widespread corruption, lack of transparency in political processes and deep-seated distrust of the top-dog 'ruling class'.

The last 10 years have been marked by countless confrontations between the police and ordinary civilians. Typically locally rooted, the protests often turn violent. Neighborhood residents frequently block roads to demand water, gas, electricity and proper asphalt roads. Strikes among road workers, hospital staff, students, officials, lawyers and even security workers are spreading in ever-widening circles.

In January 2011, violent unrest broke out in the wake of the Tunisian Spring. The unrest, triggered by price rises in corn, sugar and cooking oil, cost five lives, caused 800 casualties and led to over 1100 arrests. However, this is 'mild' compared to the standoffs between the police and the protestors in 1988, in which 500 were killed. Ninety people were killed in 2001. Altogether 2777 police operations against social unrest were reported between January and July 2011. The press is not surprised by the number of operations, but by the relatively 'soft' approach to the protests. The regime plainly wants to avoid the risk of fanning the flames by adopting a hard line. The fact that there are still desperate people setting fire to themselves out of desperation over their future, however, is extremely serious and also surprising. Their source of inspiration is undeniably Tunisia, where a young street vendor set himself alight in December 2010. He became the catalyst for the Tunisian rebellion. By contrast, similar actions by Algerians have not resulted in a national uprising.

There are at least three reasons why the social unrest has not developed into a nationwide demand for regime change.

First, memories of the terrible violence in the 1990s, when about 160,000 people were killed, are a key reason. Large sections of the population are deeply traumatized. Many feel that the conflict/civil war of the 1990s was caused by the regime opening up to democracy in 1989. In that year, a new constitution was adopted that allowed a multi-party system, complete

freedom for the media and separation of the legislative, executive and judicial powers. As a consequence, an Islamic party, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), stormed into the political arena and in 1992 it was on the brink of victory in the parliamentary elections. As is well known, the military intervened politically and the elections were annulled. In February 1992, a state of emergency was declared and the FIS was banned.

Tunisians, Egyptians and Libyans wonder why Algeria has not had its own spring. Algerian politicians and the media reply that Algeria has truly had its democratic spring. The subtext being: see what it led to after 1989 – chaos and conflict. Since President Abdelaziz Bouteflika came to power in 1999, Islamic and state violence have decreased considerably. However, there are still 'pockets' of Islamic terror, particularly in eastern and southern Algeria. As late as July 2011 many were killed and wounded by Islamic terrorists on the border with Tunisia. In March 2012, a kamikaze-attack was launched against police barracks in the strategically important southern Algerian city of Tamanrasset. Thus there is still a latent fear among the population of a fresh outbreak of violence akin to that of the 1990s. Stability and gradual, controlled democratization is given preference over the potential chaos that regime change might bring about.

The second reason is that the regime is able to buy political peace by opening up its oil coffers. All of the conservative oil-rich states such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain favor this strategy. Algeria is rich in oil and gas. Its external debt has been more or less paid off. Foreign currency reserves are astronomically high. They are currently at US$173 billion, which the regime is using to finance roads, ports, airports, reservoirs and housing.

President Bouteflika was quick to dip into the coffers after the unrest in January 2011. The government lowered prices on basic foodstuffs and granted wage increases to low paid workers, including the police force. US$100 billion of the 2012 budget has also been earmarked for social projects. If oil prices should fall, contrary to expectations, the government would be in a serious scrape, as pouring oil on the troubled waters of social unrest would not be possible in the same way.

The third reason is that the political landscape is totally fragmented. The cornerstone of the system is a policy of divide and rule. A mixture of oppression, incentives to cooperate with the powerful and exclusion from power are a result of this policy of divide and rule. Steered by personal rivalry rather than ideas, the parties are built up around systems of clientelism, to which a host of people are bound to the political leader and dependent on his economic and social protection. The factions all hold each other in check in this network of interdependence. As a result, it is virtually impossible to implement any far-reaching political and economic reforms. Instead "stability in a system of instability" is maintained. This balance between stability and instability is controlled behind the scenes by an army of 140,000 soldiers and 100,000 reserves. As far as is known, there were no deserters during the conflict of the 1990s. If the Arab Spring reaches Algeria it is thus highly unlikely that the army would back the political unrest.

Does this mean that the Arab Spring has not had any political influence on developments in Algeria?

In fact it has. The regime is concerned about a potential spillover from Tunisia and Libya, which border on Algeria. The state of emergency, established in February 1992, was lifted in February 2011. In April 2011 Bouteflika offered a few political inducements to the population. He announced that the constitution of 1996 would be revised to make it easier for new parties to stand for parliamentary election. New electoral laws would be introduced and women would be allocated 33% of the seats in the lower house. NGOs would be allowed to operate more freely than before. It would become easier to set up private television channels. By the time the lower house adopted the proposed laws in November they had been considerably watered down by two of the three largest governing parties.

The law on freedom of the press neither applies to state television nor to the regional state radio stations. It applies only to the so-called independent French and Arabic newspapers. The quota for women had disappeared. NGOs – especially those with links abroad and to the opposition – are to be controlled. Bouteflika has stated that parties "which in the name of Islam contributed to the national tragedy in the 1990s will not be allowed to stand for election". In other words, the illegal Islamic party, FIS, continues to be banned from the political stage. Blame for the conflict in the 1990s is thrown on the FIS while the government is cleared of any blame. There is a limit to how far the regime wants to open up to democratization. There are no limits to criticism of the limited reforms. However, at the same time, much of the population feels a mixture of desperation, resignation and de-politicization.

The sudden arrival of the Arab Spring took everyone by surprise. Will it come to Algeria when the parliamentary elections are held in spring 2012? If it does reach Algeria, it will probably take the form of a gradual opening up rather than sudden regime change. The Algerian regime and the population are by no means unaffected by the revolutions in neighboring countries. If the government does not allow new parties to stand for election and if the election results are tampered there will undoubtedly be widespread unrest. There will be a demand for the promise of controlled democratization to be fulfilled, but there will not be a demand for a complete change of regime.

Moroccan rappers and political descent in the age of the 'Arab Spring'

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As the prospect of a brighter future gets dimmer and the chance of being recruited in the saturated public sector becomes impossible, unemployed North African college graduates sit idle in coffee houses, lean against the walls of their neighborhoods, risk their lives in illegal Mediterranean crossings for the opportunity of employment in Europe or choose self-immolation as they lose hope. Not long before North Africa's uprisings erupted after Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire on 17 December 2010 in protest of the daily abuse of government agencies, disenfranchised youth turned to rap and hip-hop to challenge political corruption, police brutality, aging political leadership, and governments' failures to answer the needs of a growing population.
In Algeria, Loutfi Double Kanon sings about Algerian youth leaving the country for Sardinia and other Italian cities. He writes:

> For the youth: the humiliated and the conquered and the oppressed.
> Go tell the government why the youth in this country love Rome.
> In a plane, a ship, or a felucca, everyone is fleeing from the faces of those people.
> Hey, yo! The youth today don't hate their country.
> They hate those people who only fill their pockets,
> Those who got it through connections and clever tricks.
> He bought a place and they gave him a position in the FLN (Front Liberation Nationale)

The Tunisian rapper Hamada Ben Amor (alias El-Général) sends a plea to the former President Ben Ali in December 2010, one which he later posted on YouTube. The song titled *Rais Lebled* put him in jail before the President ordered his release after pressure from protesters in the streets of Tunisian cities. In an unusual cry by an ordinary young Tunisian to the head of a police state, El-Général describes a negative image of Tunisia:

> Mr. President, here, today, I speak with you
> In my name and the name of all people who live in misery.
> Go out into the street and see how people have become animals.
> Look at the police with batons.
> Mr. President, you told me to speak without fear.
> I see so much injustice. That's why I chose to speak out
> Even though many people told me that my end will be execution.
> But how long must the Tunisian live in illusions?

In Morocco, Mouad Belghuat (widely known as El-Haqed) reiterated similar concerns from a young North African generation that has been silent and afraid to voice its criticism of state officials:

> If the people want life,
> Then they'll stand up to defend their rights. No more silence!
> We have no choice but to fight for our rights.
> Silence won't benefit us. I am the child of the people and I'm not scared!
> It's for me to choose whom I want to sanctify.
> And if you understand us, come live with us.
> "God, the Homeland, and Freedom."

These three rappers symbolize an emerging politically conscious generation that lost faith in political parties' ability to represent its needs and aspirations. The rappers' focus on nepotism, corruption and economic injustice highlights common perceptions about political systems throughout North Africa. Most of North Africa's rappers are in their early twenties and therefore represent the bulging youth population of the region. They come from working classes and poor neighborhoods in urban centers throughout the region. Poverty-stricken and with no platform to voice their opinions about their daily struggles, they took advantage of the lingua franca of hip-hop to articulate widespread discontent over police

repression, economic injustice, and corruption. They used MP3s and YouTube to counter daily propaganda of state media. Accordingly North Africa's youth have begun to engage the political establishment outside the traditional political stage of political parties and aging and co-opted leaders. Through a conscious and deliberate criticism of their governments, youth rappers intend to disentangle the chains of fear that dominated the political culture of the region. This newfound agency is epitomized in their acts to cross the political boundaries that condemned dissidents in the early decades of North African states' independence to many years behind bars. It is in this context that rappers have dared to engage in a political mockery of dreaded institutions such as the police, presidency and monarchies.

YouTube and disenfranchised North African youth

In 2005, YouTube for the first time offered Internet users worldwide the ability to share their videos and a platform to communicate their opinions despite instances of Internet censorship. In North Africa and other Middle Eastern countries, the information-sharing capacity of the Internet lifted the siege of information that Ministries of Information maintained for decades after independence. The information checkpoints of national televisions and radio stations are no longer viable and effective. For instance in 2007, Internet visitors were not able to access YouTube, which the Moroccan government blamed on a technical glitch. Human rights activists and political bloggers however contended that the state knowingly blocked the site in order to shut down public access to pro-independence activists to voice their opinions about Western Sahara. Before 2006, these activists had little space to share their opinions about the issue to a wider Moroccan public. If Netscape made the world of communication flat in the late 1990s, YouTube has disrupted North African states' hegemonic control over the newspapers and public media allowing the "enemies of the state" to challenge its bureaucracies and disciplinary institutions. North Africans, especially the technologically savvy youth, have been empowered to produce their own news and dispatch it to millions of viewers. North Africa's traditional authoritarian regimes of information have not only been challenged by these emerging forces but on many occasions humiliated by counter discourse. For instance on 8 July 2007, a young Moroccan dubbed "Targuist Sniper" from Targuist, a poor town from the northern province of al-Hoceima, used his camera to capture instances of gendarmerie bribery. Corruption is common knowledge throughout Morocco. However, this generation of citizen journalists embarrassed the symbols of the authoritarian state on virtual landscapes providing a clear evidence of how widespread bribery is among the security services.

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YouTube and Moroccan rappers

In similar ways, other disenfranchised North African youth utilized YouTube and other forms of social media to express themselves without engaging in self-censorship and as a response to the limited space youth had had in national public media. El-Haqed and El General have emerged as two of the most celebrated rappers in post-uprising North Africa. Their songs share similar themes such as police brutality, regional marginalization, and political as well economic corruption. North Africa's rappers are fighting a war over access to the public sphere to engage in dialogic politics with the state and its institutions. They protest and expose the exclusionary political model of the state, which revolves around nepotism and personal networks. El-Haqed and other rappers describe their situation as a state of Hogra (social and political contempt) which denies them not only representation but also political and economic rights. Political Hogra has led to a culture of clandestine migration (Harraga) forcing employed and unemployed North Africans to flee their states for Europe.

YouTube has therefore become a new public space which exposes different forms of structural violence against ordinary citizens. On 29 March 2012, El-Haqed was arrested again by the Moroccan police in front of his house in a popular neighborhood in Casablanca. The Direction Générale de la Sûreté Nationale, the main state police institution, filed a lawsuit against the rebellious rapper. The

prosecution claims that the rapper has broken the law by insulting state figures in a video posted on YouTube titled "State Dogs" which features an assemblage of photos of the king and his advisors. The song was produced in 2008 and performed by El-Haqed on multiple occasions and places. In October 2010, the song was uploaded on YouTube featuring El-Haqed and his friend Nabil. It became popular in the aftermath of the 20 February Movement. The video under consideration was produced in early 2012 while El-Haqed was still in prison for an earlier arrest.

Rapping for the Moroccan state

Rappers have managed to circumvent the laws and restrictive platforms of communication of North African states. However, these states have outmaneuvered this rebellious youth through the co-optation of some rappers and the "balkanization" of revolutionary rap. For example, if we map rappers' politics in Morocco, we can identify a number of artists who became close to political parties or state agencies while creating a false consciousness of state contestation. Fnaire, a group from Marrakesh, has led this movement of state rappers voicing national pride and solidarity. The state has allowed other rappers such as Bigg (also known as El-Khasser) to criticize political parties and the police and sing about social malaise; however, these rappers have never crossed the sacred barrier of the monarchy. El-Haqed on the contrary has put the monarchy at the center of his protest of state corruption. The fragmentation of the industry of hip-hop demonstrates the structural strength of the Moroccan system and its power to weaken these protests. Unlike this counter-cultural movement, other rappers chose to protest the system through its traditional 'reformed' institutions. The rapper Chekhsar upholds an Islamic view that aligns him with the ruling Justice and Development Party (PJD). His songs are largely about the social and economic conditions of the majority of the Moroccan population. Yet, he openly distances himself from the positions of El-Haqed and his message of (God-Country-Freedom). For criticizing the rapping language of Bigg and the political discourse of El-Haqed, Chekhsar proposes an Islamic rap in the context of a constitutional monarchy based on (God-Country-King).

Although North African states in general and Morocco in particular have survived the political transition that followed the "Arab spring," the political leadership needs to rethink its social policies, political discourse and practice, as well as its human rights culture. Despite the ability of North African states to maintain their social policing over the majority of their population, the political awareness of their unemployed youth and their economic disenchantment threatened not only the stability of the system but also social peace and civil society. The 2011 uprisings are signs of deep social, political and economic symptoms. States throughout North Africa have made some key adjustments to these riots but they do not go deep enough to answer future troubles.

After the Islamist-led coalition Moroccan government came to power in late 2011, Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane promised to protect civil liberties and human rights. The release of many political prisoners including the leaders of the Salafiya al-Jihadiyya was seen as a sign of political opening. However, the postings of cartoons of the king on Facebook led the government to redraw its sacred lines as the movement of protest continues to lose steam. As the majority of hip-hop singers rap for the state in state-organized and funded festivals, the few like El-Haqed who dared to cross the imposed sacred limits end up in prison for insulting state officials. In the meantime, North African states are looking for ways to manage, control and police the Internet and therefore muzzle the growing opposition.

However, although North African states in general and Morocco in particular have survived the political transition that followed the "Arab spring", political leadership need to rethink its social policies, political discourse and practice and human rights culture. Despite the ability of North African states to maintain their social policing over the majority of their population, the political awareness of their unemployed youth and their economic disenchantment

threaten not only the stability of the system but also social peace and civil society. The 2011-uprisings are signs of deep social, political and economic symptoms. States throughout North Africa have made some key adjustments to these riots but their reform does not go deep enough to answer future troubles. Youth are still unemployed; they have few political alternatives to voice their criticism of their governments; and the political establishment remains unwilling to level the political field for a new political membership based on expertise instead of family connections and networks.

For North African states to establish a peaceful political culture based on compromise and dialogue, its aging political leadership needs a new formula of political participation which opens the public sphere to youth without any conditions and listens to their aspirations, frustrations and needs. The state and its fragmented political parties need to understand that the politics of consensus emerge from a civil and political society, which acknowledges and complies with the rules of participation. For years North African politics have been at their core segmentary; that is, the state managed to survive through the break-up of parties, their repression and cooptation. Today, North African states need to push for a new political alterative based on consensus and compromise instead of political domestication and cooptation. The failure to open the political space for the younger generation could lead to political extremism and violence especially if members of the younger generation continue to perceive the state as an enemy instead of a social and political partner. In addition the state has to fight nepotism and political as well as economic corruption. This would create over the years confidence in the political system which youth will grow to see as an arbitrator instead of a protector of a few members of society.

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