In the twenty-first century, North Africa has emerged as one of the most complex and challenging regions of the world. The aim of this book is to examine a variety of the challenges it offers, looking beyond the media headlines into the complex and inter-related issues of culture and politics, including the politics of performance, governance, and mapping the territory. The book is written from inside the region as well as offering international perspectives. Its essays range over a variety of geo-political issues, each inflected by a personal point of view, and it provides a timely intervention in current debates about the past, present, and future of North Africa.

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THE CHALLENGE OF NORTH AFRICA

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Edited by Andrew Hussey and Martin Rose

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Preface

Writing from England, soon after completing a four-year posting in Morocco with the British Council, I am more than ever struck by the extraordinarily fast process of change that is sweeping North Africa. During these four years, regimes and governments have fallen in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, a new constitution has been written in Morocco, and the whole political articulation of the Maghreb is changing — in some cases subtly, in some dramatically, in all irreversibly. And these processes are very far from finished.

But what strikes me above all is the cultural and linguistic change that we have seen — the way in which the francophone cultural elite of France's former empire, once monolithic, has begun to acknowledge and in many cases share the demand for other languages and other international links, other partnerships and other destinations. As a process, this was predictable — indeed I remember sitting in a faculty office in Cambridge four and half years ago, having its nature eloquently explained to me. But no one then had any idea of how fast it would happen — there was a quiet frustration in my Cambridge conversation that I recall very clearly, a sense that so much was ready to happen, but couldn't yet quite achieve traction.

That traction has been supplied by the way that the youth of the region have seized the microphone. Suddenly there is a sense of opening up, of impatience with the francophone monoculture of the last half century, of an urgent need to join a wider world. And that world speaks English. Whatever direction political processes take, and it is not easy to foresee ultimate destinations, this cultural enlargement is a fait accompli, a genie released from its lamp.

Talking through this sea-change with Andrew Hussey, then Dean of the University of London in Paris, we felt that it needed to be marked — that the intensity of the cultural drama being played out is not yet nearly well enough understood in Great Britain. So the British Council and ULIP have commissioned this short collection of essays which carry a message, explicit or subliminal: North Africa is hungry for cultural and linguistic diversification. The door is open, the welcome — as I know very well — more than just warm.

Martin Rose
Director, British Council, Morocco (2010–14)
16 October 2014

The Editors would like to thank the authors for their unique perspectives, and Collette Brown and Bronwyn Mahoney for their tireless and meticulous work without which this book would not have appeared in this or any other form.

Andrew Hussey and Martin Rose

The Maghreb in the Twenty-First Century

George Joffé

The Maghreb today, particularly the three key states of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, offers a very different picture from the early days of independence in the 1960s. Then Algeria, led by Houari Boumedienne was the embodiment of non-alignment after its violent struggle for independence dominated the political scene, whilst Habib Bourguiba's Tunisia was the pro-Western alternative and Morocco's monarchy under Mohamed V and his son, Hassan II, symbolized links to a precolonial past. Today however, Tunisia has undergone a revolution and seems set to develop a democratic alternative to autocratic and corrupt rule; Morocco has developed an evolutionary approach to political and social liberalization, but Algeria has regressed into political opacity in the wake of a brutal civil war. All three states, too, are enmeshed in complex and dominant economic linkages with Europe as they struggle with unemployment and economic development whilst seeking to come to terms with globalization and modernity. Nor can they ignore their Saharan hinterlands as, in the wake of the Arab Spring and the collapse of Libya, extremism flourishes in the Sahel and threatens to seep back into North Africa itself. Nor, indeed, have the geopolitical tensions of the past disappeared, for the age-old struggle for regional hegemony between Algeria and Morocco — typified by the Western Sahara crisis — has not gone away. Nor, finally, can Europe and America ignore the Maghreb, given its proximity to crucial trade routes through the Mediterranean, its location on migrant routes into Europe and the oil-and-gas it supplies to European states. The Maghreb remains, in short, a region of acute concern to the wider world and its significance in future seems bound to increase.

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Since the 1980s the states of North Africa have experienced radical change, which seems to be the harbinger of an ambiguous and uncertain future, both domestically and in terms of their relationships with the wider world. At the end of the 1970s, after all, Algeria was still a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, alongside Egypt and Yugoslavia, and the exemplar of successful national liberation from colonial rule. Libya, too by then

approaching the end of its first revolutionary decade as the embodiment of Colonel Gaddafi's idiosyncratic Arab nationalist vision, was refashioning itself as the world's first *jamahiriyah* — the 'state of the masses' — and earning a reputation as a global radical. Morocco, opposed to both, saw itself and was seen to be the West's partner in the Cold War and the embodiment of the longevity and viability of traditional institutions, whilst Tunisia had also plotted a pragmatic, pro-Western path under the autocratic umbrella of the charismatic Habib Bourguiba.

The economic relationship

Yet, despite these varying political alignments, all four states were still locked into a shared postcolonial relationship with Europe in which their former colonial powers continued to play significant roles. France, in consequence, was the dominant partner for three of the states concerned, while Britain and Italy were more concerned with Libya. In addition, quite apart from political and diplomatic relations, all four states had become increasingly dependent on the European connection in terms of economic relations. Algeria and Libya, and to a lesser extent Tunisia, supplied energy to Europe in the form of oil and gas whilst Morocco supplied phosphates and agricultural products. Tunisia and Morocco had become the destinations for the European tourism industry as well. All except Libya were exporters of labour too, and North African migrants were active throughout Western Europe, particularly in France, the Benelux countries, and West Germany but also in Italy, Britain, and Spain. And Europe also harboured their dissidents, often to the extreme irritation of their home governments. On the other hand, all four states were increasingly heavy importers from Europe of consumer goods of all kinds, particularly of food in the cases of Algeria and Libya. In other words, the postcolonial European embrace, particularly that of France, was proving to be as powerful as its colonial predecessors had been.[1]

Indeed in economic terms, little has changed over the years since then. Although all four states have been able to diversify their trade partners in recent years, Europe still dominates their trade patterns. Thus 50.1% of Algeria's trade in 2012 was with Europe, while for Libya the figure was 58.8%. Tunisia and Morocco, which have far more diversified economies and are not reliant on oil-and-gas, still had 55.9% and 44.1%, respectively, of their total trade with Europe in that year.[2] And as far as energy was concerned, Algeria and Libya supplied 12.6% of Europe's oil, 10.4% of its pipeline gas, and 24.2% of the liquefied natural gas it imported in 2012 — 12.6% of Europe's total imports of gas. Overall, Europe absorbs 49.7% of all the oil

and 59.9% of the gas that Libya and Algeria produce.[3] Europe is dominant in terms of foreign investment, too, at least for the non-oil economies. It supplied 61.3% of Morocco's direct foreign investment, 72.7% of Tunisia's investment receipts, and 80.9% of Egypt's investment funds in 2011. In Algeria, however, Europe only supplied a quarter of the total for most of the investment was made by international oil companies instead.

One aspect of this economic relationship that has changed, however, is that North African states now have to deal with the European Union, rather than with individual European states, as had been the case in the past. Since 1993, when the Union was formed, Europe has increasingly tried to channel its external economic relationships through European-wide instruments, rather than on a bilateral country-to-country basis. In 1995 Brussels proposed to the South Mediterranean region a comprehensive policy — the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership — to create a zone of shared peace, stability, and prosperity in the Mediterranean region. The new partnership was to address shared security issues and create a new economic relationship alongside democratic governance and sociocultural cooperation with the objective of speeding development amongst all South Mediterranean states, from Turkey to Morocco. For Europe, a key objective was to speed economic development through economic integration of the South Mediterranean region so as to reduce migrant flows from the South but political change and regional security were also seen as essential components in the process, not least to avoid growing political extremism in the south.[4]

South Mediterranean states, particularly in North Africa, had little choice but to adopt the new European policy, given their economic dependence but some, such as Algeria which only signed up to it in 2002, were clearly reluctant and resented European assumptions about how they should handle their domestic agendas. Others, such as Morocco and Tunisia, were more than happy to accept the European embrace because of the advantages they believed it would bring, despite the short-term challenges for their economies. In practice, however, the outcomes of the policy were disappointing for all concerned. For Europe, regional market integration seemed to have stalled and migratory flows hardly slowed at all. For the South Mediterranean states, there appeared to be few advantages and significant disadvantages in the new arrangements as their nascent industrial sectors experienced the chill winds of European competition whilst flows of direct private investment remained disappointingly small. Even more alarming was the fact that, after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in September 2001, Europe began to see migration as a security threat, rather than simply

as an economic and social challenge. Access to the European continent became correspondingly more difficult and, for North African elites with traditions of access to European culture and sociopolitical values, increasingly humiliating. Nor did the Maghreb feel any ownership of the new policy, experiencing instead what increasingly came to be seen as a European diktat.[5]

By 2005 it was clear that the policy was failing, so Brussels proposed a new dimension, based upon the Accession experience of East European states to the European Union in 2004, fifteen years after the end of the Cold War. It proposed that the economic dimension of the Mediterranean-wide relationship should be based on its 'Neighbourhood Policy' whereby Southern partner states should determine with the European Union the pace at which economic change would occur and to which aspects of their economies such change would apply. In return, the European Union would grant the states concerned increasing access to its economic arena and associated institutions at rates that reflected their own economic and political development. They would eventually be given access to everything except the legislative institutions of the Union, in short, just like members of the Common European Economic Space; like Switzerland, Iceland, and Norway, for example. Once again, the states of the Maghreb had little choice about the matter for it was Europe that would control the process and the benefits to them seemed vanishingly small.

The final stage in their disillusionment came in mid-2008 with a French-inspired proposal for a 'Union for the Mediterranean'. This was originally intended to be an initiative for a private sector-financed, French-led grouping of all Mediterranean states to define a common agenda for their development and thus, in effect a challenge to the European Union's own policies for the region. One of its attractions was that it was to attempt to be equally shared between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, thereby giving Southern states what they had never had before — genuine agency over regional policy. Germany, however, was determined that holistic European control over policy be maintained and France was eventually obliged to cede to its demands that all twenty-seven European states, together with the Balkans, should also be part of the new policy infrastructure. In reality the new initiative offered as little real benefit to the Maghreb as had its predecessors. Now, of course, it has been overtaken by the events of the Arab Spring and the profound political changes that have spread through North Africa in the last three years.[6]

Politics and diplomacy

Indeed, on the political and diplomatic scenes, things today look very different from the situation as it was in the 1970s. In fact the changes that have produced the contemporary North African world actually began towards the end of that decade. In the mid-1970s Morocco, in response to internal challenges to its monarchy — two attempted coups in 1971 and 1972 and a rural rebellion in 1973 — had revived an old claim to the Western Sahara which it had occupied in 1975 with the acquiescence of its colonizer, Spain. In doing so it had challenged the regional dominance of Algeria which, in response, became the patron of the Western Saharan independence movement, the Polisario Front. The dispute continues today, although the violent confrontation between Morocco and the Polisario Front ended in 1992 with a United Nations-sponsored truce, with Algeria insisting on a referendum for self-determination and Morocco determined to maintain its hold. In reality, of course, the dispute is actually about geopolitical hegemony within North Africa, with Morocco determined not to lose the advantage it gained through its annexation of the region, despite the growing restiveness of the Western Saharan population.[7]

In fact the end of the 1970s also marked a decline in Algeria's status as the region's revolutionary hegemon. The transition was symbolized by the unexpected death of the country's charismatic president, Houari Boumedienne, in 1979. His successor, Chadli Ben Djedid, who succeeded to the presidency largely because he was the most senior military officer in a country where the army, concealed behind the single political party which had spearheaded the struggle for independence, was the embodiment of revolutionary legitimacy, realized that the country needed reform if its socialist experiment was to survive. As a result, widespread economic restructuring took place, which began to transform the country's state-dominated economy, based on oil-and-gas. However the new president was not prepared to challenge the autocratic political system in the same way, even though discontent with its restrictions was widespread and alternative ideologies, based on political Islam and ethnic nationalism, had secretly begun to emerge.

In April 1980 these tensions burst into the open when the Amazigh (Berber) population of Kabylia demonstrated against the official straitjacket of Algeria's insistence on the country's Arabophone culture. In retrospect these demonstrations marked the beginning of a lengthy transition process that still continues today and which we now identify as the 'Arab Spring', for, beyond their initial demands for cultural and linguistic autonomy and legitimacy, they eventually became demands for political liberation and

participation in governance. At the time however, the Algerian regime was prepared to encourage the country's burgeoning Islamist movement to challenge Berber separatism, in a classic tactic designed to undermine challenges to its political hegemony with the result that in pitting Amazigh against Islamist, ait encouraged widespread disorder, particularly in the country's universities. It also spurred the growth of the Islamist movement, particularly amongst the new urban working class.[8]

By 1986 international economic conditions led to a collapse in oil prices at the same time as the dollar, the currency of account for the world oil market, suddenly declined by 20% in value. For Algeria the consequences were disastrous, as 80% of its foreign earnings from oil declined by 80% and its overall revenues from hydrocarbon sales abroad fell by 20%. The Algerian government compensated for these losses by restricting imports, rather than by other measures, thereby massively increasing popular discontent. The result was immediate: major demonstrations in Constantine, ostensibly over social issues, led by the newly empowered Islamist movement and, two years later, countrywide demonstrations in October 1988 to which the government responded by suddenly liberalizing the political system The Chadli Ben Djedid regime calculated that, if it split up its opponents by introducing multiparty democracy, it would become the essential arbiter between them, thereby ensuring that it would continue to control political power. It did not realize, however, just how powerful the country's Islamist movements had become.

Their power was to be symbolized by the emergence of a new umbrella political party, the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS), which swept the board in municipal elections in June 1990, capturing 54% of the vote and seizing control of 46% of Algeria's municipalities, especially in major urban areas, and 55% of provincial councils. Interestingly enough, its appeal was not confined to its Islamist agenda, which in any case was complicated by the fact that many and varied Islamist groups were gathered under its umbrella. Instead it was its potential as the authentic voice of the Algerian revolution, which had been betrayed by the former single political party, the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), and the army-backed regimes it had served, which gave the FIS its peculiar political force. As Algerians said, *'Le FIS est le fils de l'FLN'*, — a play on words in French meaning 'The FIS is the son of the FLN'. Its success was repeated in December 1991 when it won 188 of the 231 seats in the Algerian legislature with 48% of the popular vote in the first of two rounds of the legislative elections. It was an experience which, once again in retrospect, captured the experiences of Egypt and Tunisia in the immediate aftermaths of their revolutions in 2011.

And the response was immediate; the Algerian army, seeing itself as the guardian of Algeria's own revolution between 1954 and 1962, intervened in January 1992, before the second round of the legislative elections could be held, turning Chadli Ben Djedid out of office and taking over power itself. Its actions, in turn, provoked an armed clandestine response, with two armed movements emerging over the next year; one, the Mouvement Islamique Armée which later became the Armée Islamique du Salut (AIS), seeking to force the army to restore the interrupted electoral process and thus re-legitimize the political process in Algeria, and the other, the Groupes Islamiques Armés (GIA), seeking simply to force the Algerian army out of power and to replace it with Islamic government. Over time, the GIA degenerated into an extremist terrorist group, involved in horrific massacres and suspected of being profoundly manipulated by Algeria's occult security services. The subsequent civil war resulted in the deaths of perhaps as many as 200,000 before it petered out at the end of the twentieth century.[9]

Terrorism lingered on in Kabylia, however, and, in 2003, emerged in the Sahara and Sahel as well. Over recent years, fuelled by the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, it has mushroomed, splintered, and multiplied once again, seeking to carve out its own state in Northern Mali in 2012 and, in January 2013, provoking the spectacular and bungled attempt to destroy a major gas facility at In Amenas in Eastern Algeria. Eventually its activities provoked a French intervention in 2013 and French forces are still there, trying to eradicate the remaining terrorist groups and to encourage an extremely reluctant Algeria to collaborate with them. For the Algerian government however, the French proposal is a poisoned chalice, for France was the detested colonial power, yet the vehicle of a profound cultural colonization as well, which Algeria cannot shake off, despite its search for partners in the Anglophone world — the *'frère-ennemi'* that has maintained a firm hold over the country's social and cultural life despite its war of independence.

In political terms Algeria has become a quasi-democracy, a *'démocratie de façade'*, with limited personal freedoms under an autocratic and sclerotic presidency in which the administration is spurred into action by constant local rioting. In 2010, for example, the country was riven by 9,000 riots over issues of local social and political frustration; a sad commentary on mis-government in a country with massive oil-and-gas wealth, widespread poverty, and little sense of where it is to go in the modern world. As a result, even though Algerians demonstrated their anger with economic hardship in January 2011, they did not push through a change-in-government, unlike their neighbours; the result, perhaps, of a combination of fearful memories

of the horrors of civil war in the 1990s and a sense of futility over the potential of any other form of governance to achieve lasting, positive change.[10]

Algeria's neighbours — Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco — have also seen their political fortunes undergo massive change during the past thirty years, although Libya, at least, appeared to be set in political aspic until the start of 2011. In 1973 Libya became a *jamahiriyah*, a 'state of the masses' in which power resided in the people instead of simply embodying the Arab nationalist vision adopted after the revolution in September 1969. Since Colonel Gaddafi, the leader of the revolution against the Libyan monarchy, considered his political creation as the perfect form of government, dissent could only be treason so the perfect democracy that he believed he had created became, instead, the perfect dictatorship. As a result, for the next forty years, Libyans lived under an autocracy that brooked no dissent. In keeping with its creator's idiosyncratic political vision, it was also a radical, anti-imperialist state and soon offended Western preferences. A campaign of eliminating its dissidents — the 'stray dogs of the revolution' — in Europe and America soon led to diplomatic isolation. Britain broke off diplomatic relations in 1984 after a policewoman was shot and killed outside the Libyan embassy in London. The United States imposed ever more severe sanctions from 1971 onwards, bombed Tripoli and Benghazi in retaliation for Libya's alleged involvement in terrorism in 1986 and, in 1991 encouraged the United Nations to isolate the country for its alleged involvement in the destruction of a Pan Am airliner over the Scottish town of Lockerbie at Christmastime in 1988. It was only after Libya paid massive compensation of $2.7 billion to the families of the victims of the aircraft disaster, handed over two of its citizens accused of direct involvement in the affair in 1999, and abandoned plans for weapons of mass-destruction in 2003 that normal diplomatic relations could be restored.

In domestic terms Colonel Gaddafi's vision of the 'stateless state' was intensely personal and autocratic; for him the 'people's authority' and 'direct democracy' meant in effect that he was the sole arbiter of policy and disagreement was treason. As a result, Libya had no bureaucracy in the conventional sense of an organization that determined and discharged the objectives of the state according to an agreed political strategy; instead the bureaucratic infrastructure of the state was there simply to resonate to his whim and insights, even though he had no formal role inside it. Those who advised him, the *rijal al-khaima*, were his revolutionary companions from 1969, denuded (by him) of any formal power and thus, in effect, a chorus that confirmed his own prejudices. Such a system could continue only be-

cause it floated on a beneficent sea of oil revenues within the structure of a corporate state which he, his family, and their favoured retainers could milk as a personal preserve. Yet the autocracy he had created was not as impermeable as it appeared to be. At the start of the twenty-first century popular dissent emerged in the east of the country over news of a prison massacre in Tripoli in 1996 and over evidence of the widespread infection of over four hundred children with HIV/AIDS at the main hospital in Benghazi. The regime's temporizing response to these protests, coupled with pressures inside it, instrumentalized by Colonel Gaddafi's second son, Saif al-Islam, for political change laid the ground, as much as its diplomatic difficulties had done, for the radical changes that occurred in 2011.[11]

Political evolution in Morocco meanwhile had been far calmer after the king had restored political normality as a reward for the political parties' support over the Western Sahara affair at the end of the 1970s. Over the subsequent decades, the Royal Palace came to realize the dangers of autocratic rule and began to consider how the repressive techniques it has habitually used could be altered to ensure dynastic survival. During the 1980s a slow liberalization of public space began, alongside the arbitrary repressiveness with which the monarchy had usually disciplined a recalcitrant population. In 1990, with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, King Hassan II, for once misjudging the public mood, came out with a condemnation of the Iraqi action, only to retract it a few days later: 'Our heart lies in Iraq,' he proclaimed, 'but our head lies in the Gulf!' As a result, Morocco took no active part in the American-led Multinational Coalition, merely guarding the shrines of Mecca and Medina instead. At the end of that year, Fes and other towns experienced a round of angry riots, leading the political parties and the trade unions to warn the Palace that social discontent would become uncontrollable without some change in the near future.

In consequence, the king initiated a process of slow constitutional change designed to equip Morocco for participatory government in which responsibility for political outcomes could be shared throughout its governing institutions, rather than being concentrated in the Royal Palace. The monarchy, in short, would seek to reign rather than to rule within a constitutional framework. King Hassan was well aware that his own autocratic traits would make it difficult for him to operate such a system so, instead, he sought to create the institutional environment in which his successor could achieve this instead. After his death in July 1999, his eldest son, Mohammed, became king and, initially, seemed to be anxious to follow the path laid out by his father. Social programmes accompanied

legislative change designed to improve the status of women whilst the Moroccan media became some of the freest in the region, despite the continued existence of red lines that journalists did not cross — the monarchy and the Western Sahara policy chief amongst them. The king introduced a truth and reconciliation initiative, to ease the pain of the repressive 'years of lead' under his father. Morocco, too, continued with its policies of support for the West, although it prudently avoided becoming involved in the calamities of Iraq and Afghanistan.[12]

Moroccans had always congratulated themselves on having avoided the extremism and violence of Algeria during the 1990s and on their country's success in managing its relations with Europe and West Africa, despite the ongoing diplomatic difficulties caused by its annexation of the Western Sahara. Even though the border between Morocco and Algeria had been closed in 1994, relationships between the two states gradually improved in the new century although neither renounced its stand over the Western Sahara. Moroccan complacency, however, received a sudden jolt in May 2003 when a series of extremist attacks in Casablanca made it clear that the same extremism that had marked Algeria had developed there too, despite the political adjustments that had been made. The government responded rapidly with a draconian anti-terrorism law and political liberalization was put on hold. The Palace now turned to socio-economic development, rather than political change as the way forward and the Moroccan media began to feel, once again, the chill hand of official control. The Royal Palace also made sure that it was in charge of the political process and that the person of the monarch should remain inviolate and beyond constitutional control. It is against this background that Morocco's experience of the Arab Spring needs to be seen.[13]

Tunisia, rather like Morocco and Libya, seemed during the thirty years between the end of the 1980s and the Arab Spring to have achieved a kind of stable and guided political evolution away from the postcolonial era, although it, too, had to deal with a burgeoning Islamist movement. In the 1980s too, the regime created at independence by Habib Bourguiba began to become sclerotic and corrupt, the consequence no doubt of the political and physical longevity of its creator in office. Tunisia's Islamist movement, the Mouvement de la Tendence Islamique (MTI) had emerged out of a discussion circle at Tunis's Zaytouna mosque-university in the 1970s and, by the 1980s sought to play a role within the Tunisian political scene. Despite its explicit disavowal of violence and its espousal of formal pluralistic politics, the Bourguiba regime became increasingly suspicious of its motives and suspected that its real agenda was for violent change in the country. The president himself, however, was in intellectual decline and in November 1987 was removed from power by his prime minister, Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, in what became known as the 'medical coup' since he ensured constitutional legality by providing for medical specialists to certify that the president was no longer competent to discharge his official functions.

During 1988 and 1989 the new regime sought first Ben Ali's election as president, and second the adoption of a consensual political programme as a way forward towards a more inclusive political scene. As a result, when legislative elections were held in 1989 the MTI, now renamed Ennahda, made a significant showing at the polls, even though its candidates had had to stand as independents because the government was not yet prepared to register it as a formal political party. Its electoral successor, however, was to prove to be its undoing, for the new Ben Ali regime, at a time when the situation in Algeria was worsening, concluded that political Islam could have no formal place in governance. In 1991 and 1992, in a series of conspicuously biased and unfair trials, Ennahda was dismantled with its leading cadres going to prison or into exile abroad. Its leadership moved to Britain, settling in London where it remained for the next thirty years.

In Tunisia itself, the regime became increasingly intolerant of criticism of any kind, especially as international opinion hardened towards political Islam. Remnants of Ennahda were hunted down and more extreme movements stamped upon, as were secular intellectuals if they disagreed publicly with the regime. Yet, at the same time, Tunisia earned plaudits from Western commentators for its economic progress, being increasingly seen as an obedient student of the 'Washington Consensus' and the European Union's own regional development policies — the Mediterranean's first tiger economy, in fact. The regime's repressiveness and intolerance were glossed over as it partnered Europe's increasingly securitized policies towards migration, smuggling and political extremism. Europe also overlooked the intensifying kleptomania of the president's family, particularly those around his wife and daughter as they absorbed the privatized elements of the formerly state-controlled economy into massive family holdings that deliberately excluded other private sector interests or forced them in partnership.[14] By 2011 the combination of kleptomania and repression had created a tinderbox of resentment that only needed the right spark to explode.

The Arab Spring

In essence, by the end of 2010 frustrations in all countries in the Maghreb were intense and had been heightened by the consequences of the eco-

nomic and financial crisis in Europe that had begun two years before. That had resulted in decreased migration flows and declining levels of foreign investment. Inside the region itself, poverty levels and massive inequalities in income distribution had been static for decades or had worsened, alongside conspicuous consumption levels amongst the new middle classes which had become ever more blatant. Between 10 and 20% of the populations of Maghrebi states lived at the World Bank's absolute poverty level of $2 per day and the top 10% of the populations controlled around 30% of national wealth. The end of 2010, moreover, saw food and energy prices suddenly peak to their highest levels ever, and in countries such as those in the Maghreb, where food and energy demand is inelastic, the rises inevitably resulted in major protest.[15]

Popular frustration, however, was not merely confined to economic circumstance; there was also massive resentment at arrogant, complacent, and autocratic governance and at Western indifference to it, and intolerance of indigenous popular protest about it. The self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazzizi provided the spark and Tunisia the arena in which economic protest was transformed into demands for dignity, freedom, and social justice as well. Ye, even though his self-sacrifice ignited the protests, it is important to realize that he was not the first to die in such a protest — dozens had died in North Africa before in the same way and over sixty have died since — and that the fact that his death occurred in Tunisia was central to the dramatic symbolism it acquired. Tunisia was a 'liberalized autocracy', a country in which the regime had tolerated a tightly controlled yet autonomous civil society sector as a means of ensuring its own survival through such a safety valve. Morocco and Algeria, in their own ways, had adopted the same strategy whilst Libya — the reflection of perfect democracy as perfect dictatorship — had not.

The result was that in Tunisia there were organizations ready and capable of seizing the popular mood of anger generated by Mohammed Bouazzizi's death and converting it into organized political protest. The Tunisian trade union confederation, the Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT), together with other non-governmental organizations, seized the opportunity of organizing massive countrywide protests targeting the regime and demanding political rights. Then, in a second stage, the regime itself — its occult core buried deep within the single political party, the Rassemblement Constitutionnelle Démocratique (RCD) — decided that the only way to save itself was to sacrifice its figurehead, the president and his immediate, corrupt family. It took another round of massive demonstrations

to dislodge it from power and its remnants still play a part on the Tunisian political scene, not least in the powerful secular political party, Nida Tunis. In another statement reflecting the arrogance and blindness of autocratic power within the Ben Ali regime, it was to be the Islamist movement, Ennahda, which was to be the greatest beneficiary of the Tunisian revolution, even though, being in exile, it had been excluded from a meaningful role in the events themselves. It was to be the largest party by far in the new Constituent Assembly, elected in October 2011, and would dominate the coalition government which emerged from it.[16]

Since then Ennahda has gone through several salutary experiences; the inveterate hostility of Tunisia's secular elites not least amongst them. The secular political parties that emerged in the wake of the revolution fragmented, thus indirectly contributing towards Ennahda's victory in the election. But Ennahda has also learned the difficulties inherent in pluralistic political systems as, over the past two years, it has seen political environment in Tunisia turn against it. Newly emergent Salafi groups, some violent, others not, rejected its approaches; the secularists blamed its indulgence of the Salafists for the worsening security scene and, eventually, its government had to stand aside under pressure from civil society led by the UGTT. Yet at the same time, Ennahda was prepared to compromise and its deputies actively took part in designing a new constitution that met secularist objectives too. Although the economic situation continues to be poor and political problems remain to be solved, there is a strengthening sense in Tunis that the revolution is turning into a successful democratic transition, quite unlike the crisis next door in Libya or the atmosphere of political stasis in Algeria.

Of course the Tunisian experience was sui generis, as were those of the other states in the region. In Libya, where the regime faced protest engendered primarily in the east of the country and linked to long-standing social grievances rather economic resentments, the official response was confrontational with no hint of compromise over popular demands. The aggressiveness of the Gaddafian state provoked an international response which some states also took as an opportunity to achieve regime change. The result was a nine-month-long civil war between a fast-disintegrating army and a motley collection of militias in which the ruling family was either killed or forced into exile. The aftermath has been equally chaotic as new governments have struggled to control the security situation against 350 different militias, some sectarian, others regional and tribal, and each with a distinct agenda that did not necessarily coincide with that of the government or the

constituent assembly, the General National Congress, elected in July 1021. There have been threats to break up the state and Libya, with its porous borders, has become an arms bazaar, furnishing arms to extremist groups throughout the Sahara, the Sahel, and even the Middle East. Yet there is hope of a successful outcome; the country has successfully and peacefully organized two legislative elections, a committee is drafting a new constitution, municipal elections have taken place, and a building boom has erupted in its major cities. The Libyan state, however, will long suffer from the baleful consequences of the 'stateless state', the *jamahiriyah*, which preceded it.[17]

Algeria and Morocco, yet again, also followed different trajectories, the consequences of their divergent histories before the Arab Spring occurred. In Algeria the government swiftly met the riots over economic hardship with consumer subsidies, paid out of its abundant oil revenues (at the start of 2014 it had $195 billion in its foreign exchange reserves). Then it made sure that the country's political parties could not exploit the widespread discontent for political purposes, flooding the capital with police at the slightest sign of organized protest. The tactic was very successful, both because of a collective fear of a repetition of the horrors of the civil war and because of a collective sense of disbelief in the efficacy of government action! The gerontocracy that makes up the power-elite in Algeria has thus been able to avoid the hard choices that will eventually have to be made to transform it into a viable system of participatory government.[18]

Morocco has, perhaps, demonstrated the greatest flexibility in containing the political unrest released at the start of 2011, for the Royal Palace very quickly co-opted the demands of the youth-based February 20th Movement that had organized major countrywide demonstrations on that day. The king accepted the need for constitutional change towards a democratic system but then engineered a solution that left his own hold on power essentially unchallenged. In addition, capitalizing on the innate conservatism of the country, he ensured that the proposed changes, offered by the Palace and not imposed by popular demand, should be approved by referendum. In effect, therefore, the Palace was able to pose as the enabler of change, even if it was eventually bought at the price of an Islamist-dominated government. And even that has redounded to its advantage, for it is now the government, not the Royal Palace that bears responsibility for ongoing political and economic problems whilst the king, still inviolate and outside the restraints of the constitution, can continue to pose as the guarantor of the state![19]

Outcomes

North Africa today is a very different region from what it was thirty years ago. Autocratic governance has gone or is in retreat but so have many of the hopes of rapid and positive economic change. The challenge of providing employment to millions of jobless youth, now tuned into the Internet and social media and unwilling to accept the ideological shibboleths of the past is the dominant preoccupation of governments. Yet, at the same time, political and religious extremism is being stoked by frustration, poverty, and despair. Europe is closed off, except for those bold enough to become harragas — the illegal migrants that flood daily across the Mediterranean. Europe, too, has lost its appeal as a political and cultural icon, with the struggles and challenges of the Middle East replacing it in the popular imagination. Nor, indeed, is Europe willing to engage in resolving problems of common concern, as its lackadaisical response to the Arab Spring has demonstrated.

North African states, too, have become more differentiated for there are now four different paradigms, clearly defined by their varying responses to the events of the Arab Spring, from confrontation to revolution, stasis, and co-option, as we move across the region from Libya to Morocco. Ironically enough, these positions all seem to be the inverse of the positions these states occupied thirty years ago! Then it was Algeria that was the revolutionary state, Tunisia an expression of pragmatism, and Morocco an attempt to freeze the present as the past. Only Libya perhaps offered a confrontational approach and then it was primarily directed at imperialism and its alleged consequences. In a further irony, despite these profound changes in political and diplomatic behaviour, some things never change: Algeria and Morocco still glower at each other across the Western Sahara whilst the United Nations throws up its hand in despair at the intractability of the dispute.

Yet each state has also become a more autonomous entity within the global system; each has developed its own cultural and political flavour despite the commonalities of language and colonial experience. North Africa today looks outwards towards Africa and America in ways that, in the past, it would not have contemplated, trapped as it was in a postcolonial dependence on France and the heady ideological imperatives of the Middle East and Arab nationalism. Now there is an engagement with a wider, globalized world, alongside an anxiety over the crises of the Middle East and the ramifications of political Islam. The region, in short, is — Janus-like — at a crossroads, trapped between the extremism of political Islam and the challenges of a globalized world.

Notes

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Rereading the Landscape of History: Tunisia's Untold Territories

Imen Yaccoubi

On 20 January 2011, barely two weeks after Ben Ali's twenty-three-year-old regime collapsed, a crowd of protestors gathered in El Kasbah Square, calling for the implementation of revolutionary measures: the dissolution of the Chamber of Deputies and the Chamber of Advisers, the resignation of the prime minister and his government, and the dissolution of former ruling party, all of which came about shortly after. The sit-in would be remembered as El Kasbah 1. Shortly after, El Kasbah 2 followed, this time pushing the demands further and calling for the election of a Constitutional Assembly that would later draft the second constitution of postcolonial Tunisia.

That sit-ins, demonstrations, celebrations, or massacres take the name of the places where they happen is not unusual. Maybe it was thanks to the historical importance of El Kasbah, its location — situated in the heart of Medina — or because it hosts the seat of prime minister, that made it a cherished destination for protestors, albeit not the only one.

In July 2013 a number of protestors gathered in Bardo, Tunis following the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi, MP and leader in the Popular Front, and the Bardo sit-in, stylishly baptized Occupy Bardo, began. The sit-in lasted several weeks, resulting in a number of ultimatums including the resignation of the cabinet and the dissolution of the Leagues for the Protection of the Revolution. Most importantly the sit-in also resulted in a national dialogue, and eventually the appointment of the caretaker government in late December 2013.

But the most cherished destination for protest gurus in Tunisia is incontestably Avenue Habib Bourguiba, or 'L'Avenue' as Tunisians simply call it. It is L'Avenue that on the morning of 14 January 2011 saw the gathering of thousands of protestors, hours before the end of President Ben Ali's twenty-three years in power, and it is that large protest that is said to have brought Ben Ali's rule to its last breath, if we are to believe the romantic tale.

In post-revolution Tunisia public gatherings have turned into a sort of pastime practised nationwide, both by the seriously engaged and

by the curious, because everybody, absolutely everybody, knows the importance of territories following the collapse of the dictatorship. Facing a defeated army, the first challenge of the victorious army would be to fill the gap left by the enemy and 'occupy' the areas previously under its yoke as swiftly as possible, even before casualties and counting booty starts. The public space, more particularly the urban space, is at the heart of a battle, both silent and covert, between competing adversaries. Tunisians know very well that they had been excluded from the public space, as it is where they felt exposed, stalked, where a police agent could ask you about your identification and subject you to a test for drug consumption, and where your words could be compromised and twisted. To Tunisians, the urban space is as treasured and treacherous as the sea is to mariners.

Although territoriality is often studied from the angle of external contentions as is the case of settling border issues with neighbouring nations, or with clashing groups within the national territory, urban tensions also define territoriality in ways that cannot be understood easily, since territoriality is a behaviour that is difficult to explain and predict in terms of its motives, and in terms of what makes some territories the subject of disputes more than others. As Michael Saltamn suggests, 'a piece of land, a stretch of territory, are neutral items in terms fixed in time and space',[1] yet places that have symbolic and historical significance are where different parties exhibit endless territorial possessiveness. In Tunisia the battles over public places were not exclusively waged for the sake of freedom, but also for the sake of winning audiences, voters, and power as electoral campaigns proved. Likewise Tunisians have become aware since the collapse of the regime, that a huge legacy has now been left unguarded, but they are also conscious that the parties competing for this legacy are numerous and, disturbingly, mushrooming day after day.

The competition over places of worship was the fiercest of all. Right after the revolution Tunisians became aware, both by logic and by instinct, that places of worship would be the next loci of power and control, following decades of heavy-handed proscription of religious practices and dress code. The huge suppression of the role of religious sites by the former regime made it embarrassing for the state, even under the non-Islamist interim government, to interfere in places of worship because it was then easy to liken their intrusion with the practices of the previous regime. Mosques became places where religious and political figures could disseminate propaganda undisturbed, and it was some time before the state could do something about it under pressure from civil society.

Acting in response against the monopolization of mosques by the religious right, groups from the left sought spiritual places of a different kind: the saints' shrines which, they maintained, stand for the country's Sufi heritage, for the tolerance and plurality that characterized Tunisian history. The growing attention to these kind of spaces was accentuated when a wave of vandalism against Sufi shrines started. The damage claimed some important monuments, such as Saïda Manoubia and Sidi Bou Saïd El Baji, sparking a wave of sympathizing with what many regarded the threatened heritage of Tunisia and turning shrines into territories where nationalistic fervour could be exhibited. Shrines suddenly became places where all kinds of people, from the most religiously devout to the most secular, could assemble and express hatred for the impending threat of Islamism.

The cult of saints soon became associated with liberalization, art, and women's emancipation. Soon the oldest religious institution in the country, the Zaytouna, seeing itself threatened and dwarfed by the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, stood in solidarity with this wave of support, although the Zaytouna had more often than not represented the religious right throughout Tunisia's contemporary history. In a radio interview, Farid El Baji, a famous Zaytouna scholar known for his criticism of the Islamist government, was handed the lyrics of a popular rap song that criticized the situation in the country and asked to read them, which he did light-heartedly. A video recording of the radio programme in which El Baji, wearing the traditional attire donned by religious scholars in Tunisia, reads the lyrics soon went viral on social media.

But this increasing devotion to saints is no surprise if we understand the logic of territorialization. For any given territory to become consequential, it has to encapsulate a meaning for people who are faithful to it, but also for those who do not belong to it. Foes not friends are those who in reality delineate the perimeters of our territories. The same principle also defines national identity, and stresses the features that give a country its distinctiveness vis-à-vis other countries. A 2011 report from *Foreign Policy* reads: 'The Arab revolt began in a place nobody expected: Tunisia, a pleasant Mediterranean enclave long thought to be a model for the rest of the region, where the Islamists were kept out, unemployment was kept down, and test scores were kept up.'[2] The unpredictability of the uprising in Tunisia is conditioned by geographical Tunisia's location, which entails a naturally protected place where not much is expected to happen. To make it even more idyllic, the report says, Islamists were kept 'out'. This ability to draw the line between

'in' and 'out' and to stress the space bracketed between these two extremes is what mostly construes the emotional and psychological attachment to territory and legitimizes the zeal with which we tend to defend it.

The religious feeling played an important role in shaping the tensions over the religious spaces, to exemplify what David Newman calls 'geopiety', which indicates 'an almost reverential and devotional attachment to the land, as history, myth, and religion become interwoven in a complex relationship between the residents of a particular piece of territory'.[3]

But competitors over territories are dynamic, volatile and especially subject to the ever-shaking political ground, as opposed to the role of the state in defining and legitimizing territorial sovereignty. As Hannes Lacher argues, 'states [have] become so crucial in defining not just the spatial, but also the social forms of organization which have characterized capitalist modernity'.[4] In Tunisia, the state, legitimate holder and protector of sovereignty, remains the fiercest and most enduring competitor for public space. In April 2013 a number of protestors marched from different regions to Tunis. The plan for the different groups was to come together in Tunis near the UGTT (Tunisian General Labour Union) headquarters, and from there march to L'Avenue to protest against the deteriorating economic conditions. Before they reached the meeting point, police forces intercepted, and clashes ensued. A few days before, the Ministry of the Interior had issued a decree that banned demonstrations in L'Avenue because it claimed that they disturbed public order and blocked commercial activity; it was the decision to ban protests in L'Avenue that called for the intervention of the forces of order. A few days later, the ban was lifted when the ministry realized that although the ban was lawful, it was an imprudent move.

What happened in April 2012 was an attempt from two parties to exhibit their incontestable authority over L'Avenue: state authority on the one hand, which postulated that space — and therefore the task of regulating movement in space — is part of its influence and on the other hand, citizens, who regard that public space is their realm, and that once L'Avenue had been wrenched from the hands of power that it could not simply be claimed by authority again, at least not without resistance. The violence that ensued was a classic exhibition of territorial possessiveness in its primitive and raw form by two groups claiming different narratives.

The nature of the urban landscape accentuated the tension, since nearly all protests organized in L'Avenue would end in front of the

Ministry of the Interior, located in the heart of the thoroughfare, not far from three main bus and metro stations, and the Roman Catholic Cathedral. For many decades the ministry has been the epitome of terror, with its underground vaults and dark cells enclosing some of the most grisly horror stories from and about political prisoners. By standing erect in Tunisia's biggest thoroughfare it attests to the degree to which the ministry of the interior has, and is still, central to the style of governance in Tunisia, both before and after the revolution. Authority, reminiscent of the Ottoman Sublime Porte, should be at the heart of the urban space, in plain sight of both locals and newcomers.

But April 2012 was not only an attempt for people to root themselves within a certain territory, but also within a narrative of history. The protestors' pilgrimage to L'Avenue is reminiscent of the large protest Ali Balhwen organized on 9 April 1938, which led to clashes with colonial troops, and the death of twenty-two people on that day, leading to the commemoration of 9 April as Tunisia's Martyr's Day. Not many know, however, that prior to 9 April 1938 there had been a week full of events and bloodshed, beginning on 4 April in Oued Melliz, in what is currently the governorate of Jendouba.

But narratives of history as we all know are rarely inclusive; in fact, they are functional as long as they do not include every piece of the puzzle. Alternative readings of history are today trying to dispel the obscurity around the events that preceded 9 April, focusing mainly on the regional disparities that had prevailed in Tunisia since independence, and which started, many claim, with the way the national liberation movement monopolized the narratives about independence, wiping off all that does not match the centralized narrative of Tunisia's modern history. This inequity that has long characterized the distribution of resources also typifies the way historical narratives are treated. As the popular insurgency that started on 4 April moved slowly from a peripheral space (the interior regions) to the central space (the capital), the narratives of history also move from this spontaneous and raw form, into the context of a centralized narrative where it is renamed, indoctrinated and categorized.

The narrative of origin of the Tunisian revolution is that of a protest against the marginalization of the poor, but also against the marginalization of the interior regions. Poverty in Tunisia is associated not with class, but with regions. Depending on the political situation in Tunisia, the media's choice as to which narrative to highlight

wavers. Although El Kasbah 1 and 2 showed a lot of solidarity between protestors and the local residents around the Kasbah Square, there were moments when the regional tensions surged, as when local residents complained about the littering and overcrowding caused by the flow of sit-inners from the interior regions, tensions that were often tinted with stereotypes about 'other' regions.

But the fact that the revolution was based on a narrative that celebrates forgotten narratives and forgotten regions, does not make it successful in addressing a time-space continuum such as the one which defined the map in Tunisia for decades, for the past is sometimes too enduring to break with.

The story of regional inequity is a story of borders, and unless the nature of these borders is understood, little can be done to deconstruct the centrality of this time-space continuum. Borders come in all shapes and forms, they can be natural or artificial, can be flimsy or hard, they can be big or small. The apartheid wall in Israel is a border, the Berlin Wall was a border, China's Great Wall was a border, the fence around a house is a border, a traveller who places her handbag between herself and the next traveller for fear of being harassed is building a border of some sort. Everything within which grows an awareness — sometimes previously inexistent — that space is private, sacred, or both, becomes a boundary and a border. Likewise, the barbed wire around a ministry of the interior is a border. Even if it chooses to locate itself in the middle of the urban landscape, the ministry's position should also be able to set itself off from the rest of the surroundings. As H. E. Geomans indicates, it is borders that hatch the notion of territoriality in first place, for within this feeling of enclosure lies the sense of the 'us versus them' that is elementary to territoriality.[5]

Although no physical borders exist between Tunisia's regions, the unequal distribution of resources maps the territory in a most enduring and surreptitious way. By making the centralized control of resources its task, authority has the ability to strategically plan who lives where and owns what. Even within the same urban space these disparities could be seen in the way people are unable to cross the lines of food and housing prices. If we look at migrations from rural areas to cities, this principle makes itself blatant: housing and food prices would often drive migrants to live in shantytowns or ghettoes on the outskirts of big cities, in conditions often as deplorable as the ones they deserted. Above and beyond, the psychological border of 'familiarity' is the most difficult border to cross:

> But for those who reside within the segregated neighborhoods, they exist as lines beyond which people do not purchase a house, undertake economic transactions, or undertake other routine activities for fear of being in an unfamiliar and threatening space. Territory and globalization.[6]

Yet up to a recent time in contemporary history, Tunisia's borders were movable, and setting them up was problematic to tribes that had been moving freely on the two sides of the frontiers. Moreover, this resulted in another dilemma; to these same tribes, which had their own way of drawing borders and their own rules as to how to define, move, and remove them, re-structuring the landscape around them, throughout the process of turning tribe-dwellers into citizens must have been an ordeal. The Tunisian state, much like its neighbouring states, saw to it that it enforced a new order that weakened tribal feeling, substituting it with national belonging. Tribal territories had used different norms in delineating their borders. What Miles Kahler calls 'the focal principle', which defines the borders that constitute a homeland, generally happens by consensus and relies on recognizable landmarks that are more often than not natural, like rivers or mountains. It is difficult to identify a clear-cut focal principle for the borderland of a community, as it can be a unique amalgamation of several factors. Language, religion, and cultural homogeneity also define the focal principle, but in tribal societies in Tunisia, kinship was an equally strong denominator in the focal principle according to Mounira Charrad.[7]

Focal principles shifted drastically during the process of nation building after independence, resulting in a paradoxical situation. Though moving across frontiers to areas that previously supplied grazing lands and trade opportunities is now restricted by border policies, former tribes were forced to open up borders to each other, even between those that have not always been on good terms with each other.

The story told by '*régionalisme*' in Tunisia reflects much of this kinship order that has once defined tribal orders, and here I am not suggesting that what used to be tribes have now turned into regions, but the centralized structure of the map has survived throughout the process of nation building. This centralized map explains why thousands of unemployed young people could rally and walk from 'remote' regions to Tunis, to paradoxically protest against the marginalization of their regions. It is difficult to determine whether by doing so, the protestor is challenging the notion of remoteness that the centralized view of territory postulates, by projecting the territory where they come from over it, or admitting defeat since they still recognize that part of the natural order of things: some places that are central while others are marginal.

This has been part of the debate on the nature of territoriality, and whether with globalization territories do count after all. Globalization has transformed the meaning of borders so much and in such diversified ways that it seems it has become obsolete to voice concern about the physical space. Occupying space has to become symbolic to dissociate itself from the logic of physical encounter with the space, globalization tells us. It is exactly the logic behind movements like Occupy Wall Street; to create this spatial 'teleportation' through physical movement in space and to defy the laws of physics. It is no surprise that this would happen at this time of history, amongst prophecies of the end of the world, spiritual transcendence, and paradigm shifts, all leveraged by the New Age philosophy and the digital revolution.

Yet no matter how appealing such claims can be, there remains a fascination with real space that cannot be abated. As Miles Kahler claims, territoriality is still well and alive, and it is enough to look at the majority of territorial conflicts to agree with that.[8] While notions like territoriality, locality, and national identity are being challenged, resulting in the blurring of borders and the imploding of linear and traditional ways of communication, Tunisian society is stepping into the irreversible volatility of the digital age with a high level of territorial awareness that reflects a desire to be rooted not only in place, but also in the past, by seeking acknowledgement in a certain narrative of history.

Notes

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6. Ibid., p. 91.

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Moroccan Women Between Legal Aspirations and Cultural Traditions: The Story of an Evolution

Mohamed Laamiri

In the last few decades Morocco has been living a national debate over the legislative and social status of women. The debate was not always peaceful and at some points, its itinerary has known vehement and violent exchanges between religious conservatives and feminist militants. This debate is not the exclusive result of national and international insistent claims to update Moroccan laws and to adapt them to international standards, nor is it the mere result of the recent political upheavals that shook the whole region but it is the outcome of a long process that can be traced to long before the Arab Spring. A survey of some aspects of this evolution is the aim of this paper.

Historical survey: Women in precolonial and independent Morocco

Before addressing the evolution of the legal system and its impact on the status of women, it would be useful to look at some of the cultural and historical roots and forces which contributed to moulding the social, economic and legal status of Moroccan women. We cannot speak today of the status of women in Morocco without considering the Berber constituent as a key historical, cultural, and demographic component of the evolution and present status of Moroccan women.

The Berber dimension

Anthropological studies show that women in Berber culture enjoyed an honourable social status throughout history. The term for woman is *tamghart* the female word for *amghar* which means leader. In this matriarchal society, children belong to the mother and the term for brother is *ou-ma* meaning the one who belongs to my mother and sister is *olth-ma* again the girl who belongs to my mother. Berber women were known for their courage, hard work, and involvement in all aspects of social life. Berber people have a high opinion of their own values of freedom and some extremist militant voices still — after so many centuries — consider that the presence of Arab-Islamic culture in North Africa is stark colonialism. Regarding the status of women this same opinion

considers that the 'conquering' Muslims made women mere property that can be bought and sold. In this vein Kateb Yacine denounced the low status of women in the eyes of their Arab conquerors by attributing to Kahina, the Berber warrior queen, the following words:

> Les Arabes m'appellent Kahina, la sorcière. Ils savent que je vous parle, et que vous m'écoutez … Ils s'étonnent de vous voir dirigés par une femme. C'est qu'ils sont des marchands d'esclaves. Ils voilent leurs femmes pour mieux les vendre. Pour eux, la plus belle fille n'est qu'une marchandise. (…) II ne faut surtout pas qu'elle parle, qu'on l'écoute. Une femme libre les scandalise, pour eux je suis le diable.[1]

It is therefore important to contextualize the ambiguity of the status of women in Morocco within the ancestral and pre-Islamic social organization in its relation with modern laws and social aspirations.

In fact, the ambivalent cultural status of Moroccan women and the observed social behaviour in matrimonial relations vacillates between nostalgia for ancestral customs and modern laws inspired by religious Islamic fiqh and human rights values. This, in a way, contributes to the difficulties encountered by judges in implementing the Family Code in rural areas.

As products of the whole community, Berber tales reproduce the community's social pattern but allow, at the same time, space for the emergence of the marginal discourse of female sexuality. Berber tales constitute a site where the ethnic unconscious is expressed and where the repressed and the non-said about the female's condition and status is released and regulated. In other words, we notice that in spite of centuries of the Islamization process and decades of national laws to regulate and democratize male female relationships, deep remnants of pre-Islamic social behaviour still mark the daily male-female relations. Hence the difficulties to implement the new Mudawana in rural areas and hence the resistance shown to some of its provisions including the marriage of underage girls.

A reading of Berber folktales is illuminating as to the cultural and social forces at play in the social behaviour of Moroccan Berber women. Berber tales are ambivalent discursive sites where 'the conflicts, the non-said and the repressed of the social reality take shape, and where the tale plays the role of a tension regulator'.[2] While folktales reflect the ethnic unconscious of the whole community and obey its predominant patriarchal discourse, they nevertheless allow margins for the oppressed voices of women. In his translation of Atlas Mountains

folktales, Michael Peyron noted that despite the presence in the tales of Islamic patterns of conduct, Berber society's behaviour was not much removed from the pre-Islamic 'pagan' status: 'In fact, a case could be made for a matriarchal society, rather than a patriarchal one, since in husband-wife decisions, the latter is frequently depicted as having the last word.'[3]

If we add to this that in some areas these women have important economic power and that they go out unveiled we may come to question the superficial discourse which categorizes Moroccan women and their social status as a homogeneous whole with the same status everywhere. This does not mean that these women are not oppressed but simply that certain aspects of male-female relations in Berber society were different from the historical image of the cloistered female in the old Medina.

If understanding the social status characterizing women in Berber areas is important for any study of the evolution of women's rights in Morocco, it is also important that such a study should take into account the role and the impact of historical and emblematic individual women in marking this evolution.

Historical Moroccan women and the defiance of the patriarchal order

We cannot talk about Moroccan women's struggles for equity without referring to the breakthroughs made by individual heroic women who contributed to highlight women's potential in a conservative society. By setting an example, through their courageous actions and daring behaviour, this elite contributed to the liberation of Moroccan women by showing their value and highlighting what they could achieve in a patriarchal society. Reference could also be made to the so often forgotten silent and silenced majority who throughout history fought sexual injustice and discrimination. To these we can add the forgotten queens or *'les Sultanes oubliées'* who played important social and political roles in Moroccan history. Among these exceptional women we can mention: Zeinab Annafzaouia,[4] Fatima Al-Fihria,[5] Lalla Aouda,[6] Kenza Al Aourabya,[7] and Assayida Al Horra[8] (The Free Woman) and many others; all of these women marked not only the history of Morocco by their heroic or exceptional actions but also the evolution of the image of the Moroccan woman.

In the colonial period the role of Moroccan women's resistance to French colonialism is epitomized by Malika Al Fassi,[9] who at the risk of her life signed, with Allal El Fassi and other figures of the Moroccan resistance, the Independence Manifesto, claiming the independence of Morocco, presented

by the Nationalist movement to the French colonizer in 1944. Beside Malika Al Fassi, reference should also be made to Touria Chaoui,[10] Mmi Fama (Mother Fama),[11] the heroic women who contributed to the cause Moroccan women's emancipation.

In more recent years, the sociological studies and militant writings of women sociologists like Fatema el Mernissi and Soumaya Naamane Guessous for the emancipation of Moroccan women have marked the intellectual feminist discourse.

Beside the historical heroes and the sociologist thinkers, mention should also be made to the heroic courage of Aicha Chenna,[12] who defied religious conservatism and dedicated her life to the cause of unmarried mothers and their children. Not heeding the vehement attacks of fundamentalists, she has acquired international fame for her daring heroic defense of unmarried mothers.

The legal evolution: beginnings

Women's rights in Morocco experienced substantial ideological fluctuations according to the historical realities of each historical period. In fact the legal framework of each reform was tailored to meet the minimum claims of the social and religious forces at work in the public sphere. The evolution of the personal status code framed women's legal status through the regulation of marriage and family laws.

As early as the 1940 voices of the Moroccan elite, aware of the role that could be played by women to develop the country, called for a more egalitarian status for women. In this elite we find open-minded religious scholars (or ulema) Fqih Belarbi Alaoui[13] and Allal El Fassi,[14] but also modernist thinkers and political leaders like Mehdi Ben Barka,[15] and King Mohamed V himself. The latter set his own daughter, Princess Aicha (1930–2011) as an example for women in independent Morocco. He gave her a modern education and allowed her to appear unveiled and in European dress in public meetings. During the king's visit to Tangier in 1947 to claim Morocco's independence, Princess Aicha gave a public speech on the education and the emancipation of women.

Fqih Belarbi Alaoui and Allal El Fassi belong to a Moroccan-educated elite influenced by nineteenth-century Egyptian reformist thinkers like Jamal Eddine Al-Afghani, Mohamed Abduh, and Abderrahmane Al-Kawakibi. Allal El Fassi worked for the education and the emancipation of women and went to the extent of advocating the abolition of polygamy and more justice for women.

Beside this elite with its traditional education and openness to new ideas from Egypt, other nationalist figures defended the emancipation of Moroccan women from a secular standpoint, as is the case with Mehdi Ben Barka who was influenced by modernist and socialist ideology.

The struggle for independence in Morocco was multifaceted and one of its fronts was the resistance to the binary legal system adopted by the French Protectorate in 1930, which submitted the rural zones of the country to 'Berber' customary law and the urban and city zones to Islamic Maliki rite law. This binary legal system was known as Dahir Barbari or (Berber Decree). After Morocco's independence in 1956 one of the first decisions taken by King Mohamed V and the first Moroccan government was the abolition of the Berber Decree and its customary law and the king's appointment of a ten-member commission to draft the Personal Status Code. The primary spirit governing the code was the need to banish the French laws through a unifying Islamic legal system based on Maliki Fiqh. Though the commission used the Tunisian code it did not adhere to its liberal spirit.[16]

This first Mudawana was more than a legal text but a symbol of national and Islamic identity.

The 1957 Mudawana did little to change the traditional and discriminating status of Moroccan women; it adhered closely to the precepts of the Maliki rite and to the predominant Salafi concern with authenticity and Islamic identity. The legislation subjected women to men's authority and tutorship corroborating old traditions of women's inferiority. Attempts to allow more justice for women by eminent figures like Allal El Fasssi failed because of the resistance of conservative fukaha and because the newly independent Morocco was more concerned about the nation's unity and cohesion than suffering social conflicts over the Personal Status Code.

However, throughout the last decades attempts to reform the Mudawana continued. From the mid-sixties the issue of women's emancipation was relegated to a secondary political position under the influence of Hassan II and traditionalist ulema through the adoption of an austere Islam.

In the seventies and eighties voices claiming justice for women were drowned within the bitter political struggle for democracy and human rights between the monarchic system (Makhzen) and the political militant left; this struggle was met with unrestrained repression resulting in what Moroccans refer to as 'Les années de plomb' (The Years of Lead). During these years when there was no hope of change in the legal status of women,

some educated feminine voices resorted to literature to express their struggle against the social and legal oppression they were subjected to. The novels of Badia Hadj Naceur and Leila Houari are good illustrations of this.[17] Unfortunately these texts were written in French and only a small elite of educated women had access to them.

It was only in 1982 that strong claims for women's rights came to be put forward as part of the struggle for human rights. Though in urban areas more women left their cloistered traditional life to go out and earn their living, their new contribution to the country's economy was not reflected in their social and legal statuses.

Though many attempts were made to reform the Mudawana and to adapt it to the social and economic evolution of the country none of them succeeded because the status of women was so rooted in traditional customary behaviour, beliefs, and social practices that any attempt of change is conceived as a renunciation to the fundamentals of Islam. As a consequence of these religious, cultural, and social realities, the traditionalists always had the last word over the reformists.

To overcome this deadlock, militants for women's causes adopted a new strategy, adhering to a progressive reform that adapts the laws to the social and cultural realities of the country within the general framework of the Islamic precepts and sharia thus avoiding a frontal clash with the conservatives.

The 1990s saw a clear shift in the struggle for women's rights as the issue came into the public sphere through the appearance of dedicated women's associations and militant women's branches of political parties[18]; their fight combined calls for gender equity and a more egalitarian legal status for women on the one hand and claims for the democratization of the political system and more respect for human rights on the other.

In the early nineties, feminist and women's associations with the support of opposition parties came to control the debate about the status of Moroccan women in the public sphere to the extent that some conservative ulema issued fatwas of apostasy against feminist militants and members of associations claiming reform. In 1992 the Union de l'Action Feminine (UAF), the women's branch of the Organisation de l'Action Démocratique et Politique (OADP), launched a petition for the reformation of the Mudawana which, to the stupefaction of all, collected one million signatures.

The issue of the Mudawana polarized Moroccan society, between those for reform and those against it; the agitation and the noisy protests made by both sides was so forceful that King Hassan II, sensing the dangers of the

impact of an ideological controversy over the issue, made the question of women the main topic of his speech in September 1992. He even announced that the status of Moroccan women and the question of the Sahara would be his priorities from then on. He addressed the women's associations, saying:

> We are ready to meet you and to put things aright. True, there are certainly gaps in the Mudawana or a bad implementation of its provisions, there is unfairness and oppression but let us solve the problem away from the political arena.[19]

A few weeks later, the king established a commission charged with amending the Mudawana but the few amendments introduced by the Royal Commission were considered insignificant by women's associations. Understanding the situation's urgency the government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) with reservations on many articles that were considered as incompatible with Islamic sharia.

In the late nineties, the Makhzen's commitment to political and social reform brought about a favourable response to women's demands. especially with the Socialists' access to the government after the king's decision to establish what came to be known as Le Gouvernement d'alternance (1998–2002) or the Alternation Government headed by Abderrahman Yousfi the Socialist opposition leader. With this government, Morocco engaged in a timid process of democratic transition based on respect of the fundamental principles of human rights and the freedom of the press.

Women's associations and feminist militants benefitted from this general political context characterized by openness to change and by the government's need to organize the religious field following the public confrontation between the religious fundamentalists and the feminists. At the same time women's associations such as Union de l'Action Feminine (UAF) and Association Democratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM) increased their pressure by street protests, public meetings, conferences on gender equity, and petitions. Insistent voices of political and civil society organizations began to be heard in the public sphere, giving birth to an unprecedented social split between those calling for more justice for women through a change of laws and the conservative and religious forces who claimed that there was no need for such a change.

For the conservative clan, the solution did not reside in changes of laws but in a return to a proper implementation of Islamic teachings as provided by Koran and Sunna; for them, non respecting of Islam's precepts is at the origin of the injustice inflicted on women. Islam guarantees the

dignity of women, and a rigorous implementation of the religious precepts alone would contribute to building a healthy, balanced society.

The national debate regarding the legal status of the family divided Moroccan society into two camps, 'reformists' and 'conservative', and this confrontation was crystallized around the 'Plan National d'Intégration de la Femme au Développement' (PANIFD),[20] a daring egalitarian plan for the reform of the Mudawana proposed by the alternation government and opposed by conservatives who saw in it a transgression of Islamic principles.

This confrontation culminated in two competing marches on the same day (Sunday 12 March 2000): one in Rabat by most national parties and reformist civil society organizations supporting the Plan D'Action National pour l'Intégration de la Femme au Développement (PANIFD) and the other in Casablanca by the conservative Islamic parties and associations who opposed the PANIFD. According to its organizers, the Casablanca March gathered two million people while the Rabat march gathered much less.[21]

The 2000 battle over the PANIFD ended by the abandonment of the plan and the victory of the Islamic conservatives; hence the Moroccan feminists changed their strategy by moving their arguments from the secular battlefield to the religious one and by relying on an open and evolutionary rereading of religious texts rather than on the secular literature of the western human rights discourse. The justice and equity principles defended by the movement spring from the general framework of a less misogynous interpretation of Koran and Sunna Islamic law. The strategy adopted by Moroccan feminists was to avoid Western feminist terminology and to fight religious conservatives in their own territory by using of Koran and Sunna vocabulary; for this they relied on an open re-reading of Islamic texts, extracting teachings on social justice to fight gender discrimination.

The national and international contexts and the pressure for change

The new Mudawana came in the context of a whole national and international context. While the Moroccan feminist movement is deeply rooted in its national framework, it was never completely cut off from the impact of international context surrounding it. The multi-level links between local and international feminist activists contributed to the support of Moroccan actions for the emancipation of women. In fact many Moroccan thinkers and reformists were educated in Westen universities before engaging in intellectual and political battles for the

respect of human rights. Beside the direct contacts between the Moroccan intellectual elite and international women's organizations, satellite dishes and the Internet played an important role in linking Moroccan homes to Western emancipatory and liberating ideas.

Beside the interpersonal relations interwoven between Moroccan activists and European feminists, gender equity concepts of the international organizations crossed Moroccan frontiers, thus spreading notions of militancy for women's emancipation. This could be seen in the appropriation of the International women's Day celebrated on 8 March by Moroccan women to honour women's achievements. Moroccan women's rights activists have also drawn from the United Nations organizations reports such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on the status of women in different regions of the world and from reports by the World Bank.[22]

On the whole we can say that the process of democratization of the country was brought about by the pressure of the national progressive forces but also by the pressure of human rights organizations and Western governments with whom Morocco had commercial agreements and conventions of free exchange.[23] In an attempt to quell the disapproval of its Western political and economic partners in Europe and the United States over its human rights transgressions, the regime launched an unprecedented process of openness towards and cooperation with international human rights UN organizations and NGOs such as Amnesty International. A fact that had had an impact not only on the evolution of the respecting of human rights — in comparison with Hassan II regime — but also on the fight for women's and gender equity.

If a combination of internal and external factors contributed to bring about the reform, it remains that this would not have been possible without the legitimation of an egalitarian reading of Islamic law by King Mohammed VI's authority in his status as Amir al-Muminin (Commander of the believers). As Eddouada put it: 'The reform of the Family Code, initiated by King Mohamed VI, was part of a more general shift in the state's policy on gender based on the "egalitarian spirit of Islam and universal human principles.'[24]

On 16 May 2003, the Casablanca suicide bombings precipitated things in favour of reform. As Ziba Mir-Hosseini put it: 'The bombing horrified the public and turned the tide against the Islamist opposition, who wanted to distance themselves from such horrific acts. The women's movement judged the time ripe to push for reform.'[25]

The Royal Advisory Commission and the preliminary work on the Moroccan Family Code

In Fez on 27 April 2001, King Mohamed VI set up an Advisory Council for the Revision of the Family Code Chaired by Dr Driss Dahak, the first president of the High Court and president of the National Advisory Board for Human Rights. The new commission was composed of sixteen members of which, significantly, only three were women. The work of the commission lasted thirty months and the debates consisted of reconciling the majority composed of conservative religious scholars on the one hand and a minority of three women and two or three other members who were more in favour of a flexible reading of religious texts. The summary of the commission's debates (more than eight hundred pages) is very informative of the spirit and the philosophy underlying its work. The reading of the commission's debates and the different analyses given by each side regarding their positions are deeper and go beyond the superficial arguments and attitudes commonly found in many publications about the genesis of the Mudawana. If it is published, it will be of much use to researchers wanting to deepen their understanding of the arguments behind the different positions of the commission members, which reflect in a more scholarly way the public debate that had been going on for decades in the public sphere.[26]

A reading of these debates reveals the strengths and the weaknesses of each position and gives the religious or secular foundations of each argument. The debate also shows the sincerity of the members in defending what they believed to be the right legal provisions in the interest of Moroccan society according to their convictions.

Guidelines for the Royal Advisory commission

When the king appointed the members of the Advisory Commission, clear guidelines were given to them along with the broad lines underlying the spirit and the philosophy of the projected code. Two objectives were set for the commission:

1) The liberation of women from all that may hinder their progress in building a Moroccan society based on solidarity, stability and cohesion.

2) The preservation of the well-established Moroccan-Islamic identity while keeping pace with the social progress and the general social qualification of all society members.[27]

The same document stated that: 'the commission adopted a creative approach through a harmonious combination between adherence to the firmly established Moroccan religious beliefs and attachment,

whenever possible, to the contemporary spirit marked by the universal character of human rights'.[28] The king's instructions to the commission were clear and aimed at 'reconciling on the one hand, our attachment to age-old values that are the very essence of our identity, and on the other, a total adhesion to contemporary thought as encapsulated in the Rights of Man.'[29]

The 2004 Mudawana reform took place within a complex context of interplay between a political trend of democratization and the will, in the aftermath of the 2003 Casablanca terrorist attacks, to institutionalize and control religious practice. The new Family Code was part of a more general Makhzen policy on gender, based on an egalitarian approach to the status of women. Within the same policy, an earlier initiative granted the quota–based election of thirty-three women to the parliament.[30] In the same vein, the ministry in charge of religious affairs started recruiting and training women preachers known as murshidate, explained in detail below.

When presenting the new Mudawana to the members of the Parliament,[31] the king enumerated not less than eleven major amendments in favour of women in the new Mudawana. Most important of all are:

* the adoption of a modern form of wording and the removal of degrading and debasing terms for women,
* granting the right to tutelage to women,
* equality between men and women regarding the legal age for marriage, fixed at eighteen years for both,
* making polygamy quasi-impossible through stringent restrictions and the need for judge's authorisation,
* and making divorce a prerogative that may be exercised by both spouses when need be.
* The new procedure for repudiation requires judicial permission and its registration is subjected to the payment of all vested rights owed to the wife and children etc.[32]

The aftermath of the Mudawana

The 2004 Moroccan Mudawana was hailed as victory for women's associations in Morocco and in the Muslim world; it was held up as an example for an open and flexible way of reading Islamic sharia law to be adopted by other Muslim countries. Despite this, legislative victory however, shades of doubt remain in the background when it comes to the implementation of the Mudawana's articles.

The day after the king's announcement of the adoption of the Mudawana, the national reaction was positive considering the event as a victory for women. Morocco's entire social fabric was in a state of effervescence. Mudawana became the subject of the day: the event's strong impact and a social euphoria about male-female relations overwhelmed the public sphere. A whole oral popular discourse was built around the Mudawana and the popular imagination was filled with anecdotes, jokes and songs around the new relations between spouses on the aftermath of the new code.[33] Many jokes were made about how men were now under the threat of being repudiated by their wives and husbands fears' of being brought to justice for maltreatment of their wives. For months the issue of the new Mudawana was the subject of the day in radio and TV debates as well as in the written press. Booklets explaining the Mudawana invaded Moroccan kiosks.

Concurrently, all over the country courts were overwhelmed with wives applying for divorce believing that the new code facilitated the procedure for them. They were surprised to find out that the matter was not as easy as the official discourse presented things and as some media reported the impact of the event. Just a few months after its adoption in courts, initial feedback complained of implementation problems. Most family judges were conservatives and their interpretation of the legal texts did not always reflect the spirit and the aims of the new Mudawana.

In a recent speech given at a study day organized on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Moroccan Family Code, Mustapha Ramid, the Minister of Justice declared that the 'Mudawana was a social project which succeeded to conciliate Islamic foundations and social evolution' insisting that Moroccan cultural heritage limited the implementation of a number of provisions of the family code.[34]

According to the Minister:

1) The number of authorized underage marriages went up from 18,341 cases in 2004 to 35,152 in 2013. Though the law stated that the legal age for marriage is 18 for both sexes yet it left a window open for the judge to allow underage marriages in exceptional cases.

2) The adoption of the Mudawana had no impact on polygamy since the percentage of polygamous marriages remained stable in the last ten years: the highest was 0.34% of all contracted marriages in 2004 and 2011; and the lowest was 0.26% in 2012 and 2013.

3) Regarding divorces, the Minister said that the number of registered divorces went up from 7,213 in 2004 to 40,850 in 2013, explaining that 97% of divorces concerned irreconcilable differences between the spouses (*ash-shiqaaq*).[35]

As could be inferred from these figures, the limitations of the Mudawana, in some of its provisions, is clear. The article setting the age of 18 as the legal age for marriage for both sexes is undermined by a sentence in that article which allowed the family judge to permit underage marriages in exceptional cases. Feminist organizations opposed this provision but the conservative members within the Royal Commission imposed it. The next battle for the reformists is the abolition of this provision.

As for polygamy, it is clear that it represents an insignificant percentage (0.26 to 0.34) in Moroccan marriages but the stability of their number shows that the Mudawana had no effect in eradicating or at least reducing polygamy. This also shows that family judges did not abide by the spirit of the Mudawana regarding polygamous marriages since they continued to permit the same percentage of those marriages.

As for the increased number of divorces for irreconcilable differences (*ash-shiqaaq*), this could be seen as positive because women who could not file for divorce in the previous code and who had to suffer oppression have been given the opportunity to be free. The increase of this kind of divorce is an increase in the number of liberated wives.

Women and religion policy in Morocco: the Morchidat[36]

Victims of the social and legal system as they are, women are resorted to by Makhzen to provide what the Ministry of Habous and Religious Affairs call the 'spiritual security' of Moroccans. The new weapon of the Moroccan government against religious extremism and terrorism is a soft one; it consists of a training programme for women preachers (Morchidat) in mosques and other community spaces. The Morchidat are recruited from among female university-degree holders then given a specific training in Maliki rite precepts along with other communication skills to play a leadership role similar to that played by Imams though these women are not allowed to lead prayers. The aim of the programme is to teach and spread a tolerant and non-violent Islam in accordance with Morocco's official adherence to the Maliki rite. The programme is also meant to promote women's rights by giving them the opportunity to play a leading and prominent role in the spiritual guidance of Moroccans.

The programme was hailed nationally and internationally as unique and innovative to the extent that it was approved by the Americans and the Europeans. In recent months many African countries asked to benefit from the religious training given to Moroccan Imams and Morchidat.

However its critics consider that it does not bring much to the status of Moroccan women since it perpetuates traditional male domination by uncritically reproducing a strict patriarchal discourse.

Recent events Social customs override law: the case of Amina Filali

On 17 September 2012, a major demonstration was organized in front of the Moroccan Parliament in Rabat. A young woman was holding a banderole which read: '*Violez-moi, épousez-moi, ma vie est vaine, je suis marocaine*.'[37] The protesters called for the abolition of a controversial article in the Mudawana following the suicide of a sixteen-year old girl who after having been raped was forced to marry her rapist, due to an article in the Mudawana stating that if the rapist accepted to marry his victim he could escape punishment.

In conservative rural areas the girl who loses her virginity, even in case of rape, is stigmatized and considered unfit for marriage and a cause of shame for the family's honour. Hence some families solve the problem by marrying the girl to her rapist. In fact to avoid shame and the victim's possible illegitimate pregnancy, families impose such abominable marriages on their raped daughters under the protection and the blessing of law.

Young Amina Filali was subjected to such an ordeal, which ended with her committing suicide after her forced marriage. With the debate on the Mudawana and its impact on Moroccan society still going on, the country was shocked and the scandal took a national and international dimension. Demonstrations were organized all over Morocco to abolish the incriminated article. The law's widespread denunciation was so great that conservative organizations coiled down and the Islamic government had no choice but to yield to the social pressure. International NGO's and Amnesty International hailed the controversial rape law's modification in February 2014.[38]

Jail for sexual harassment

Feminist activists won another victory recently when they pressed the government and the parliament to pass a bill protecting women from sexual harassment in public spaces. The proposed law concerned: 'any unwelcome act against a third party in public spaces, whether an act, remark, or gesture of a sexual nature, or intended to obtain a sexual act.' The article prescribes prison sentences ranging from two months to two years and fines between 1,000 and 3,000 dirhams. It is not certain whether this law would stop sexual harassment but it could at least limit some of its most aggressive

forms. This law, like the previous one related to Amina Filali, shows that despite conservatism, the feminists are slowly and steadily gaining victories for equity between the sexes and more protection for women.

The status of Moroccan women today

The status of Moroccan women today is more complex and more intricate than what some studies present. If the official discourse tends to present a homogeneous and singular legal status which applies to all, the reality is that the social practices at force have an impact on the moulding of that status; the situation of women living in urban centres differs from that of those living in rural areas and the social practices related to women living in the southern Sahara differ in many aspects from that of those living in Atlas Mountains, the Tadla plains or in the Rif Mountains despite the national personal status laws supposed to be applied to all. What we mean here is that the lived reality and the regional social model may have a more important impact on the lives of women than the laws issued by fuqaha and law experts in the Rabat parliament.

Therefore the issue is not only one of change in legal texts but a change in concepts and in cultural beliefs and social convictions rooted in Moroccan society. Resistance to change cannot be ascribed only to militant conservative forces but it is also due to popular mental structures too impregnated with traditional values to accept change; this is aggravated by poverty, illiteracy, and superstitious religious beliefs as illustrated by the case of Amina Al Filali where a combination of defective laws united with archaic cultural beliefs resulting in women's suffering and societal problems.

What prospects for women's social status?

As a consequence of the democratization process and the allowed margins of freedom it has permitted, daring claims are put forward and many social and religious taboos are now challenged. Taboos, previously repressed because of *hshuma*, which means fear of social shame engendered by any behaviour that trespasses customary social traditions, are now challenged in the public sphere. This challenge was recently epitomized by *Dialy* ('mine' or 'my own' in Arabic), a Moroccan version of *The Vagina Monologues* by Eve Ensler,[39] a daring artistic feat claiming sexual freedom for women which, had it been performed a few years earlier, would have put the playwright and the actors in prison.

In a similar vein, reference can also be made to *Mess'ouda: Mudhkirate Taliba wallat âamilat jinss* (Messouda: Memories of a university student

turned sex worker),[40] an anonymous novel in colloquial Moroccan *darija* describing the day to day life of an ex-university student turned prostitute. What is interesting about this novel is its daring explicit sexual language to describe the life of sex workers that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago; the novel is also an open challenge to conservatism in its female narrator's vehement and vengeful language against men.

To these examples of daring feminist literary and cultural challenges to conservatism we can add the recent Moroccan adaptation of *À mon âge, je me cache encore pour fumer*, a feminist comedy by late Algerian playwright Rayhana. It is another example of recent feminist militant challenges to traditional social status of women.[41] Directed by Adil Madih, the play features nine women of different ages and backgrounds in the safety of a hammam, away from the violence of the city relating their experiences in a patriarchal society. Through their intimate stories the tragic reality of the social status of North African women is dramatically enacted.

Conclusion

It is now exactly ten years since the Moroccan parliament adopted, after a long and strenuous national debate, the amended 1959 Personal Status Code as the Moroccan Family Code (Mudawanat Al-Ousra); however, full justice for women has not yet been attained and the impact of the new Mudawana is limited.

The Mudawana first encountered resistance from those supposed to implement it in courts and second from sections of society itself. Some conservative judges who were too imbued with a traditional approach could not easily adapt to the new law and continued to interpret the texts in a retrograde way whenever the law left a margin for that.

As to the social resistance to change, it varies according to social, cultural, geographical, and economic parameters. Geographically the population in rural areas is more attached to ancestral behaviour than urban citizens, thus demonstrating resistance to any change in their social habits; culturally the educated elite is more prone to accept equality between sexes than illiterate people,[42] and even acts for its achievement. In cities, resistance to change and to more equity for women is encountered in the poor and the marginal suburbs of cities; here we register more violence towards women than in middle and higher social classes. From a religious point of view we find that resistance to — or acceptance of — change depends on whether the Fqih (Muslim religious scholar) belongs to an open and tolerant religious school or to a conservative category of fuqahas who adhere to fundamentalist and puritan interpretations of Islam.

Since the beginning of its implementation ten years ago, civil society organizations and some political parties consider its impact on women's emancipation limited and that another reform of the Mudawana is necessary. Consequently, other daring claims were recently put forward by the Socialist Party regarding the reconsideration of the Islamic provisions related to inheritance, especially the article giving a female heir half the amount given to a male heir of the same kinship class. All this predicts that another reform of the family code is necessary and the first signs of its genesis are perceived in the assertions put forward in the public sphere. The remaining question is: How long will it take before the 2004 Mudawana is updated?

Notes

1. Quoted by Yasmina EL Kadiri in 'Kahina la mystérieuse reine 'guerrière', *Zamane* (10 January 2013) <http://www.zamane.ma/kahina-la-mysterieuse-reine-guerriere> [accessed 5 June 2014].

2. Yasmina Sarhrouny, 'Introduction, Gendering Tales: A Feminist Reading of Seven Wonder Tales' *The Literature and Culture of Morocco in the Postcolonial Web*, 14 December 2001 <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/morocco/literature/sarhrouny/1.html> [accessed 5 May 2014].

3. Michael Peyron, *Women as Brave as Men* (Ifrane: Al Akhawayn University, 2003), p. 8.

4. Zeinab Annafzaouia, wife of Sultan Youssef Bin Tachfine (1071–1106). She played a key role in the political events of her time.

5. 'Fatima al Fihria (800–878) was born in Tunisia in 800. At a young age, she moved with her family to Fez, Morocco. In 859, Fatima founded the world's first academic degree-granting university existing today, the University of Qarawiyyin in Fez, which is considered the oldest university in the world. She died in Fez in 878.' From <http://www.alfihri.eu/ar/> [accessed 5 April 2014].

6. Lalla Aouda (Messaouda) (d. 1000), known also as the Princess-scholar, was an Amazigh woman from Zenata in the south of Morocco and mother of Sultan Ahmed Al Mansur, famous for her scholarship and charity work in support of women and young girls.

7. Kenza Al Aourabya, Berber wife of Idris I, the founder of the first Islamic dynasty in Morocco (Idrisid) and the first Islamic sultan. She played an important political role after the death of her husband and stood by her young son in his governing of the country.

8. Assayida Al Horra is Aicha Bint Ali Ben Rached known as the Free Woman. She lived in the second half of the sixteenth century . A heroic woman, she challenged male authority to become governor of Tetouan, Morocco. Carol Malt published the novel *The Free Woman* about her struggle in 2002.

9. Malika El Fassi, born in 1919, was the only woman, at the risk of her life, to sign the Independence Manifesto in 1944.

10. Touria Chaoui, born in 1934, was arrested at age seven for calling for demonstrations at school. At the age of eight she was the first Moroccan girl to play on stage. The first Moroccan pilot, she was assassinated by French secret police in 1956 for her nationalist opinions.

11. Mother Fama, born in Chaouen, North Morocco, she resisted the Spanish in Tetouan, the French in the South and international colonialism in Tangier. She was one of the founders of the Union Nationale des forces Populaires in 1959. She also contributed to the creation of the women's union within the party. She later advocated for the social work and the defense of Moroccan women's rights.

12. Aicha Chenna, women's rights activist and president of Solidarité Féminine, an NGO she created in 1985, which specializes in helping unmarried mothers and their children. She received the International Women's Club's Elisabeth Norgall Award in 2005 in Frankfurt for her work. In 2009 she received the Opus Prize in the United States and the Prix Dona d'el Ano in Italy, as well as the French Légion d'Honneur.

13. Fqih Belarbi Alaoui (1880–1964), eminent scholar, university professor, minister, and national figure known for his nationalist positions against French colonialism and mostly for his open mindedness regarding the status of women.

14. Allal El Fassi (1910–1974), Islamic thinker, political leader, literary writer, founder of the Istiqlal Party (Independence Party), minister, and, above all, reformist religious thinker. He advocated the rights of the Muslim Moroccan woman, arguing in his writings for the abolition of polygamy and supporting its abolition during the codification of the 1957 Family Code.

15. Mehdi Ben Barka (1920–1965), nationalist political leader, one of the founders of the Istiqlal Party, head of the First Moroccan Parliament, minister, and international socialist figure. He quit the Istiqlal Party in 1959 to found the Union Nationale des Forces Populaires (UNFP), which later became the Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires. He was one of the most virulent political opponents to Hassan II's regime, and one of the latter's emblematic victims. The details of his kidnapping and assassination in Paris in 1965 are still an enigma in Moroccan history. He was one of the first national leaders to encourage his wife to abandon the traditional veil and adopt European dress.

16. See Léon Buskens, 'Recent Debates on Family Law Reform in Morocco: Islamic Law as Politics in an Emerging Public Sphere', *Islamic Law and Society* 10, no. 1 (2003), p. 73 (70–131) for the comparison of the Tunisian Majalla with the Moroccan Mudawwana.

17. Badia Hadj Naceur rebels against religion and archaic traditions in her *Le Voile mis à nu* (Paris:Arcantère, 1985). In this novel, Yasmina rebels against her rich and traditional Tangier family by falling in love with a Frenchman before going to live in France, away from all social and religious constraints. Two other novels which appeared in the same year expressed the same rebellion against male and patriarchal oppression: Leila Houari's *Zeida de nulle part* and Farida Elhany Mourad's *La Fille aux pieds nus*.

18. Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), founded in 1985 by the Party of Progress and Socialism; Union de l'Action Feminine (UAF), 1987; the women's branch of the Organisation de l'Action Démocratique et Politique (OADP); and the Organisation de la Femme Istiqlaienne (OFI), the women's branch of the Istiqlal Party, 1987.

19. Hassan II's speech on 29 September 1992. The speech is available in Arabic: <http://www.habous.gov.ma/daouat-alhaq/item/7576> (my translation).

20. For more information on the PNIFED see Said Saadi, 'L'expérience maroCode in Morocco' (in Arabic), *Islam Today*, 14 March 2011 <http://islamtoday.net/nawafeth/mobile/zview-46-2624.htm> [accessed 6 April 2014].

22. See for example *The World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* <http://go.worldbank.org/LROQ7XSDA0>.

23. The Morocco-European Union and Morocco-United States free trade

agreements included social and economic provisions that placed pressure on the government to carry on down the path of reform.

24. See Souad Eddouada, 'Implementing Islamic Feminism: The Case of Moroccan Family Code Reform' in *Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives*, ed. Anitta Kynsilehto, Occasional Paper No. 96 (Tampere: Tampere Peace Institute, 2008), p. 40.

25. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, 'How the Door of Ijtihad Was Opened and Closed: A Comparative Analysis of Recent Family Law Reforms in Iran and Morocco', *Washington and Lee Law Review* 64, 1499, 2007 <http://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/wlulr/vol64/iss4/10> [accessed 22 April 2014].

26. The translation of the text from Arabic into English by order of the Office of the General Secretary of the Government has just been completed by myself and two other colleagues as 'Preliminary Work on the Moroccan Family Code'.

27. Unpublished text of 'Preliminary work on the Moroccan Family Code', Appendix 3, p. 773.

28. Ibid.

29. Mohamed VI, Royal Speech on the Setting up of an Advisory Council Regarding Revision of the Family Code (27 April 2001, Fez).

30. In previous parliaments the representation of women was limited to two or three women.

31. Speech given on the opening of the Second Legislative Year of the Seventh Legislature (Rabat, 10 October 2003).

32. Ibid.

33. Najat Aatabu, a famous popular singer, came out with a song about the Mudawana that was heard everywhere in the months following the adoption of the new family code. Her song was unanimously appreciated and applauded. The words of the song include: 'Did you hear about the Mudawana or you want me to tell you about it / Did you understand the Mudawana or you want me to explain it / O man! Sharia law is clear: Mudawana entitles you to One wife (not more) ….'

34. Reported by <http://www.maghress.com/alyaoum24/12982> (of 28 May 2014) as 'Ramid yukaddimu Hassilat âchr sanawat min tatbiik mudawwanat Al usra' (Ramid presents the results of ten years of the implementation of the family code) [accessed 28 May 2014] and *Hespress* <http://www.hespress.com/politique/219391.html> (of 28 May 2014) as 'Ramid : al ma'uruth athakafi lil-maghariba mana-â attanzil alfi'îli li-mudawanat al-usra' ('Ramid: the cultural heritage of Moroccans prevented the actual implementation of the Family Code') [accessed 28 May 2014].

35. For these statistics and others regarding the Mudawana after ten years of its adoption, see the report of the minister's speech in the Moroccan newspaper *Almassae* (26 May 2014), p. 6.

36. Samantha Harrington, 'Women Provide "Spiritual Security in Morocco', Thomson Reuters Foundation, 12 December, 2013 <http://www.trust.org/item/20131212010325-jkva6/> [accessed 14 April 2014].

37. 'Rape me, marry me, my life is pointless, I am Moroccan.'

38. The original Article 475 of the Penal Code stated: 'Quiconque, sans violences, menaces ou fraudes, enlève ou détourne, ou tente d'enlever ou de détourner, un mineur de moins de dix-huit ans, est puni de l'emprisonnement d'un à cinq ans et d'une amende de 200 à 500 dirhams.'

Lorsqu'une mineure nubile ainsi enlevée ou détournée a épousé son ravisseur, celui-ci ne peut être poursuivi que sur la plainte des personnes ayant qualité pour

demander l'annulation du mariage et ne peut être condamné qu'après que cette annulation du mariage a été prononcée.'

In the modified article the second paragraph is simply deleted. See Article 475 of the Penal Code, Bulletin Officiel No. 6240, 20 March 2014, p. 2492.

39. The Moroccan team adapted the French version of the play; I owe the information about the original author of the play to Ms Bronwyn Mahoney, may she find here my sincere thanks.

40. A novel by an anonymous writer published in weekly chapters by the electronic newspaper www.goud.ma. *Mess'ouda: Mudhkirate Taliba wallat âamilat jinss*. The novel was published in twenty (?) weekly episodes in 2013–14 [accessed at different dates between December 2013 and April 2014].

41. See Siham Jadrauoui, 'Théâtre : Neuf femmes au devant de la scène', *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 17 April 2014 <http://www.aujourdhui.ma/maroc/culture/theatre-neuf-femmes-au-devant-de-la-scene--109241#.U07LUfl5P-s> [accessed 22 April 2014].

42. Morocco's average illiteracy rate was 43% in 2004 and it remains high, despite its reduction to 28% in 2012 <http://www.lavieeco.com/news/actualites/baisse-du-taux-d-analphabetisme-au-maroc-a-28--26483.html> and <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/Maroc.pdf> [accessed 15 March 2014].

'Arab Spring' and the Performance of Protest in Morocco and Tunisia

Khalid Amine

[A]ctor-citizens of activist performances use the public sphere to call attention to their political agendas, they do not discuss and debate these agendas in public.[1]

Protest events occur against the backdrop of public life. They intrinsically contain performative elements. And despite the commonalities and contentions inherent in definitions of performance, the performative articulation of the political is striking in relation to the so-called 'Arab Spring'. The present undertaking explores the notion of 'agonistic performance' within the context of democratic setbacks in two of the 'Arab Spring' countries, namely Tunisia and Morocco. It is highly informed by the thinking lines of Nancy Fraser, Christopher Balme, Pia Wiegmink, and Maria Pia Lara.[2] Some activist performances have functioned as unfailing players in the turbulent countries of the 'Spring'. They brought into play the public sphere to call attention to their political standpoints and 'dissensus' as they have deployed the politics of performance to make statements in public.

How does theatre as a performance event relate to the public sphere? Christopher Balme has eloquently answered this question:

> The relationship between the public sphere and the theatre is, in my understanding of the term, a relationship between inside and outside, between the internal dynamics of exchange between stage and auditorium, performer and spectator, and the more difficult interconnections between the generally closed realm of performance and the wider dynamics of political and social debate.[3]

The relation lies within this dialectical oscillation between the inside and the outside, insofar as there is no inside closed upon itself. Theatre has a magical capacity to implicate 'Others'; it negotiates the differing relationships among its participants, and in the process it reformulates social legitimation and plays its part in the public sphere 'beyond state control and moral censure'. The role of the spectators in the fulfilment of a theatrical performance is mandatory, as they are active participants and co-subjects rather than passive recipients of a finished spectacle.

The agency embedded in audience's participation is best illustrated by Erika Fischer-Lichte's 'autopoietic feedback loop', wherein the 'aesthetic experience of a performance does not depend on the "work of art" but

on the interaction of the participants'.[4] Once outside Theatre, audiences remain potential contributors to the discussions of the public sphere. Sometimes theatrical content stirs up heated debates in the public sphere on the degree of its privacy and freedom to go beyond the accepted ethics. Balme articulates the problematic in the following: 'Of more interest is the collision between two different perceptions: most theatre spectators and advocates of artistic freedom privatise theatrical space in order to enjoy this freedom, whereas the opponents declare it to be a public space, thereby being able to invoke blasphemy laws.'[5] Such collision illustrates that the theatrical public sphere is a site of 'contestational politics' wherein a 'plurality of competing publics' defy each other. The controversy over *Dialy* will illustrate this later in this essay.

With the rise of the Arab Spring, and as protesters dig into the streets against tyranny, poetry, theatre, singing, site-specific performances, and even street arts have become tools to maintain spirits. In this context, one can also draw on the work of American Studies scholar Pia Wiegmink, who defines 'activist performance' as a 'form of political action which is located outside the political consensual realm of party politics as it is not institutionally affiliated with parties, unions, or other organizations … activist performance can be conceived as the (temporary) formation of a counter public which both aesthetically as well as ideologically defies prevailing, dominant political discourses.'[6] New digital media outlets were utilized as counter dominance of the public over the state's hegemony. Still, can we consider the Net as a new form of public sphere? The rapid diffusion of dissident voices on the Net allows the emergence of deterritorialized virtual public spheres, 'where people and information intersect in virtual communities or subcultures'.[7]

However, new digital technology is by no means a saviour of global politics, rather another medium where individuals can develop their political voices and perform their political selves. Still, the Net as a container and content cannot be a factor of social change, rather 'an extension of political life off the Net', as Margolis and Resnick argue: 'There is an intensive political life on the Net, but it is mostly an extension of political life off the Net.'[8] On the eve of Arab Spring, political groups were created online. As an example, the Facebook page 'We are all Khaled Said' was among the first activist groups to call for the 25 January uprising in Egypt. The page was named after a twenty-eight-year old Egyptian who was beaten to death while in custody in Alexandria. He became the Egyptian equivalent of Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi, who immolated himself, setting in motion the Arab

Spring. Meanwhile, the 20 February movement in Morocco was born on the Internet, and has created its own website, Mamfakinch.com ('never give up'), as a digital media outlet that circulates news, opinion, and debate outside of state control and party politics. Still, if all Arabs sat by their keyboards there would have been no Arab Spring. There are a number of theatrical performances informed by Arab Spring activism,[9] yet my present focus will be on two examples: *Yahia Yaïch* and *Dialy*.

Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi, artistic directors of Familia Theatre Company in Tunisia, have long fought for a citizen theatre as a tool for social and political dissent that eludes hierarchical power structures of the state in its attempt to co-opt it under its umbrella. They produced *Yahia Yaïch* in 2010 as an exploratory study of memory, identity, and power relations in post-independent Tunisia. Ironically, after the Jasmine Revolution of January 2011 and the subsequent protests for democracy sweeping across North Africa and the Middle East, the play's re-enactment took a different turn; the connections between Yahïa and the run-away President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali have become quite evident. Naima Zitan, founder of Morocco's The Aquarium Theatre Company staged *Dialy* (It's mine), an ultra-feminist play about violence against women within the context of political transition in Morocco along with the Islamists in power after the elections of 2012. The company draws its strength from being political in nature, deeply committed to social theatre, and to the cause of gender equality and respect of women's rights. The play is fuelled by the 20 February movement's social demands; it has garnered attention nationally and internationally and on social media, where the production has attracted a flurry of posts and manifestos.

Yahia Yaïch and the drama of a fallen dictator

Yahia Yaïch or *Amnesia* is the most significant theatre piece to address the fall of the dictator just before the 'Arab Spring'. The play has been credited with predicting the ousting of the Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali. Written by Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi, it was staged by Familia — the most visible independent professional company in Tunisia today — at the Mondial Theatre in the heart of the capital Tunis, just before the Jasmine Revolution. The play pursues many of the same social, political concerns and explorations of memory typical to the theatrical experimentations of Baccar and Jaïbi. As such, it is another exploratory study of identity and power relations in postcolonial Tunisia. It was also subject to minor revisions by what Jaïbi rightly calls the 'censorship commission' rather than 'Orientation Commission'.[10] These revisions affected even the title of the play that was

inverted from the original 'Yaïch Yahia'. *Yahia Yaïch* is concerned with the state of being of a dismissed minister.[11] It is a performance which suddenly joined the spectacle of the fallen dictator. Actress Fatma Ben Saïdane rightly describes *Yahia Yaïch* as the play that has now 'a role of archive. It reminds us to what extent the freedom of expression has been forfeited to us. It refreshes our memories.'[12]

The play opens with eleven performers rising from the auditorium, gazing at the audience from all directions. Their lack of engagement with the audience suggests the silence of the class of political elites, the media, and most importantly, the silent majority in contemporary Tunisia. Then they disappear back stage inscribing a state of oblivion, and re-appear again to sit on white chairs, shaken from time to time by spasms, as if they were crossed by flashes of lucidity or repressed nightmares. Sounds of bombs and shots are heard. Yahia appears onstage, celebrating the birthday of his daughter, Dora. But he is asking about time as if awaiting some news. Then his wife breaks in and puts an end to the birthday party. She brings the devastating news of his dismissal from the ministry and detainment at home, shouting: 'they dismissed him.' A whole cycle of nightmarish dissent ensues.

Yahia is not charged with a crime, but is no longer allowed to leave his home, and by extension, the country, because of what he knows about state secrets. His private library is burned while he is kept alive. Now Yahia, in his turn, has become victim of new oppressors. Like most dictators, Yahia used to live in a bubble of paranoia that is so deep and pervasive. He makes his final exit symbolically, in an armchair, facing the charges of his previous victims, and fully confronting the horror he wrought on his community in the name of duty. He unwillingly deals with his past abusive acts in a futile attempt to justify his obedience to the hierarchical power structures. But life has become a relentless hell for him after being abandoned by old friends who are not ready to compromise their positions in the name of friendship. Yahia serves unconsciously as a scapegoat, letting others off the hook. Jaïbi and Baccar illuminated the Tunisian policing regime as immune to the psychological scarring that afflicts the Tunisians at various levels. The extensive use of 'chairs' as a 'trouble index' metaphorically hints at power positions as well as power abuse.

The irony of history is that one sympathizes with the fallen minister who becomes no more than a shadow of a fallen dictator in an amnesic society. The many doctors, lawyers, and businessmen around him are unmasked, showing their true faces. Before the Jasmine Revolution of 2011, most readings of the play had interpreted the situation of Yahia Yaïch as a critique

of the Bourguiba era (even though Jaïbi has denied this interpretation). The play was mostly represented in the press as a trial of Bourguibian absolutism with its lack of democracy, repression of opposition, and its different forms of power abuse. When the play was first performed in Tunisia in April and May 2010, it was a call for power holders to revise their relations with citizens. The public was so scared; Jaïbi described the fear among the audience members in an interview at the Avignon Festival in July 2011: 'Some were constantly turning around to verify that there were no members of the secret police in the auditorium to incarcerate everyone, actors and spectators.'[13] However, in February and March 2011, the play was re-enacted in the middle of the Spring, 'and was sold-out at the Mondial, while in the adjacent streets bloody events were occurring'.[14] Karim El-Kefi, an actor in the production, also reminds us of the blurring of boundaries between street protests and what was taking place inside theatre: 'We played in a theatre next to the Ministry of Interior, and protesters used the building as a refuge. We were inundated by teargas. Spectators could no longer distinguish between nightmare and reality.'[15] In the middle of the Tunisian revolution, *Yahia Yaïch* was re-enacting the drama of the fallen dictator. Revolutionary protests joined the fictive trial crossing the borderlines between the outside and the inside of theatre. Yahia's nightmare has become a reality, with slight differences between the scenarios of the two descents.

Ironically, the production continued to tour even after the Jasmine Revolution and the protests for democracy sweeping across North Africa and the Middle East; it was performed in Theatre Mohammed V in Rabat on 21 April 2011. The nuances between Yahia and the run-away President Ben Ali were quite evident. Once the dream of the fall of Ben Ali has become a reality, Baccar and Jaïbi refused to change the play. In Rabat, after the performance, I asked Jaïbi the same question: 'Have you edited or changed anything after the revolution?' Surprisingly, his answer was: 'not a single word.' After all, the play holds a trial of President Ben Ali and his regime of terror: 'I did not want to do it in a metaphorical way,' Jaïbi affirmed in an interview, 'or by taking an already existing text from the classical repertoire … I was inspired by our corrupt and decaying system that made an entire people sick and depressed.'[16]

Dialy (It's mine) and the national debate over 'Clean Art'

For playwright and artistic director of Aquarium Theatre Company, Naima Zitan,[17] the Arab Spring is an opportunity to redefine the role of Moroccan women in a society under transition. Women participating in the 20 February

Movement campaigns have, indeed, experienced the revolution in their own way as they marched in the streets with men claiming equality and dignity as part of the Arab Spring parcel.[18] In post-Arab Spring Morocco, however, some decentralized conservative networks have become more dynamic increasingly assuming the role of 'communities of interpretation' in the public sphere and allowing themselves to judge theatrical performances and films from a quasi-moralistic standpoint.[19] Such hostile opinion has built underground and has eventually erupted to disturb the performance scene and film industry in Morocco with the Islamists in power.

In responding to the controversy over artistic freedom and the fierce debates over women's position in the political scene — and by extension, the art scene — the Aquarium Theatre Company staged *Dialy* in the middle of the 'Arab Spring' in 2012,[20] as an act of dissent and an enunciated critique of the deeply rooted patriarchal power structures and the Makhzen patronage networks sustaining them. The production is narrative centred, as it is based on a series of fragmented narratives that question how theatre could be utilized as a site for the marginalized and subaltern, both to participate in political life and partake of existing male-dominated regimes of theatrical representation. It is an act of dissension by a feminist group against patriarchy as manifested in public morality, using the public sphere to call attention to their emancipating political agendas. The play challenges social restrictions on women's sexuality and denounces violence against women. Moreover, the play's purpose is to encourage women to be more comfortable with their bodies and to give voice to fields of silence related to female sexuality in a Moroccan context. The play is also an ideal medium to educate people about different types of violence women face, particularly young women. Furthermore, the play insists that it is not against the male sex at all. Because of the stigma surrounding women who openly speak about their sexual preferences and experiences Dialy has allowed many women to share their stories without being afraid or insecure.

The production is partially inspired from *The Vagina Monologues* by the American playwright and feminist activist Eve Ensler. It revitalizes the spirit of struggle to stop violence against women, yet within a purely post-Mudawana Moroccan context. Driven by the same archival impulse as Ensler's, Zitan's team interviewed around one hundred and fifty Moroccan women from different walks of life, right in the middle of the Spring, for a period of seven months. The interviews unmasked different forms of women's oppression. What constitutes the bulk of the play *Dialy* is a series of revelations that represent 'informal archives' in the form of stories narrated,

or rather re-enacted onstage by three brave actresses: Nouria Benbrahim, Farida Elbouazaoui, and Amal Benhadou. These stories, though fragmented as they might appear, reveal a great deal about the private lives of subalterns.

Dialy is a two-act play with no dramatis personae, but only nameless female characters identified only as numbers: Woman 1, 2, and 3. The three actresses remain onstage and never disappear fully in order to foreground a given character. They are enacting a drama of confession amid a fervent belief in the power of storytelling. Act I exhibits a painful process of overcoming the shame of voicing out what was otherwise the silent world of the 'vagina'. Indeed, the 'vagina' is the pathway to the womb which houses the utmost power a woman possesses: the power of creation. It is not by coincidence that the play centres on the muffled, subdued, and silenced voices of the womb; and by doing so it empowers Moroccan women and makes them attend to the intuitive voice of their femininity. Using the artistic manoeuvres typical to *al-halqa* such as addressing audiences directly, throwing questions to the floor, framing the stories through interruption, *Dialy* opens with one of the actresses addressing the public, establishing, from the outset a subtle contact with the diverse body of audiences: 'What do you call your sexual organ? What is its form? Have you ever contemplated it? How does it smell? What is its suffering?'Fragmented confessions with no linear development become the stage of a sensual, yet painful delirium, culminating in the pronouncement of the word 'vagina' in the utmost vulgar register of Moroccan dialect. Such vulgarity was meant to show these actresses in their most vulnerable states, to restore their humanity and dignity after being deified in the name of tradition. Women's language in Moroccan culture often reveals a frequent politeness, unlike men who are allowed to be vulgar. *Dialy* not only condemns this appetite for political correctness, but subverts the deeply rooted masculine voice operating underneath. The first act investigates women's language, which is full of taboos: it reveals the inequality between the sexes by means of highlighting what is in the name. The voicing of the word 'vagina' in the utmost vulgar ways by the actresses is performed as a collective therapy; it is a strong instance of dissent against conservative power structures.

Act II, however, reveals three stories (as narrative fragments released by all three actresses without associating characters and events): the first story shows a factory girl who was gang raped at a cemetery all night long; the second one discloses the story of a married woman who hates her husband, who raped her on their wedding night; and the third is the story of a girl who was abandoned by her partner after losing her virginity, left alone to

face the violence of 'public morality'. Such stories expose the hypocrisy of Moroccan society in the face of the mounting rate of single mothers and victims of rape, especially with the performance taking place in the aftermath of Amina Filali's tragic suicide. In March 2012 the suicide of Amina Filali, a sixteen-year old Moroccan girl who was forced to marry her rapist, ignited a global outrage. The crime sparked an unprecedented outcry to break the silence of centuries-long patriarchal oppression legitimized through religious rhetoric and its sustaining phallocratic interpretations. In most Moroccan cities anti-rape demonstrations followed Amina Filali's suicide, culminating in a sit-in in front of the parliament on 17 March 2012. An online petition has drawn many far-away supporters of stopping violence against women, including the repeal of article 475 of the penal code. Moreover, defenders of sexual freedom in Morocco go even further, demanding the abolition of article 490 (which considers extra-marital sex as a crime for both sides). A heated battle has been taking place on the Net between conservatives and progressives. Each side accuses the other of being misguided vehicles of dangerous ideas threatening the cultural security of Morocco.[21] With the Islamists in power after the Spring, some feminist movements have become more vigilant than ever before despite the new constitution (voted 1 July 2011) guaranteeing gender equality. On the ground, out of thirty ministers forming Abdelilah Ben Kirane's first government, only one woman was. *Dialy* was devised against the backdrop of all these discussions by a company reputed in Morocco for its privileging of community and as a forum theatre of the oppressed.

Dialy is both challenging and abusive, Naima Zitan and her team subvert Moroccan audiences' instinct for moral judgment and push them to attend to the subtle humanity underneath such repressed histories. The narrative performance voices a diverse body of different experiences, bound together not with one single narrative, but by their confluence and interrelations between womanhood and female sexuality within a deeply rooted patriarchal society. Some of the narratives appropriate the prevalent misogynist images of women as sex objects, commodified and over-reduced into no more than procreators under the yoke of male domination: 'Sometimes my mother used to tell me: "*Jemii hammek*"; and she was right. "*Hammee, mouchkil dialy*", mine, my own problem! And not only mine, but all women's … At home, we used to talk about it among women's gatherings. In the public bath, all women are naked!'(*Dialy*, 3).Others manifest a furious response to the ritualistic subjugation of women in the name of tradition. The magic word '*dialy*' implies different meanings, most of which reveal patriarchal

oppression and violence: '*rani kharejlek sdaak, raak dialy*' (I have given you a dowry; so you're mine), says Sanaa with deep sadness as she was re-enacting the moment she was being raped by her husband the first night: 'It was him who raped me the day of the wedding. The father of my children … I hate him' (*Dialy*, 10). Such stories become the outlet, or rather the offshoot, of silent and repressed histories related to everyday practices insofar as they encode exactly what they do. They provide a testament to the strength of female sexuality and along with it, the power of the womb, a power no veil can ever obliterate.

The performance triggered a polemic firestorm of harsh criticism beyond theatre circles; it has garnered attention nationally and internationally, and on social media. If *Dialy* was a reaction to the ongoing debates in the public sphere about women's rights in the post-Mudawana Morocco, it has triggered a heated debate and has been severely attacked by most conservative cultural and political circles. Abdelkerim Berrchid,[22] the most furious among them all, wrote a manifesto condemning the play's pornography, immorality, and luck of creative imagination: 'It is an animalistic and savage subject … If some women have problems with their vaginas, it is their problem and not the concern of society at large … Those who practice pornography in the name of theatre should have enough courage to pronounce it openly.'[23] Furthermore, Berrchid openly expressed his refusal of adaptations of any kind:

> I am always in favour of the original instead of the imported, creativity rather than imitation, and writing rather than devising … *Dialy*'s dramatic text does not belong here, and so is its discourse and cause, and even the theatrical location … I see that the real Moroccan public cannot refuse art. If today the Moroccan public refuses this performance, it is because it is not convincing intellectually, aesthetically, and morally.[24]

At this point, it must be emphasized that Berrchid pronounced his opinion without seeing the performance, or even reading the script.

Thus, Berrchid judges *Dialy* from its title; and that in itself the worst bias. Yet his manifesto, published on the Net by the most popular electronic journal in Morocco, *Hespress*, was highly praised, reaching 111 positive comments and 475 'likes' on 8 August 2012. What Berrchid sought in his opinion about *Dialy* amounts to a manifesto of prohibition and banning, which claims truth. It is far from being an artistic opinion about a theatre tradition that is different, or a curious investigation that is not judgemental. Judging *Dialy* as a 'pornographic' drama does not, by any means, reveal

much about the play. On the contrary, it mirrors what's in the mind of Berrchid, and by extension, a host of conservative mindsets schooled by the delirious tradition of essentialism. No other play has been subject to more heated debate in the Moroccan public sphere than *Dialy*. The Aquarium Theatre Company has succeeded in imposing a national discussion on sexual politics and the true limits of the freedom of artistic expression in a country which claims to be on the move towards democracy. Yet *Dialy* was denounced by the guardians of authenticity as exemplified by Berrchid. Attajdid, the newspaper of the ruling Islamic party Justice and Development (PJD), has also criticized the political use of artists by the opposition. The call for the death of actress Nouria Ben Brahim on the Web at the time of writing this paper reveals a great deal about co-option and resistance.

Conclusion

The game of 'Arab Spring' has, at best, changed the names of some autocrats, but not the totalitarian regimes, due to internal and external obstacles to real democracy and real change in the ruling elites and systems of governance. The illusion of change on the ground is actually stuck in the stasis of utopianism. However, the Spring has created a fundamental transformation in the public sphere. It has liberated Arab youth from fear and momentarily suspended the nexus of historical causality. The Spring has flourished with communal performances very much like a carnival's way of sensing the world 'with its joy at change and its joyful relativity'.[25] Gilles Deleuze reminds us that what characterized people after the students protests of 1968 was that they were in a 'state of becoming', 'a revolutionary-becoming'.[26] Deleuze's reply to the conservative critics who denounced the miserable outcomes of a revolutionary upheaval is that they remain blind to the 'dimension of becoming'. The students' protests of '68 changed 'national discussion' and widened 'social awareness', though they led to no permanent political change. The two performances are similar in their re-enactments of different facets of the so-called 'Arab Spring'. Drawing from archival 'evidence', the two projects strive to keep the past alive. Informed by the politics of protest, they disturb traditional Arabic systems of representation and reveal a great deal of transgression of societal rules. Theatrical re-enactments of diverse fragments of the archive are perhaps the first steps towards a long walk of reconciliation with memory.

Notes

1. Pia Wiegmink, 'Performance and Politics in the Public Sphere', *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 3, 2 (2011), p. 2.

2. Maria Pia Lara, *Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in the Public Sphere* (California: University of California Press, 1998), p. 8. For more details on revisions of the Habermasian model, see feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: Contributions to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990), 38–47.

3. Christopher Balme, 'The Affective Public Sphere: Romeo Castellucci's On the Concept of the Face Regarding the Son of God', Keynote Address, Performing Transformations Conference, Tangier, 2 June 2012, p. 1.

4. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. by Saskya Iris Jain (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 36.

5. Balme, 'The Affective Public Sphere', p. 12.

6. Pie Wiegmink, 'Performance and Politics in the Public Sphere', p. 5.

7. Lauren Longman, 'From Virtual Public Sphere to Global Justice : A CriticalTheory of Internetworked Social Movements', *Sociological Theory*, 23, 1 (March 2005), 42 –74, p. 55.

8. Michael Margolis and David Resnick, *Politics as Usual: The Cyberspace 'Revolution'* (London: Stage, 2000), p. 14.

9. Ever since the Jasmine Revolution there has been an emerging tendency in the theatre scene to re-enact the Arab Spring activism. *Hadda*, a solo performance by the activist company Dabateatr opens up a canvas of timely political questions related to Morocco today; *Richard III* by Jaafar Guesmi from Tunisia is a play that weaves together Shakespeare's text and local narratives of tyranny; *Dmou' Bel Khol* (Khol tears) is another reaction to the questions exposed by the Arab Spring in Morocco; *Tsuname* by Baccar and Jaïbi is their ultimate alarming cry in face of the Islamists in Tunisia.

10. In Tunisia theatre was the only cultural form subject to censorship by the law up until 14 January 2011.

11. In an interview Fadhel Jaïbi affirms: 'There was a standoff and we came out winners, with some minor "adjustments" really trivial and anecdotal.' See Monica Ruocco, 'Staging as a Historical Event: The Tunisian Revolution Anticipated by Fadhel Jaïbi and Jalila Baccar', paper presented at Performing Transformations International Conference organized by the International Center for Performance Studies, Tangier, 1–4 June, 2012, p. 4.

12. Fatma Ben Saïdane <http://www.france24.com/fr/20110719-festival-avignon-yahia-yaich-amnesia-fadhel-jaibi-reve-chute-ben-ali-tunisie-theatre-proces/> [accessed 18 September 2014] (my translation from French).

13. Priscille Lafitte, '"Yahia Yaïch", quand le théâtre rêve avant l'heure de la chute de Ben Ali', France 24, 19 July 2011 <http://www.france24.com/fr/20110719-festival-avignon-yahia-yaich-amnesia-fadhel-jaibi-reve-chute-ben-ali-tunisie-theatre-proces> [accessed 25 September 2013].

14. Monica Ruocco, 'Staging as a Historical Event', p. 5.

15. Karim El-Kefi, '"Yahia Yaïch", quand le théâtre rêve avant l'heure de la chute de Ben Ali', France 24 <http://www.france24.com/fr/20110719-festival-avignon-yahia-yaich-amnesia-fadhel-jaibi-reve-chute-ben-ali-tunisie-theatre-proces/> [accessed 18 September 2014] (my translation from French).

16. Fadhel Jaïbi, in Lafitte, '"Yahia Yaïch", quand le théâtre rêve avant l'heure de la chute de Ben Ali'.

17. The Aquarium Theatre Company was founded in 1994 by Naima Zitan, Naima Oulmakki, and Abdullatif Oulmakki. Against the backdrop of political transition in Morocco, the company draws its strength from being political in nature, deeply committed to social theatre and to the cause of gender equality and respect of women's rights. *Qabla Al-Futur* (Before breakfast, 1997) is another Aquarium production that critiques the behaviour of the majority of Moroccan male intellectuals who practice their version of modernity only outside their own homes.

18. The 20 February Movement is the Moroccan version of 'Arab Spring'. The movement was represented on the Net with no founding ideology, only demands: more freedom, dignity, the end of corruption, and more limits on royal power (a king who reigns but does not govern). The movement's web site 'Mamfakinch' won the Global Voices Summit Breaking Borders Award in 2012.

19. From October 2010 to date (10 June 2014), actress Latifa Ahrar's appearance onstage in Kafr el Naom half nude has been subject to heated debates in Moroccan media outlets.

20. Inspired by Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*, and informed by women's testimonies in a workshop under the name "Avec elles" (With them), *Dialy* was written by Maha Sano and directed by Naima Zitan, with actresses Nouria Benbrahim, Farida Bouazzaoui, and Amal Ben Haddou. The play premiered Friday 15 June 2012 at Salle Gérard Philipe (Institut Français, Rabat) and at the Théâtre Aquarium on Saturday 16 June.

22. Abdelkerim Berrchid is the founder of Al-Masrah Al-Ihtifali in Morocco. His theoretical writings have been primarily devoted to finding an appropriate theatrical form that would reflect Moroccan/Arab cultural identity better than the implanted Western model. This concern was most fully articulated in his 1977 foundational manifesto Al-Masrah Al-Ihtifali (Ceremonial theatre). Since then, Berrchid has embarked on an essentialist quest for purity in the name of 'the search for an authentic theatre tradition'.

23. Abdelkerim Berchid in *Hespress* (4 July 2012) <http://hespress.com/art-et-culture/57586.html> [accessed 8 August 2012].

24. Ibid.

25. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. By Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 160.

26. The proper Deleuzian paradox is that something truly new can only emerge through responding to what is intolerable: 'Men's only hope lies in a revolutionary becoming: the only way of casting off their shame or responding to what is intolerable.' Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 171.

Reshuffling the Cards in the Maghreb: A Political and Cultural Affair

Pierre Vermeren

The 'Arab Spring' of 2011 was born in Tunisia before spreading to other regions of the 'Arab world'. Since the Ottoman Empire, Tunisia has occupied a unique place in the heart of that region: the gateway between the Orient and the Maghreb, this coastal country is also the gateway between the Western Mediterranean — be it the Berber region or the Latin — and the Middle East. In this sense, Tunisia differs from its two neighbours to the west, Algeria and Morocco, which are more marked by Berber culture, and by their Corsair, Saharan, and African heritages.

Tunisia's merchant, religious, and intellectual elites play an intermediary role not only between the northern and southern banks of the Mediterranean, but also between the two basins of the interior sea. The participation of the people and of the intermediary classes in the country's affairs is another of Tunisia's unique aspects: the Arab revolution was born in the popular milieux of the interior, then it was relayed by the unions up the national ladder, before being adopted by Tunisia's social elites. This unique national configuration explains in part the success of the Tunisian revolution, and the political transition, which was without precedent or equivalent in the Arab world. The configuration can be attributed to Tunisia's ancient geographical, cultural, and economic heritage.

By accident or by necessity Tunisia benefitted from the most complete modernization of all of France's colonies: it was not devastated by either a conquest or a war of decolonization; it benefitted from ongoing economic and legal reforms over the course of seventy-five years; the army stayed out of public affairs; finally, the country has undergone the most successful educational reforms in the region. At the end of the colonial period there were as many university graduates in Tunisia as in the rest of North Africa combined, even though Tunisia only contains 10% of the region's population. This unique situation allowed the secular and Francophile republican politician, Habib Bourguiba, an admirer of Mustapha Kemal, to persevere and increase his country's transformation, fully in line with French politics (Habib Bourguiba led the country from 1956 to 1987).

During the 1970s and ’80s, significant modifications were made to the initial model, but they did not eradicate the complex historical heritage. The Tunisian elites, and with them a growing part of the population, were truly bilingual in Arabic and French; they were marked by French republicanism, Turkish modernism, and Arab socialism. These models conflicted with each other, but none of them could fully supplant the two others.

The two rival countries in the central Maghreb, the Algerian Republic and the Moroccan Kingdom, have encountered very different destinies. These two countries’ historical heritages share many common aspect — a historically and socially dominant farming and shepherding population, a somewhat secondary, chaotic urban history, political domination by tribes and brotherhoods, an Arab-Berber population, which is more Berber-speaking to the west, a common language, and solid authoritarian and military traditions exercised from Fez and Algiers, but also within tribes. The main difference between them is their political history. While Algeria was part of the Ottoman Empire, Morocco remained an independent caliphate. Algeria was the only French colony that French settlers populated; it was integrated into French national territory for more than a century; whereas Morocco, colonized much later, remained a Muslim sultanate. The countries were both territories of expansion, conquest, and martial law (exceptional administration) by the French army, but their subsequent decolonizations were very different.

Morocco, which regained independence in 1956 (after forty-four years as a protectorate), became an Arab monarchy the following year. The monarchy definitively allied itself with the West in 1961 under Hassan II (1961–99), remaining structurally dependent on French, American, and Saudi aid. In contrast, Algeria, after a very long period of colonization (132 years) and a bloody war of decolonization (1954–62), became a military socialist republic, with ties to the USSR during the Cold War, but also always remained in contact with France, due to its (Algeria’s) economic autonomy. In effect, Algeria’s hydrocarbon resources allowed it to seesaw between the West and the East, and to stay politically as well as economically independent.

Over the course of the fifty years that separate the time when the three countries of the Maghreb became independent (1956–62) and the Arab Spring (2011), their histories converge on certain points. For example, the French Republic has never loosened its strong political influence in these countries — political, economic, and social elites who were themselves influenced by France’s political and cultural model relayed that influence to the interior of each country. Furthermore the French influence over large

sectors of the population through school, work, and the media, was more intense during the 1960s and ’70s than during the colonial period. At this time Maghrebins learned the French language better than when colonial rule had imposed it upon them.

France has certainly worked hard to keep French a relevant language in the Maghreb. It sent tens of thousands of young people to the Maghreb until the 1980s, and has hosted hundreds of thousands of students from its three southern neighbours. The bilateral relationship between France and the three central Maghreb countries, although unequal, has remained very close, and in certain ways has become more and more intense over the course of the past half-century. France has pursued a ‘soft’ imperialism in the Maghreb, of which the principal advantage for the local elites has been its non-interference in local political and religious affairs, and indeed unconditional aid to governments in times of difficulties (whether economic, political, security, or military), and even in civil war, as in Algeria in the 1990s.

Did the Arab Spring put an end to the half-century long postcolonial transition in the Maghreb? This hypothesis cannot be rejected at this point. Nor is it certain, for many reasons. In effect, France remains a trustworthy representative, and a loyal intermediary in Europe, on behalf of each of the three countries in the Maghreb. Even if France’s financial and economic power has diminished, the former colonial power is still a relay point between each of the three countries and the European Union and its institutions: France supported the Tunisian revolution (not without some hesitancy), but it has also supported the Algerian military regime, and to a greater extent the Moroccan monarchy. France asks few questions, but it transmits these governments’ concerns to the European Union, all the more indispensable since Europe’s institutions have demonstrated an incontestable lack of interest, mistrust, and even incoherence toward these countries. The Germanic countries frown upon newly arrived immigrants’ subjection to their government and religion; Spain does not miss the calls for human rights in its former colony, the Western Sahara; the Scandinavian countries want the Maghreb countries to make progress toward respecting liberties, etc. France, on the other hand, even if it is troubled in the long run by conflict in territories once colonized by the West, is content to support its former colonies.

Whatever it may be, the year 2011 put an end to the long postcolonial sequence. Certainly, the end of the Cold War some twenty years ago had already brought about the beginnings of political transitions (1987–90 in Tunisia, 1988–92 in Algeria, 1997–2002 in Morocco). But the civil

war in Algeria (1992–2000), then the growing threat of international jihad (attacks in New York in 2001, in Casablanca in 2003, in Madrid in 2004, etc.) consolidated the powers in place, and gave legitimacy to the authoritarian regimes contending with subversive forces. Not until 2011 did the Tunisian revolution forcefully renew the political and constitutional question in the Maghreb, and by extension in the entire Arab region. What to make of it three years later?

In 2014 Tunisia is headed toward a political democracy hitherto unseen in the region. This path, in keeping with Tunisia's legal, political, and social history, is unprecedented. The Tunisian political transition, though we should in no way underestimate the risks of hindrances, insufficiencies, or threats that continue to hover around it, seems to be following the path toward democracy. After the revolution, a complex political process began which engaged antagonistic political forces in free elections by the end of 2011; then, in the beginning of 2014, a large majority of the population approved a republican constitution, with general elections slated for autumn 2014. A second republic was born in Tunisia, which brings together Islamists and liberals, two political blocks that seemed condemned to interminable dispute under the watchful eye of military and police authorities. Indisputably, these two blocks still strongly distrust each other; each side is working to eradicate the other. Yet the point remains that the political institutions, the large majority of the population, and the intellectuals firmly refuse to this day to begin the cycle of violence.

The progress of the Tunisian transition strongly contrasts with the forms of political stagnation in Morocco and in Algeria. Certainly, these two regimes, which are completely different except for their authoritarianism, have reacted differently to the threat of political subversion. Morocco anticipated the demands for social justice, isolated the protesting groups, and took advantage of the political calendar. The monarchic regime claimed to be able to respond to the hopes of the political 'Spring' (also known as the 'Movement of February 20') but in reality it was doing everything just to neutralize the movement.

Facing equally disorganized activism, the Algerian military regime followed its traditional formula of, on the one hand, flexing its military muscle to neutralize the possibility of revolt, and on the other, providing tens of thousands of petrodollars to its population. Evidently, the two governments' strategies were consistent with their resources: political resources in Morocco and hydrocarbon resources in Algeria.

In both cases the regime remains in place. The Moroccan monarchy pretended to give power to the Islamists, bestowing them with the nominal post of prime minister. But that only helped to discredit the fraction of Islamists who collaborated with the government because, beyond the fact that their powerlessness was demonstrated, they also lost the heroic appearance which comes with being in opposition to the powers that be. As of 2013 the monarchy took back from the Islamists of the PJD (Party of Justice and Development) what it had conceded to them, going so far as to eliminate any possibility of influence (the current prime minister, Abdelillah Benkirane, has hardly any space to manoeuvre). Meanwhile, in April 2014 the Algerian regime, without much opposition, managed to have elected an impotent President who is incapable of giving a speech. Abdelazziz Bouteflika has been in that post since 1999. This shows that the Algerian ruling class, which consists of gas and import-export magnates, superior officers, and political bosses, judged the danger of the Arab Spring to have passed.

In spite of their apparent political impotence, Algerian and Moroccan societies, particularly their liberal components, have not remained immobile since 2011. The political events that are unfolding in the rest of the Maghreb (Libya, Tunisia) and in the Arab world (Egypt, Syria) have at once impassioned, fascinated, and terrorized public opinion in the two countries. True political changes have been put off until better future days for a lack of organizational and representative capacity. But people are exhibiting new creative and expressive tendencies, which the regimes try to isolate to avoid yielding anything. Given the inertia, waiting, fear of violence, and attempts at change, the Moroccan and Algerian people could move in unprecedented directions in the years to come. In spite of their apparent inertia, and of the strict maintenance of political and security control (as attested by the yearly global ranking of the freedom of the press, which gives them a mediocre standing), the 75 million Algerians and Moroccans, fairly well informed, connected, and interested in international evolutions, are quite hopeful.

If these two peoples remained largely unaffected by the Arab Spring it is not because of fatalism, atavism, or because their regimes are particularly crafty. Beyond the fact that the Algerian Civil War of the 1990s showed them the aporias and dangers of an Islamic revolution, and that the people remember the violence of that war with dread, the Moroccans and Algerians are hampered by profound uncertainties of culture and identity. A 'crisis of nationalisms' is not a meaningless phrase in the Maghreb. It expresses the structural difficulty of governments to confront and impose a coherent cultural model since the countries became independent.

The Berber states of the nineteenth century became French colonies and protectorates. In the mid-twentieth century, in order to contest colonial France's control over the most profitable enterprises, and to win the support of the Arab nationalist movement born in the Levant, anti-colonial nationalists declared the Maghreb to be Arab. The 'Arab Maghreb' was not a pre-existing phenomenon but rather a political tool to defeat the French colonizer. After the states won independence, the pro-Arab component of the nationalist movement wanted to spread the Arab language and culture, following the model of the Middle East. In fact in 1962 only 5% of Algerian men were literate in only Arabic, 10% in French and Arabic, and 15% in only French (these percentages greatly surpass Morocco's). Moreover, neither Morocco nor Algeria is linguistically homogenous; both are divided by three competing maternal languages: the Maghreb dialect of Arabic, Berber, and … French (which is spoken by an elite minority). This may be the reason why the elites have refused to support the governments' avowed path of 'Arabization' (Arab nationalist ideology).

It wasn't until the end of the 1970s that Arabization was established as a public priority in the Maghreb. Poorly organized, poorly thought out, poorly executed, too ideological and populist, this project, at once academic and administrative, radicalized a portion of the society, and offered diplomas to battalions of young people in newly established Islamic academic programmes. At the time 'Arab' nationalism was transforming in part into Islamic nationalism. For the second time in a half-century, the francophone ruling class (whether French-Arab or French-Berber) refused to accept this ideological project. There has followed, since the 1980s, a long period of coercion and struggle against Islamic radicalism, but without putting into question the official programme of scholastic Arabization (except in Tunisia in the 1990s), which is reinforced by strong ideological, national, and religious components. Islamism has been 'dealt with' in its more violent outbursts but not in its causes.

Currently, Morocco and Algeria have — though they are not the only countries in this situation — populations and ruling classes that are divided in the political, cultural, and ideological arenas. Arab Islamism, which the preachers and Sunni television channels present, is a Middle Eastern ideology that the elites distrust, but which very adept people advocate. French culture's allure remains powerful, even if it also remains a clear social distinction of the ruling class. Arabic, as it is spoken in the Middle East and in the Arab media, is not spoken in everyday situations in the Maghreb. It is a public language that makes its speakers 'respectful' (in

the sense that it intimidates them); people in the Maghreb actually speak in their mother tongues, and constantly mix multiple linguistic registers and languages (the Maghreb Arabic dialect, Berber, French, complex urban slang, regional expressions, etc.). The Maghrebins' multilingual dexterity is quite astonishing, and it reflects a complicated hierarchy of taboos, styles, and practices. Yet the standard Arabic taught in schools and Arabization remain on the margins.

Moroccans and Algerians refer to themselves as Arab or Berber (and more precisely Kabyl, Soussi, Rifain, etc.) and more recently 'Arab-Amazighe' (i.e. 'Arab-Berber'). A third of them, mostly from the upper echelons of society, speak fluent French. In contrast, formal Arabic, which they learn at school, is not used in daily life; it is only written. Formal Arabic enjoys both a religious status (the Koranic language has a sacred character) and the prestige of Arab nationalism. Thus it is not questioned despite its ambiguous status. The Arabic dialect, interspersed with the occasional European word, is the language that most people speak fluently.

Although the majority of people speak Darijat (the Maghreb Arabic dialect), it is considered a secondary language, a dialect of little prestige. In the early 2000s there was a public debate in Morocco about whether to make this dialect a national language. It could really be the language of the entire Maghreb, because from Constantine to Marrakesh, even if the people are unwilling to acknowledge it, the same language, with certain variants, is heard. But no changes have been made: pro-Arabists and Islamists do not want to discuss it; Berber speakers are indifferent (though they too often use Darijat in their daily public affairs); and French speakers maintain their social superiority.

All this is not simply the vision of a French observer: it is a social reality in the Maghreb, internal to Algerian and Moroccan societies. The language of the former colonizer, so long inaccessible to the masses, has become an object of power, distinction, and prestige. Generations of youth (as well as older generations to a lesser extent) have certainly learned to master other languages, English and Spanish being the highest priority, for their usefulness in business, tourism, and media; Algerians have also learned Russian, and Tunisians learn Italian, German, and other languages useful for emigration. But French enjoys a unique status since it is used in national discourses. With the Arabization movement in Algeria, and the civil war of the 1990s, which forced francophone executives and professors into exile, the importance of French had significantly declined there. Its return is only more spectacular in the past

several years, led by a new set of professors, and a young generation using new technologies to facilitate the learning of French, which they are acquiring with more success than in the past decades.

It is possible that things will evolve and that the English language will occupy, as it does within the francophone world, the status of 'scientific language', but there is a significant difference between a language used for international communication and a language spoken everyday. In the international cities like Casablanca or Algiers, the affluent youth, and above all the commercial and financial import-export agents, speak English fluently, which gives them a tad of social distinction, and allows them to cheaply denigrate the French, as certain elite French people themselves do so well. Nevertheless in millions of Maghrebins' daily social relations — whether they are functionaries, lovers, journalists, families, doctors, etc. —the French language is a privileged mode of expression.

Another question in the Maghreb is the Berber identity. Unlike France, contemporary Maghreb governments have had neither the time nor the power — nor the legitimacy — to make non-official languages disappear; among these languages, the most common come from the Amazighe (i.e. Berber) family. Moroccans and Algerians are neither fully Arab nor fully Berber — not in an ethnic sense (that is another question entirely) but in a linguistic sense. In many regions (Morocco's Rif Mountains, the Atlas Range, the Touareg Sahara, the M'zab region, etc.) of the Maghreb, Berber remains the language of the people. Though it isn't the only one in use, it certainly has not been relegated to the status of a historic language. The Algerian and Moroccan governments have only recently recognized in their constitutions (Morocco in 2011!) that Berber is a national language, though not yet official.

This recognition was brought about in both countries by a vast oppositional cultural movement, which the francophone and Arabist elites had long been able to relegate to the margins. But since the 'Kabyle Spring' of 1980, Berber speakers have continued to increase the pressure to have their languages recognized, a movement which the ruling class has tried to contain. The primary objective of the ruling class has been to restrict the popular movement to the cultural sphere, and to keep it from entering the political. In this Morocco has been more successful than Algeria.

The Maghreb's cultural and linguistic situation thus remains tenuous. Languages are in somewhat anarchic competition. Arabization was poorly conceived, and its school system and students continue to pay the price. The deterioration of the Algerian and Moroccan educational system has been universally acknowledged since the 1980s, yet no reform to address the deficiencies has been undertaken, except the attempt to adapt to the international structural reforms that the European Union advocates. The use of the French language has greatly increased in the last fifty years, even though governments and Islamists have attacked it. Morocco, which was by and large alienated from French in 1956 when Spanish was much more common, now has a large number of French speakers, which, though proportionally it is still not as high as in Algeria, is now not far behind its eastern neighbour. Berber has greatly diminished as the main regional language, largely because of the efforts of Arabization, but it has escaped the low status that Arab nationalists gave it, and it is now being used in political movements of identity that oppose the government.

The highest-achieving Moroccan and Algerian students, who specialize in commercial, scientific, medical, and sometimes legal, artistic, and technological subjects, easily master several languages. The Maghreb is confronted less by a linguistic and technical problem, and more by a question of identity: who are Maghrebins? What culture or cultures do they share and to which do they belong? Is it possible to accept that their culture at the individual, local, and national levels is at once plural, regional, and complex? Are both Jacobin centralization, which the nation-state of the 1960s emphatically adopted from France, and in addition, the ideological hegemony of Islam, often perceived as an optimal ideology, actually obstacles that block free and honest thinking? Can we even freely debate these questions?

In Morocco as in Algeria, millions of people live within the multilingual situation just described. This multilingualism has been the object of numerous scientific, linguistic, and literary works. Thousands of scholarly works have treated the situation of diglossia born out of the Arabic language, the role of French, and the construction of Berber as a written and unified cultural language. The media, the press, and numerous intellectuals, as well as public relationships, have brought these debates about the complex linguistic realities to the fore. With regard to these reflections, the public debate, dominated by the government and the religious and political institutions, remains limited. Everything proceeds as if the situation were normal, as if the consequences of this linguistic and cultural pluralism were neutral. Yet in no way is this the case.

International modern Arabic is the official language of these governments: from this foundation, it is the language of the schools, the legal system, and official publications. French is a foreign language but it is used every day in economic and administrative affairs, in the media and the sciences. Berber has

been recognized as the original cultural language, and very recently as a national language. Twenty to thirty million Maghrebins speak Berber. English, a foreign language, is perceived as necessary and useful, but German and Spanish are also taught and studied. Finally the majority of Maghrebins most often speak Darijat. However, it is almost clandestine, possessing no status, neither written nor used by the government.

This de facto pluralism, common in numerous states in the world, would not pose a problem if it were adequately addressed. But between a spoken language that is not recognized (Darijat), an official language that is not spoken (standard Arabic), a 'foreign' language that the elites speak (French), and a subordinated mother tongue (Berber), the Maghreb linguistic situation is the cause of numerous impediments if not paralysis.

We are not only speaking about a situation of 'social apartheid', as in France's case, or even only an ideological question, as the Islamist's sacralization of standard Arabic would suggest. This is a concrete and polarizing impediment in national life: the people's two native languages are not taught in schools or used by public institutions. The young student must study standard Arabic at school, an intense effort especially for the less privileged — and even more so for those raised speaking Berber — which contributes to a very high rate of academic failure, as well as numerous dysfunctions within the educational system. Once the student masters standard Arabic, he or she quickly realizes that they also need to know French, not only to rise within the social hierarchy, but most of all in order to enter into administrative work or study the sciences or other subjects. But though he takes on the task of mastering French, he must also learn the international language, English, or even another language beyond that.

The standard Maghreb student, who does not benefit from hearing foreign languages at home, or from studying in an elite or private school, must devote many hours to studying languages before understanding — if they can — their real and symbolic uses. This is the level that most polarizes the privileged minority from the majority of the population, which is excluded from public politics and official discourse. In this respect, learning English or Spanish would not improve the situation.

Certain sides in the public debate advocate a radical or partial simplification of the situation. But no choice is simple. To abandon one of the four common languages in the Maghreb would be an amputation. Tamazight (i.e. Berber culture) is at the heart of Maghreb identity, its founding civilization, and its unique history vis-à-vis the Middle East. To abandon the Arabic dialect would be absurd, since it is the language of the majority of the population throughout the Maghreb, and even the media has used it since the early 2000s. To abandon standard Arabic would be a strange choice, at the moment when it has developed into the international language of the Internet and satellite media in the Arab world. And finally, getting rid of French is not so simple. Not only is it a Maghreb language, but the Maghreb is also a stakeholder in the French-speaking world.

Maghrebins watch a large amount of foreign television — at least as much in French as in Arabic. And local television channels also frequently use French. Moreover, almost 10 million Maghrebins (one out of every eight or nine) live between North Africa and France. They go back and forth or live for long periods in France, often staying their whole lives. This population, more and more francophone — and often exclusively francophone — has the means, know-how, and capital that makes it a proponent of the development of the region. Thus a permanent contact develops, on multiple levels, with the countries of the Maghreb. Most Maghreb families have a member or relative in France or Belgium (not to mention Spain or Italy). And this European branch of the family, which plays a central role in the economic and monetary flow between Europe and the Maghreb, always uses more French in daily exchanges.

Furthermore, the Maghreb is halfway between Europe, the Sahara, and West Africa. The sub-Saharan region, in large part francophone outside of Nigeria and Ghana, is establishing more and more ties with the Maghreb. Morocco, and Algeria are in multifaceted competition (for reasons of security, economy, culture, and religion) to develop ties with the governments of the Sahel. Maghreb governments and their enterprises develop relations with this region using the French language, relations which are among the main hopes for sustained economic development, other than Libya. Economic growth, which will be weak for the foreseeable future in Europe, combined with the Maghreb economies' difficulty exporting to European markets (with the exception of hydrocarbons), makes Africa stand out as a promising source for new growth. In the winter of 2014, the Moroccan king spent a month in the Sahel with the leading heads of business. To this day, French remains the language of exchange between the Maghreb and West and Central Africa.

Therefore, it will not be easy to change the course of action or the common languages in the Maghreb. Rather, a cultural, political, and ideological clarification is necessary to ameliorate the cultural and educational malaise in Morocco and Algeria, and to make way for future political, economic, and identity reconstruction. At a linguistic level, each

question should be addressed pragmatically and politically — even at the regional level — instead of being addressed ideologically, as has too long been the case. Berber could be recognized and taught in the regions where it dominates, like the Rif or the Kabyle, which would require major democratic advances. Indeed, it would officially become a dominant language in certain regions of the Maghreb. Many examples in the world demonstrate the success of such a pluralistic, choice-based approach.

Darijat should be recognized as the national language of Morocco and Algeria, as well as the language of Maghreb unity. Training in a fundamental knowledge base in this language would be an enormous pedagogic progress. The only way to help the majority of the population develop according to their needs would be for the national press to adopt this language . Local experiments have met with success, as in Tangier, in a country where the literacy rate remains dramatically low. This knowledge base would then allow students to master standard Arabic at secondary school. This progression from mastering Arabic dialect to learning standard Arabic, would be both more coherent and more effective.

Under these measures, European languages would at last be less polarizing. Teaching French to young students, which is already in effect, is something Maghreb governments have never given up. Though it is taught less and less as students progress, it is reaffirmed within public discourse, because French has become one of the Maghreb's languages, reaching far beyond the closed circles of the elites. Several reasons affirm this choice, as soon as the population accepts it. Teaching science in French would be less polarizing if it began before university. Experiments in multilingualism demonstrate that in a comparable situation, elite intellectuals are perfectly capable of acquiring three or even four languages. Furthermore, Maghreb students educated in a multilingual manner prove to be eminently capable. Yet these choices are profoundly political.

For decades the Maghreb's ruling class have feigned indifference. But only centralized, responsible governments can resolve interlocking crises of identity and education. It will take courageous leaders to confront and assume the responsibility of their nations' history and pluralism, and to promote an undogmatic pragmatism. However, a clarifying reform is indispensable in the domains that are essential to the development of the region. In this capacity, it must be supported and democratically founded by France, the country on the northern bank of the Mediterranean. These evolutions in academic reform would cause a real political advance for the benefit of the people, and spur economic growth in the region.

Small Brothers are Watching You: Reflections on a Moroccan Digital Spring

Youssouf Amine Elalamy

I was not born digital. No, I was not born with a mouse in my hand, a keyboard at the tip of my fingers, and a legion of screens around me. I belong to a generation for whom a mouse was still that grey little thing we catch with a piece of oiled bread attached to a trap. Occasionally, when my parents were kind enough to turn on the TV, the mouse would turn into a smart cartoon character endlessly chased by a dumb cat. Yet, as smart as it could be, it would not obey a simple click, nor would it open limitless possibilities as it does now. Yes, I do belong to that pre-digital age peopled only with a one-eyed dinosaur named television. Not a herd of technological tools but only one single black and white state-owned TV channel that would regularly cancel a popular show or the much-awaited football game to display the Leader's activities of the day, when not one of his endless speeches. In that age, had the remote control been invented, we would have still not been able to zap between channels. And no need to turn off the TV either, for that image on the screen will follow you wherever you go. Public spaces were filled with that inevitable visual feature of daily life and we were brought up to think that no city street would look complete without it. We all grew up with the idea that the Leader's portraits were as natural to a street as trees are to a forest, so who could possibly chop them down or even object to them blooming in every corner? The LPLF, or the Leader's Portraits Liberation Front, had not been created yet, and has not been created since either. We had lived inside this forest for so long that it didn't occur to any to change that seemingly natural order of things.

A few years later, from the fanciest villas of Casablanca to the poorest neighbourhoods of the country, satellite dishes mushroomed above our roofs, bringing their loads of new images, along with alternative values and ideas. The One and Only suddenly turned into one single option among many others and, for the first time ever, we could switch to other heroes, born and raised elsewhere, miles away from our forest, and who looked ever more attractive and desirable. With this continuous and ceaseless flow of television images coming from all directions and organized in a sequential fashion, we also discovered how each new image could replace that alleged eternal one.

The foreign satellite TV channels were the first cracks in the wall, allowing us, if not to touch it and feel it, at least to imagine the green grass that lay behind the wall. Soon the small cracks will be followed by the larger fault lines introduced by the Internet and that will ultimately shake, disrupt when not fully unsettle the traditional political establishment. A cyberspace was born that will deeply question the divide between the subject and the policymaker, as well as the foundations of a political system that did not tolerate alternative views nor competition. Whoever navigated in that space could post, chat, or tweet and activate the fault lines by sharing, when not taking the control of words, discourse, and images. A whole literature and imagery will soon emerge to document those shifting boundaries, capturing the winds of change taking place in Morocco and the region and offering a barometer for the social, cultural as well as the political shifts at stake. Predictably, that no man's land cyberspace is where the next political earthquake will strike.

A whole population of digital natives joined by some digital immigrants will conquer that space and redefine the rules of the political game. The computer, with its logic and languages, followed by a better Internet access and the more recent social networks, has contributed to the emergence of a new generation of Internet citizens or netizens. With this new generation, raised with a technology that favours speed and immediacy, new conceptions and perceptions of relationships, institutions, power, and control emerge. Their early exposure to technology both fundamentally and substantially changes the way they learn and communicate and, most importantly, it empowers them to seek immediate and radical change. Their natural habitat, the digital world they are raised in, helps them develop a keen perception of their environment, including the political one. And if they are not satisfied with it, they can simply delete it and switch to a better one, because if it is true that we humans are the ones who create and shape the technology, it is also true that the technology we create ends up structuring our mind, moulding our consciousness and the way we interact with the world and define the real. I once overheard a young Moroccan man telling his friend who had just created his first Facebook account: 'Welcome to the real world, you exist at last!' This ordinary young man had unconsciously reformulated Descartes's cogito into 'I Facebook, therefore I am'. His seemingly innocent statement contained more than a hint of transgression for in this new (dis)order of things, the old dividing lines between the real and the virtual, the high and the low, the well-established and the informal could and would not stand anymore.

What best defines this new generation with their innovative techno environment is precisely that drive to blur the walls, limits, and borders, all kinds of borders; those between the known and the unknown, the old and the new, the past and the future and, most important maybe, the real and the virtual. Understandably this is a real challenge for the politician managing the public sphere and who needs to deal with fixed identities and spaces in order to be able to manage and control them. How could he/she possibly deal with this new species of digital nomads, as I would call them, who are always on the move, who belong to no territory and refuse to settle down, constantly seeking new and ever-changing borders? For the digital nomad, borders, nation, and home itself are all imaginary concepts that need to be constantly redefined and re-imagined. When he/she clicks on the icon 'home' to go back to the main menu, it is not to settle down but only to be able to open a new window that allows a new departure. Again, for the politician who often plays on a polarized world with opposing ideologies to assert his position and consolidate his power (we all remember the post 9/11 statement: 'You are either with us or against us', don't we?), it is and it will be more and more difficult to manage a population of digital nomads who can be 'here' and 'there' and even 'elsewhere', neither 'inside' nor 'outside', neither 'North' nor 'South', neither 'East' nor 'West', neither 'us' nor 'them', a whole new population of digital men and women who believe that they can be 'both … and…' instead of 'either … or …'.

In a region like ours, which has been living for years behind a wall, a forest, a forest of walls, modern technology, with the computer, the Internet, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and other virtual agoras seems to have been built for us, the needy people. It has enabled the non-seeing to see, the non-hearing to hear and the non-speaking to speak. More often than not, parents who are obviously not digital natives, and who seemingly fail to adapt to this modern world, clash with their children at home over gaming, texting, Facebooking, and other Internet-technology issues. They can hardly see how their children could use digital technologies to engage with their immediate environment and initiate processes of social, political, and personal change. The least that we can say is that familiarity with the technology, or what has been called 'techno-disposition', allows those who possess it to progress in society, to imagine ever-new alternatives and ultimately bring some social and political change. Again, for a whole generation raised, when not born in this digital technology, one that is based on fast and immediate change, nothing is permanent and no one is eternal. The omnipresence and omnipotence, the two attributes of the existing power, are severely put into

question by a generation of young people who have been taught and, most often than not, have learnt on their own that they can delete any image, word, or discourse with a simple click; that they can tame the most dominant figure by reducing it on the screen to a tiny powerless dot, just as they can enlarge, or even better, cut-and-paste to multiply and turn an insignificant and barely visible presence into a resistance army. They know that by joining a social networking platform like Facebook or Twitter they can trigger a chain of limitless multiplication that can give way to some liberating practices and, therefore, help them gain in power. The novelty here is not so much the emergence of a mass power with a leader but rather, the birth of a mass of potential leaders, or Small Brothers, who can each initiate action and, in turn, be followed by the others. A good way to describe this maybe is to use Nietzsche's image of a chorus in which every singer is a soloist.

Just like many of their counterparts around the world, Moroccans have discovered the mobilizing power of the Internet, through the 2009 elections in Iran, followed by the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings of 2011. Through personal blogs, social networks like Facebook, Twitter as well as the sharing video site of YouTube, the protesters, mostly 'normal citizens', could instantly post messages, photos and videos on the web, thereby constituting much larger coalitions and better coordinating their actions. According to a media study conducted by the *International Journal of Communication* and quoted by Alex Nunns and Nadia Idle in their *Tweets from Tahrir*, 69% of the Tweets or Twitter messages during the Egyptian revolution came from mere individuals rather than organizations, and only 14% were sent by the main media. Furthermore, in one of their strategic studies, Portland Communication reports that there are more than 2.2 million Twitter users in North Africa, with Morocco ranked second (745,000), just after Egypt (1.214 million), and before Tunisia (61,920). Regarding Facebook users, Morocco is ranked third with 7.6%, just after Tunisia and Egypt with, respectively, 20% and 16.5% of the overall population. Finally, according to *Internet World Stats*, on 31 December 2011 Morocco ranked first in North Africa (including Egypt) with 15.7 million Internet users and a penetration rate of 49%, a figure that is constantly increasing.

Along with the Iranians, the Tunisians and the Egyptians, to name but a few, Moroccans have discovered in the Net a new space of political expression, other than the traditional and often biased, when not corrupt — spheres of political representation. Some new noisy, busy, passionate, and always rebellious comments and images will emerge on the Net with the will to address the world, to expose the most secret aspects of the political system and to question its legitimacy.

Yet, it should be noted that when the Spring bloomed in the region with the public immolation of Tunisian Mohammed Bouazizi, the political situation in Morocco was quite different from those prevailing in other parts of the Arab world. Since 1999, and after king Hassan II's thirty-eight years of repressive reign (also known as 'The Lead Years'), King Mohammed VI has slowly, yet effectively introduced some important social, cultural and political reforms in favour of women, the Moudouwana or family code, the Berber/Amazigh ethnic and linguistic community, human rights, the press, etc. He has also tried to face Morocco's main challenges like poverty, terrorism, and illegal immigration as well as the many other social, economic, and political issues that have afflicted the Moroccan people since the independence of the country from France in 1956.

Despite these substantial efforts, and driven by the unprecedented uprisings in the Arab region, a group of young Moroccan activists under the name of 20 February (Feb. 20) has created a Facebook page as well as a YouTube campaign video that both went viral and immediately rallied thousands of young men and women around issues related to the lack of civil liberties and human rights, the high illiteracy rate, the poor educational system, the wide and increasing gap between the rich and the poor, the endemic structural corruption, the failure of healthcare and the judicial system, etc. For the first time in the reign of King Mohammed VI, a huge number of demonstrators took to the streets of Rabat and the main Moroccan cities in peaceful marches, demanding immediate political changes, a new constitution, legislative elections with a new government, some economic and job opportunities, and an end to corruption. What Feb. 20 has introduced is a new political practice operating outside the conventional structures of the sometimes biased trade unions and political parties. Often accused of being apolitical and having no interest in public affairs, those young people have shown that they not only were willing to play but also wanted to change the rules of the game.

The difference with the more radical claims made in the uprisings of Tunisia, Egypt, Lybia, Yemen, and Syria is that Feb. 20 activists and protesters were not against the presence of the monarch as much as they were in favour of a parliamentary monarchy based on the separation of powers where the king reigns and the government governs, where justice and the media are fully independent, and where politics and religious faith are clearly separated. In a word, they were struggling for a political system that would transform a nation aspiring to democracy, like Morocco, to one which is truly democratic.

Following that, on 9 March 2011, in a live address to the nation, the king praised 'the patriotism of his faithful people and the ambition of its youth', before announcing his firm commitment to undertake a deep constitutional reform aimed at accelerating the democratic process. The proposed constitutional changes and amendments gave the elected prime minister more executive authority as he could, for the very first time in Morocco, appoint government officials and dissolve the parliament, two former prerogatives of the king. Together with Arabic and the Hassani language spoken by the Moroccan Saharawi, Berber (or Tamazight) was, and for the first time again, made an official language in Morocco. However, in the new constitution, the king remains the highest religious authority in the country, the commander-in-chief of the army, and the chair of the Ministers' Council as well as the Supreme Security Council. The new constitution was soon submitted to a national referendum on 1 July and, though considered as insufficient and not 'truly democratic' by Feb. 20, which called for a mass boycott of the poll, it had been largely accepted by the population and had passed.

Yet, if the expected changes had not all taken place, another revolution held in cyberspace was underway, one that should not and will not be aborted. In this social networking age, and in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, many young 'Moroccan soloists', with a perfect understanding of the new media of communication, will soon join a larger chorus of cyber activists, or netivists, and play their 'musical part' by producing, posting, and sharing on the Net some challenging political messages in the forms of blog articles, documentary films, videos, or cartoons. Their work, which is sufficiently professional in appearance both mimic and twist the conventional political speeches and practices, in an attempt to overpower them. These acts of 'semiotic sabotage' and 'semantic hijacking' carried out in some personal blogs and other Internet platforms like YouTube redefine the roles and turn the former subject into, if not yet a full citizen, at least a netizen capable of criticizing, when not fully questioning the leaders, their power and their official media. A new breed of citizen journalists upload their clips made of images which, rather than reporting on what has occurred, record and display events as they are being born. Such images are able to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries to testify and show the world some facts and scenes that the mainstream media predictably distort, misrepresent, or simply ignore.

In Morocco this 'digital commitment' to social justice had appeared prior even to the Arab Spring. As early as July 2007 an anonymous Internet user known as 'The sniper of Targuist' (a small town in the north of the

country) performed what could be considered as the first Net activist action in Morocco. This Robin Hood of the Web (unless they were many under the same name) regularly shoots and posts videos on YouTube showing police officers caught in acts of corruption which immediately earnt him the title of a Web national hero whose videos are viewed and shared in the whole country and far beyond its borders. Following on from that, the press echoed the Sniper's videos forcing the police to investigate and eventually arrest a number of police officers who had been exposed by the filmed images. This, followed by a few others, could deservedly be considered as the first victory of the Moroccan Internet community.

In January 2008 the Moroccan engineer Fouad Mourtada became the first Facebook prisoner in the world after having created a fake account and usurped the identity of Prince Moulay Rachid, the king's brother. The netivists immediately took action, echoing the news in their blogs and other sites like Web Help-Mourtada, both around and outside the country. To make a long story short, the young engineer was eventually pardoned by the king and released from prison on 18 March 2008.

In July 2009, ten years after the death of King Hassan II, Moroccan weekly magazine *Tel Quel* in association with the prestigious French daily paper *Le Monde* published a survey on the ten years of reign of Mohammed VI. Among the figures revealed in that survey, 91% of Moroccans expressed their satisfaction with his reign. Despite these figures in favour of the monarch, both the magazine and the French daily paper were banned. Following this, copies of the survey circulated on the Net, mainly through e-mails and personal blogs, and a new movement born in the digital sphere and called 'I am 9%' emerged. It soon acquired a visual identity as well, with another version of the Twitter bird twittering: 'I am a 9%.' Information as well as comments on the ban circulated to protest against it and to suggest ways to protect freedom of speech. For the first time ever a survey, sustained and relayed by the young digital community, had revealed that the monarch, although truly still very popular in the country, might not achieve unanimity.

On 19 July 2008, a group of Moroccan users of Facebook created the AFAM (The Moroccan Facebookers Association). They were some 70,000 Facebook users then and are more than 5 millions now! The Blogoma (or Moroccan blogosphere) is indeed one of the largest in the Arab world. One of the most active Internet platforms that has both supported and promoted the Feb. 20 youth Movement calling for social, economic, and political reform in Morocco is Mamfakinch (meaning 'no concession' in Moroccan

Arabic), a citizen cooperative community website with a strong belief in freedom and human rights and some politically engaged content published in Arabic, French, and English. This Web media was launched after the first uprisings in the Arab world to address the many attempts of disinformation carried by the official media to cancel the march of 20 February and other militant actions. In only a few weeks Mamfakinch became the reference website to get information about activist action, police repression, etc. It was cited in some prestigious international media and nominated to compete for the Best Arab Blog of the year.

Following this movement, certain uploaded online clips would in turn be used by some more experimental and better-trained youth as editing material to produce new documentary films. A case in point is *My Makhzen and Me*, a forty-two-minute film, again under the label of the Moroccan independent news portal Mamfakinch. Based in San Diego, California, Nadir Bouhmouch, the Moroccan author of this documentary film, uses English with Arabic subtitles to review and show all the recent uprisings in the Arab world. Through the voices of some active members of Feb. 20, he then points to the corruption at all levels, the governmental repression of the youth movement, the intolerance, the economic stagnation, the alarming rate of unemployment, the failing educational system, etc. The attacks are oriented towards the Moroccan governing elite, or the Makhzen, which mainly consists of royal notables and other powerful economic leaders centred around the ruling power.

Following the same line, *Basta* (Enough!) is another independent documentary film directed by Hamza Mahfoudi and Younes Belghazi and produced by the unofficial Guerrilla Cinema. In this film, the two filmmakers attack the Moroccan 'official' or mainstream movie industry with its share of censorship and decide to shoot without any authorization from the CCM (The Moroccan Cinema Centre). These young directors, among many other emerging netizen journalists armed only with pens and cameras, see themselves as civilian combatants using guerilla tactics as a new style of warfare including ambushes, sabotage, hit-and-run actions, as well as raids to fight against the established system, be it artistic, cultural, institutional, or political. Taking advantage of terrain more accommodating of censored and unauthorized content, the 'digital guerrilla' will then rely on the support of the worldwide Internet community to denounce and hopefully weaken 'the enemy'. What invalidates some of the traditional repressive tactics of the state, and may even render them counterproductive, is the fact that these 'new insurgents' may not constitute one single and easily identifiable group

or community that can easily be located and eliminated. There may even be numerous competing insurgencies in one and the same environment rather than one single enemy that could be circled and possibly defeated. What makes the opposition or the repression of these guerrilla insurgents always more difficult is that they are often mobile, constantly travelling between modes of communication and creativity and even identities, which understandably leaves those who exercise censorship perplexed, when not fully disoriented. Like the author of *My Makhzen and Me*, the guerrilla fighters of Basta could truly be seen as social reformers who take up cameras to infiltrate and expose the system, and ultimately fight for all their 'unarmed' brothers who, so they believe, are kept in ignorance, injustice, and misery.

This new and ever-growing community of Moroccan digital activists or reformers has undoubtedly helped trigger some democratic changes and achieve the most peaceful (r)evolution in the entire region. Yet, to take it a few steps further and achieve more social, economic, and political change, will ultimately require to play the political game and operate from the inside and not only from the digital periphery, as it has always been the case so far. These new forces should be able to imagine a common structure to both federate and consolidate all of their actions and potentials, one that would make the link between the existing links as well as all the future ones, and achieve a real hyphe-Nation.

The Frontiers of North Africa Might Need Reconsidering

Francis Ghilès

It is a general truism of this world that anything long divided will surely unite, and anything long united will surely divide.
Luo Guazhong, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (14th century)

Introduction

Since January 2011 North Africa has experienced events which few observers had forecast or even imagined might happen in their lifetime. Change of leadership in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt has plunged these countries into a period of great uncertainty. Violence has become a growing fact of life as their security systems have been seriously weakened. An interim government is nominally in control of Libya. Yet 225,000 registered militiamen are loyal to their commanders rather than to the state that pays them. Militiamen have ensured that oil and gas production has been reduced to a trickle for months. Blowback from the toppling of the Libyan regime forced France to intervene in January 2013 to prevent the collapse of Mali. A few weeks later an unprecedented terrorist attack was launched from within Libya on the Algerian gas field of In Amenas, close to the frontier. The response of the Algerian security forces was brutal but it avoided the field turning into a fireball. The international reputation of Algeria's state oil company and its security forces was badly tarnished. The two key foreign operators resumed full operations last spring (BP) and last summer (Statoil). By bidding and winning, jointly with Shell, in October 2014, to explore the Timissit bloc, which is located next to Algeria's frontier with Libya, the two companies demonstrated their trust in the tougher security measures put in place by the Algerian army after the terrorist attack of January 2013. The result of this attack has led to Algerian troops being deployed *en force* in Libya, close to the border with the blessing of the US, something that would have been quite unthinkable a few years ago.

Last autumn Algerian troops discovered a huge cache of weapons near the border with Libya, south of In Amenas. In Northwest Africa instability is spreading across many boundaries: *siba* territory (provinces where rulers failed to levy taxes and lawlessness may prevail), is gaining ground at the expense of *makhzen* territory (provinces which

are or were fully under state rule). Frontiers have turned into sieves. Smuggling of weapons, drugs, cigarettes, and manufactured goods has grown exponentially. The economies of large tracts of Libya and Tunisia are almost entirely dependent on smuggling and stand outside central government control. There is little short-term prospect of improvement. The Algerian-Moroccan border has been closed for years but at least $3 billion worth of petroleum products, hashish, and other goods are traded illegally between the two countries.

Traditional smuggling rings have been prised open by newcomers exploiting the opportunities of the Arab awakening. Violence has increased. Smuggling has long been a traditional means for poor border populations to earn a meagre living. Smuggled goods flooding Tunisia pose a serious threat to the viability of well-established companies. Tunisia is estimated to lose half its tax take as a result, Libya even more. No state is immune.

Order in the Levant is collapsing

Events in Northwest Africa pale, however, in comparison with events unfolding in the Levant. What was largely a mosaic of states, tribes, sects, and people has been turned in the course of three short years into a bloody kaleidoscope. The opening words of the Chinese classic *Romance of Three Kingdoms*, whose first English translation was published about the time Mr Sykes and Mr Picot gave the Levant its current borders: 'Empires wax and wane; states cleave asunder and coalesce' sums up the situation.

The Israel-Palestine issue remains at the centre of policy for the United States and the European Union. It is no longer as powerful a theme in Arab discourse as it has been but still arouses a considerable sense of indignation and exasperation among Arabs towards the West. Other issues have now achieved greater prominence: the confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran; between Iran and Israel, between salafi Muslims, Copts, other Christians, Shiites, and Alawites; between Sunni jihadis — some of whom have morphed into the extremely violent Islamic State (ISIL) — and those they term Shiite apostates; between generals and demagogues; between the street and security forces; between Arabs, Kurds, Persians, and Turks. A century after its birth, the Middle East that outside powers created seems to be disintegrating. Indigenous forces are now tearing it apart.

Events in North Africa are hardly less dramatic. But, at the risk of being surprised by events — as almost all commentators were three years ago — I would say that Tunisia and Morocco are not about to witness any confrontation between Arabs and Berbers who constitute

the foundations of the Maghreb. In Libya particularly and to a lesser degree in Algeria the situation is more volatile. Many Algerian rulers are Berbers, not least the head of security. That does not stop them repressing those Berbers who since independence have argued that the native language of North Africa, Tamazight, an idiom spoken 1,500 years before anybody had heard of Arabic, should be promoted more vigorously. Of the twenty-two Algerians who belonged to the Organisation Spéciale, which launched the fight for independence in 1954, probably half spoke Berber as their mother tongue. Many Berbers remain convinced that the state is still trying to deny a culture that is the anthropological bedrock of their identity.

Nor is a war likely between states, however tense relations remain between Algeria and Morocco. Yet North Africa (Egypt included) has witnessed a near doubling of the weapons it imports, essentially from Russia, over the past decade. Algeria has moved up from the 22nd-largest importer of weapons worldwide to 6th, Morocco from 69th to 12th. This huge increase in stocks of weapons, quite apart from the pillaging of the Libyan state armoury in 2011, does not however bode well for the future. Nor will there be any redrawing of frontiers whether or not the international status of the West Sahara issue is finally settled.

Libya is another question. The country risks falling apart. The impoverished southern region of Fezzan, riven by tribal and ethnic animosities, is a powder keg, the embodiment of the new siba. Many Libyan Arabs on the coast feel contempt for Berbers and Tuaregs in the south, let alone different black people, not all of whom are harratin, or former slaves. Arms smuggling in the south is a way of life. What is happening in Libya is much more than chaos. Militias may clash repeatedly but there is an intense process of social mobilization underway as society comes out of four decades of lethargy. The US has pressed Algeria hard to get involved in preventing chaos spread in Libya and from there in Tunisia. Though Algerian officials denied it, Algerian special forces are believed to be operating inside Libya to protect the long border between the two countries.

In southern Algeria, the state is not shy of manipulating the Chamba Arabs. The Chambas and other Arabs who settled in the south after independence are pitted against the many Berbers who follow the Ibadi rite of Islam (as do their cousins in Jerba in Tunisia and the Jebel Nefoussa in western Libya). Scores have been killed since late last year. Mokhtar ben Mokhtar, the Islamist who attacked the gas field of In Amenas last year, is a Chamba. Many of these people have built a grid of cocaine smuggling that is gaining importance across the region.

Political games played in faraway Algiers could lead to lawlessness in this part of the Sahara, similar to what is currently found in northern Mexico.

Jihadi terrorism remains a major threat as national frontiers in the Sahara are difficult to control. Certain local strongmen, who mix contraband, kidnapping, and terrorism, have considerable capacity to outfox the security forces of nearly every country in the Maghreb and Sahel, along with US and French forces and assets. Pessimists note that from Mauritania to Libya, long-standing ethnic and political grievances still fester. The abuses of the civil war that fed Islamist anger in Algeria have not been fully resolved. The issues that caused riots in the Western Saharan capital of Laayoune in October 2010 persist. The risk of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb once again achieving its goal of taking over a state or a state-sized area and creating a haven should not be underestimated, though supporters of Polisario, which has been fighting for an independent Western Saharan state for forty years have resisted such siren calls so far. Never have al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and its affiliates controlled so much land, attracted so many recruits and been so well funded as was the case in 2012.

As in the Levant, the notion that one is either 'with us or against us' has lost all resonance. No government in North Africa or the Middle East is prepared to entrust its future to foreigners, still less to a single foreign power. So the role of great external powers is becoming complex and asymmetric rather than durable and all encompassing. There is room for new players. There is a growing Chinese footprint economically, notably in Algeria. But the Chinese will have to dance to tunes composed in the region. Despite all these changes, neither Algeria nor Morocco seems to appreciate that now is the time to exercise leadership in the region and gain control of their own destinies. The sooner both countries understand that outside powers cannot solve their problems, the better.

Across the Atlantic meanwhile, unconventional gas — what is commonly called shale and tight gas — is close to making America self-sufficient in energy, with consequences for its foreign policy priorities. Will America choose to play a lesser role in North Africa and the Middle East and turn its attention to Asia and China?

North West Africa is rarely the centre of attention in Washington but events in Libya might push it up the agenda. America's primary, deep-seated interest in the region is ensuring a free flow of oil from Persian Gulf countries, and protecting Israel. The old status quo in the Middle East no longer holds. America's traditional allies are often pulling in different directions. Such is not the case in North Africa. Here Morocco and Algeria share an interest in curtailing the rise of siba territory and strengthening the *makhzen*. The US and the EU share similar objectives.

Algeria and Morocco hold the keys to the future

Recent events have thrust Algeria centre stage, a position its rulers are far from comfortable with. Algeria and Morocco, each on a different side in the Cold War, have long competed to be the dominant power in the region. That competition gave way to civil war in Algeria and bad relations centred on the unresolved issue of international boundaries in western North Africa. The fact that we live in different and very challenging times has not resulted so far in any serious rapprochement between the two *frères ennemis*. Both appear to be managing the economic and political strains resulting from recent events better than expected, though a bumpy ride cannot be ruled out where Algeria is concerned. Algeria's ageing elite should face up to serious economic reforms and allow its citizens to join more freely in the ongoing debate behind closed doors about the future of the region. But it seems unwilling to do so. So long as Algerian rulers draw their legitimacy from a war of independence which is fast fading from this very young country's memory rather than on the quality of their governance, as long as presidential election winners are first selected by an opaque conclave rather than by more dignified democratic praxis, they will be in no position to imagine a bold future for the region and help shape it. The Arab uprisings are forcing the leaders of all countries in the region to manage their economic systems in a more inclusive fashion, to pay more attention to the needs and aspirations of their people. Will they succeed in building stronger institutions? Will they develop a capacity to think ahead? Will they devise and implement economic policies that create jobs rather than continue travelling down the road of the rentier state? Those who have escaped the fury of the mob will be held to account, sooner or later. If they fail to think boldly and reform their systems of governance, further violence will occur. The nightmare scenario here is Algeria hitting the buffers. Violence in Algeria and Morocco will simply add to Europe's woes.

Northwest Africa threatens to become a collection of failed states. This would threaten any hope of lasting political and economic reform, notably in Tunisia and add to Europe's worries about illegal immigration and terrorism. The only wonder is that neither France, nor the UK, properly thought through the consequences of overthrowing the former Libyan leader. President Sarkozy and Prime Minister David Cameron's pleas in favour of bringing democracy to Libya were as disingenuous, if not downright hypocritical as Tony's Blair arguments about the need to destroy imagined weapons of mass destruction in Iraq a decade earlier.

The manner in which the presidential election played out in Algeria in April 2014 might have offered some keys to how the country's leadership was facing up to the challenges of the future. That Abdelaziz Bouteflika secured a fourth mandate suggests that protecting their interests short term is the only game the ruling class knows how to play.[1] How political events unfold in Algeria in the near future is more uncertain than it has been since 1999 when Bouteflika won his first mandate. In economic terms, domestic consumption of gas (to meet fast-rising electricity needs) is set to overtake exports by 2025. This is not sustainable. Gas prices are among the lowest in the world and the economic distortions this entails are growing. The balance of payments is deteriorating, exports of hydrocarbons are falling, and popular revolts are a daily feature of life: will they one day morph into something broader which could endanger the state, as happened in the 1990s? Algeria has until now been a reliable exporter of gas, a more important asset for the country than oil.

Morocco is somewhat better run, economically — not least because it has no oil, but rentier none the less. The state Office Chérifien des Phosphates boasts some of the largest reserves of phosphate rock in the world. In recent years the management of this state behemoth has been revolutionized and OCP has turned into a nimble international player but, in the absence of greater accountability and institutional reform in the kingdom, a new management team could reverse the changes of recent years. If the changes are consolidated OCP's international strategy in Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Africa could help shape Morocco's future foreign and economic policy. Alongside OCP, other Moroccan banks — notably Banque Marocaine du Commerce et de l'Industrie, and companies have developed strategies towards West Africa.

Morocco is the second highest recipient of foreign investment flows in Africa, after South Africa. That said, a few ruling families control large swathes of the economy and life for many is mere survival. None the less, private enterprise plays a greater role here and is freer to operate than in neighbouring Algeria. Other changes are taking place, which seldom hit the headlines. Regions that, economically, counted for little two decades ago, are surging ahead. The intercontinental port of Tangier is acting as an economic engine to the north-western coast but this has little impact in poorer northern hinterland. Beyond that, will Morocco's status as a privileged partner to Europe allow the country to implement EU legal and other norms across the board that would dramatically improve the

management of its economy? Can Morocco integrate both with Europe and West African countries? That would amount to a regional revolution. But internationally accepted rules of engagement, where the civil service, the courts, and the financial system are concerned, will have to become the norm both in the kingdom and in countries south of the Sahara if economic cooperation is to bear fruit.

The crisis in Ukraine has pointed to the role as-yet-untapped Algerian and Libyan oil and gas reserves — both conventional and unconventional, which are plentiful — could play in helping Europe lessen its excessive reliance on Russian supplies of energy. However Algeria needs to improve the business climate in which foreign operators work. On the only occasion Algeria launched bold economic reforms, in 1989–91 under Prime Minister Mouloud Hamrouche, France's president, François Mitterrand did everything he could to subvert them, helped by powerful vested interests in the country.[2] A golden opportunity to reconcile France and Algeria was lost to the politics of resentment. Mitterrand had been minister of the interior when the first shot in Algeria's war of independence was fired on 1 November 1954.

On the ground, a lot is changing. The town of Sétif on the eastern uplands between Algiers and Constantine, has become a hub of private enterprise and the second most important centre of industry in the country. More than a thousand Tunisian companies are present in Algeria and many are active in Libya, despite the turmoil there. Closer cooperation between Tunisia and neighbouring Algeria and Libya would do much to create badly needed new jobs in poor frontier regions.

States might have difficulties in working together but private companies do not. Algeria and Morocco boast not only a foreign policy and army and security forces that operate in the name of the state, but also a number of private and state companies which are going global. Were the two countries to be on friendlier terms, their cooperation would help enhance not just economic activity and job creation, but the broader security of North Africa.

Algeria is not above expressing concern about the internal politics of its neighbours. It recently warned the leader of the powerful Ennahda Party in Tunis, Rachid Ghannouchi, that Tunisia must put its house in order. Algeria has no wish to see Tunisia travel the same road to near chaos as Libya has. That helped convince the Islamist government to relinquish power to a government of technocrats. The ousting of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt and the turmoil in Turkey were key factors here but most important was the legacy of the founder of modern Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba. At independence in 1956 he gave women greater rights than anywhere in

the Arab world or indeed in many countries in Europe. Educated women and many men fought hard to prevent the Islamist government pushing through a constitution which included elements of Islamic law. The main trade union is, more than in any other Arab country, a major de facto political force. With the employers federation, the bar association and the League of Human Rights, civil society is stronger here than anywhere else in the Arab world. It was the key broker in the confrontation between Rachid Ghannouchi and the leader of the opposition Nida Tunes, Beji Caid Essebsi. Tunisian leaders compromised whereas Turkish leaders, often quoted as an example of how to reconcile Islam and democracy, seem incapable of doing so.

A third factor should encourage a dialogue between Maghreb countries. The prolonged economic crisis in Europe is having a negative impact on them. Most of their exports of goods and services are to France, Spain, Italy, and Germany. Receipts from European tourists in the Maghreb and North African workers in the EU are stagnant if not declining. The Moroccan and Tunisian economies face losing competitiveness in textiles and tourism. Algeria and Libya are shielded to some extent by their oil income. Yet Algeria's industrial base has shrunk by three quarters (related to GDP) since 1990. That is no sign of a coherent industrial policy.

True, Morocco buys more Algerian gas than a few years ago, the electricity grids are connected, and thousands of Moroccan workers are present in western Algeria. But none of the possible forms of cooperation involving iron ore, gas, ammonia, phosphate rock to produce fertilizers for which the world market is so hungry, let alone banking and financial services, has materialized.

Algeria has two major state oil and gas corporations — Sonatrach and Sonelgaz. The former is slowly diversifying abroad but is only beginning to recover from having its senior management removed in a major corruption scandal and its minister of energy dismissed in 2010. Algeria boasts a number of important private companies but few of them export manufactured goods.

Tunisia, though it has the smallest economy, has companies which export highly lucrative value-added products. But political uncertainty is putting a serious brake on foreign and domestic investment. A certain amount of instability and an economic J-curve after the fall of Ben Ali were inevitable. But incompetent and somewhat corrupt management means the country is slowly but surely becoming more dependent on the IMF rather than navigating its own future. If Tunisia's incapacity to

reform itself economically forces upon it a new Washington consensus, that would be bad news which simply underlines the incapacity of the regional elites to think for themselves and promote strategic policies as the Chinese have done for a generation. Making labour laws more flexible and withdrawing support for subsistence farmers will inflame public opinion. Strong support from the US, which is playing an important if discreet role in making the Tunisian-Algerian border more secure, matters. So far those who threw out Ben Ali have little to show for their pains. If free and fair elections are held successfully and coalition governments continue to steer a middle course, Tunisia might stand out as a rare beacon of light in the Arab world, one where politicians are able to compromise, respect the rule of law, and the freedom of the judiciary. An Arab country without a king or a strong army, boasting an economy where the fruits of growth were shared with greater equity would be wondrous to behold.

Millions of Tunisians have democratic aspirations. A true educated middle class exists although, until 2011, it was not politically assertive en masse. Tunisians continue to find it difficult to agree on key political, economic, and social issues. They agreed on structures earlier this year with a new constitution but there are still important identity, governance and policy issues.

Tunisia is lucky because it does not have a powerful army or religious minorities which elsewhere define nations in sectarian terms. Indeed there are no significant religious minorities west of Egypt, other than Ibadi Muslims in certain remote towns in Libya and Algeria and the Tunisian island of Jerba. There are tiny vestigial Jewish populations and small but growing foreign Christian communities. The system of checks and balances which characterize Western democracies has never had a chance to grown roots in countries where the inheritance of Ottoman and Mamluk centralized and militarized bureaucracies has entrenched the power of small social groups. But Tunisia is far from homogeneous. The coastal elite have few social links with the poorer Tunisians who live in the hinterland. Until the revolt of 2011 they often felt deep contempt for their poorer brothers and sisters of the phosphate-mining region of Gafsa. For all Tunisia's facade of modernity, links of family and clan, often rooted in a specific region, are what really matter. They are the bedrock of social relations and political and economic power.

Algeria for its part is vast and very diverse: that one half of all Berbers marry non-Berbers, that a Kabyle Berber from the east can marry a Tlemceni woman from the erstwhile royal city in the west, was unthinkable

a generation ago. Army officers who are well educated are today drawn from across the country. A generation ago the officer corps was dominated by Chaoui Berbers from the east. In a country whose social and physical fabric was torn to shreds by 132 years of colonial rule, the army remains, unsurprisingly, the backbone of the nation.

Morocco is also undergoing deep social changes and has retained its traditional elite which is modernizing but in some ways more than others. The dynasty that rules Morocco has a legitimacy born of three and a half centuries on the throne. The monarchy has made control of the Western Sahara a centrepiece of its legitimacy. That in turn prevents it from making the slightest concession that might encourage Algeria and the US to push for an ultimate solution. In the late 1980s the two countries came close to an agreement but such a possibility is remote today. Neither country has leaders of the mettle of King Hassan II or Colonel Chadli Bendjedid. The then Algerian head of state believed his country should build closer relations with Morocco and argued his case against much opposition in the military high command. King Mohammed VI does not seem to be interested in a rapprochement and his close advisers Morocco fail to appreciate that the Western Sahara is a matter of no great importance in Algiers.

Building legitimacy in post-revolutionary Tunisia and Algeria is a far more complex matter. Islamists for their part are as diverse as other political groups, a mixed collection of populists, pro-poor radicals, and pro-merchant or entrepreneurial commercial agents. Western domination in colonial days and the strong support given by the US and Europe to ruling autocrats and oligarchs in recent decades have stifled the emergence of a middle class.

Small and medium-size companies are also playing an important role. More than half of them belong to the informal sector. They may not pay taxes and may conform to the law even less than those in southern European countries. More and more French, Tunisian, and other companies are setting up shop in Casablanca and Algiers, with a view to marketing their products in the rich Algerian market. This is both a source of jobs and networking — or getting to know the other — which is of great potential for the future of inter-Maghreb economic relations. The Tunisians however will have to learn to be as open to foreign investment as the Moroccans while both will have to avoid the trap of thinking that, because of its vast hydrocarbons revenue, Algeria is simply a neighbour to be preyed upon.

What does the future of North Africa hold?

Many questions confront North African companies today. What kind of relations might they build with countries south of the Sahara whose economies are growing at an accelerating pace and which are faced with unprecedented attention from China, India, Turkey, and Brazil?

Different studies have looked at the cost of the absence of open frontiers and regional cross-border investment in North Africa and the role entrepreneurs, from the private or state sectors, could play in revitalizing the economies of the region. The Peterson Institute report of 2008, Maghreb Regional and Global Integration: Dream to be Fulfilled, brought out certain features of possible cooperation but they need to be updated. Morocco says it wants to open its frontier but refuses to pay the slightest political price — it certainly has more to gain, economically speaking, than Algeria, at least in the short term. Nationalism is both an ingrained reflex and a convenient tool to distract public opinion from the more pressing problems of social inequality, youth unemployment, predator elites, and capital flight. North African economies need sustainable, empowering solutions. There are many reasons why North African companies and ordinary people in the region might dream of a united and economically well-performing Maghreb. Yet their rulers are unlikely to grant them satisfaction in the near future while the old border disputes remain unresolved with maps still featuring ambiguous dotted lines.

Algeria appears to be in a more comfortable position — for now. Its ample oil and gas income has allowed it to build foreign currency reserves. Fast rising imports, unconsidered subsidies and stalled reform will have to be reckoned with sooner than later. Its best private companies are less competitive, far more rentier in nature, than their Tunisian and Moroccan counterparts for they do not have to compete on world markets. But Algeria cannot sustain an everlasting rise in food and energy subsidies. Budgeted and implicit subsidies accounted for 26.4% of GDP in 2012. Such a huge misallocation of resources spells future trouble.

Morocco meanwhile has to contend with EU free trade agreements that do not work especially in its favour. Should Morocco revise its current energy policy by increasing its gas imports from Algeria? That would of course make the kingdom more dependent on its neighbour. Diversifying sources of gas should make it feel more comfortable about its eastern neighbour. The quid pro quo might be to allow a major Moroccan bank to operate in Algeria. Banking is a sector where Algeria lags behind its neighbour.

However such bold moves cannot come before a much greater measure of trust is built between the two countries. Companies — be they private or public — were the forgotten actors of the Barcelona Process but their role is set to expand. They could well shape the environment of the region in a more meaningful way than more traditional state actors. Corporations might prove to be, a few years hence, the really nimble modern players who shape the destinies of the states and regions they belong to. A modernized OCP will surely be among the new actors as will a recovered Sonatrach.

The geopolitical question over which the greatest uncertainty hangs today is how Algeria's rulers imagine their vast country's regional role in the years ahead? They argued, until very recently, that the country's constitution precludes it from sending troops abroad which is not so. Today are deployed in Libya, even if their presence is officially denied. A new regional role is being forced upon the elite which begs the question of whether it will ever manage to have a rational debate about this role, set up new parameters for foreign policy, or simply follow guidelines set in America and Europe. The role of a gendarme might appeal to part of the military and security apparatus but some of their peers will be more reticent to engage with outsiders whose motives they instinctively distrust. Many in the elite have no desire to see foreigners, whoever they may be, poke their noses in Algerian affairs and are loathe to poke their noses in anyone else's. Being a rentier state offers many comforts. The number of Algerian entrepreneurs and many younger officers who want to see their country better integrated into the global economy and security systems is growing but they face continued and determined opposition from many of their peers.

Despite the anti-Algerian rhetoric in Morocco, many senior officials understand that were the kingdom to discover important sources of oil and gas off the coast of the disputed Western Sahara, exploiting them could run into severe difficulties. They recognize that reconciliation between Algeria and Morocco would not simply open a flood gate of joint ventures but give millions of North Africans faith in the future of their region. As the older generation of Algerian and political leaders pass away, the elites of both countries know each other less and less. Who among the Moroccan monarch's close advisers really knows, let alone understands Morocco? Do they ever consider that Morocco is the party seeking to consolidate its position, that Algeria is asking for nothing and spends far less time thinking about the question of the frontiers than Morocco does. Whether North Africans will throw up political leaders with the calibre of the founder of modern Tunisia is anybody's guess. Those who led North Africa's fight for independence were giants compared to today's leaders.

The best that can be said, in the words of the Moroccan playwright and economist Driss Ksikes is that 'Le Maghreb a un drapeau qui ne flotte nulle part'. He believes Morocco is also quite confused about its regional role:

> Je viens d'un pays fâché avec ses frontieres. Un pays en meme temps ouvert et encerclé, un lieu de transit et un cul de sac. Un lieu extrême, ou l'Orient est déspaysé, et l'Afrique excentrée. Bordé par deux étendues maritimes, et par un pays belliqueux et un front dissident, le Maroc est un pays de paradoxes: il est désenclavé mais pas forcément un lieu de passage; il est très proche de l'occident mais incapable de s'y arrimer; il est traversé par des flux marins et des courants d'air rafraîchissantants mais sent, ici et là, le moisi et le refermé.

What Ksikes says of Morocco applies, à la lettre to Algeria.

> C'est un Maroc, où souvent seuls les militaires, au Sud et a l'Est, ont un oeil rivé sur les frontières terrestres. Les civils les scrutent de loin, les yeux hagards, sans espoir de mobilité. Aux quatre coins du pays, les civils ne traversent pas normalement. Dans quelque direction qu'ils empruntent, ils ressentent au fonds d'eux, soit un arrachement tragique, soit un désir suspendu.[3]

It might be counterintuitive, or considered even counterproductive in the current climate to argue that America and Europe should encourage Algeria and Morocco to share the burden of underwriting security in Northwest Africa — the kingdom would ensure security in Mauretania and the Western Sahara, Algeria in Tunisia and the Tripolitania and Fezzan regions of Libya, Egypt in Cyrenaica. Recent events are wrong footing all the actors: the first visit the new Egyptian head of state paid abroad was to Algeria, another quite unthinkable occurrence only a few months ago. Frontiers will change in the Middle East but not in North Africa even if here changes to the status quo are badly needed. If some existing frontiers need be reconsidered, so be it.

Notes

1. James McDougall offers a lucid assessment of the challenges Algeria faces as it seeks to reinvent itself in Algeria in the shadow of the revolution, for example at a lecture at SOAS, London in November 2011 and in other writings.

2. Francis Ghilès, 'L'Armée Algérienne a-t-elle une politique économique?' *Pouvoirs*, no. 86 (1998), pp. 85–106.

3. Driss Ksikes, *Errances critiques* (Casablanca: Editions La croisée des chemins, 2013), pp. 17–25.

Algiers Underground: A Psychogeographer's Guide

Andrew Hussey

In the winter of 2011 I arrived in Algiers for the second time, to continueresearch on a chapter on Algiers in a book that I was writing at the time. My aims were both simple and complex. I wanted to get a sense of what the city 'felt' like now, in the era after the terrible civil war of the 1990s. This seemed simple enough but the reality was much more complex. For one thing, even in the new era of 'peace' and in the wake of the 'Arab Spring' this was not an easy city to navigate on your own, and even with a guide, it was hard to get a real sense of what people felt and what was happening. This was partly because the government were still very much of who you met and what they said, but also because even without the government, much as had been the case in Tunisia under Ben Ali, ordinary people operated a under kind of 'autocensure' which automatically prevented from them from saying what they thought. And yet I was still determined to break through this wall of silence or half-truths, mainly because I was still concerned with what Walter Benjamin might have called the 'politics of atmosphere', in other words the truths about everyday which cannot always be fully articulated but which nonetheless reveal the reality of a situation. Clearly another technique other than simply interviewing people was needed.

It was at this point that I returned to research I had done much earlier (over a decade or so in fact) on the Paris-based avant-garde coalition called the Internationale Situationniste. I had written a biography of the group's leader and chief theoretician, Guy Debord, and greatly admired his key work *La Société du Spectacle*, published in 1967, and often since then cited as one of the key influences on the events of May 68 in Paris. (My book is indeed now published in French as Guy Debord now enters the canon of 'great French thinkers', marked by an exhibition of his archives at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in 2013, and a possible appearance in the French national curriculum for the baccalauréat.)

Debord's book appears at first glance to be an impenetrable series of Hegelian theses on the 'Spectacle' — the concept that he defines as the enemy of real lived experience and the main cause of alienation of Western

societies. In this book, however, and more to the point as a 'Situationist', Debord also proposes methods of active resistance to the 'Spectacle' — this indeed is what it means to be a 'Situationist' — to create 'Situations' which defy or subvert the controlling force of the 'Society of Spectacle' which, according to Debord, coerces individuals into passive behaviour.[1]

One of the key forms of resistance is the practice of what Debord called 'Psychogeography'. In recent years this is a word that has entered the language, and is most closely associated, at least in English, with the writings of Will Self or Iain Sinclair. In this form of 'psychogeography' a city is intuited as much as it is 'seen' or 'known'. It is an imaginary institution as well as a place where things happen, and the imagining of the city happens primarily through aesthetic means. These means are varied: buildings, paintings, novels, songs. Their unity resides in the articulation they express between place and collective memory or identity. Indeed, these two levels of approach to the city cannot be fully separated.[2]

All of this is pretty much faithful to the definition that Debord provided when he coined the term 'Psychogeography' in 1957. For Debord collective memory tends to cluster and crystallize around places, resulting in articulations of identity that bind together physical space and cultural representations, though as the critic Walter Benjamin discusses, the 'atmosphere' of a city is far from constant across different time frames.

This is why, when I arrived again in Algiers, I had already decided that what I needed to discover — outside the frame or 'spectacle' of official discourse — what lay behind or underneath this version of reality. I needed to discover 'Algiers Underground'.

How to do this? With the aid of the British Council in Algiers I brought a varied group of people together in Algiers, meeting in the Council building but also in different parts of the city. I explained the principles of 'psychogeography' and, in due course, asked my interlocutors for their responses to this way of mapping the city. These were of course varied and multifarious. But what they had in common — to be discussed further below — was a desire to uncover what lies behind the gesture of trying to define the 'essence' of Algiers, as well as a severe will to ask questions about how assumptions about this 'essence' surface in different forms of cultural production and indeed within the very fabric of the city.

The historical context

This was not, however, the first time that Situationist ideas and practices had been engaged with the Maghreb, and Algeria in particular. During

the 1950s and 1960s, at the height of the Algerian War of Independence, the Situationists had always declared themselves to be unequivocal anti-colonialists. They published articles in the *Journal Internationale Situationniste* in support of struggles in the Congo, the Middle East, and the Maghreb. They attended mass meetings and demonstrations and joined in debate with like-minded radical groups.[3]

Guy Debord and Michèle Bernstein, the effective leaders of the group, were also signatories of the 'Manifeste des 121', the celebrated list of intellectuals protesting against the Algerian War, with Jean-Paul Sartre leading the way. Debord's published correspondence of the period testifies to an unwavering commitment to the Algerian cause. This activity was matched by Situationist cosmopolitanism. From its earliest days, the Situationist International had had its own 'Algerian section', and early Situationists such as Abdelhafid Khatib played an important role in formulating theory in the first years of the group. Indeed the input from the Maghreb had always been considerable. Mohammed Harbi, the great historian of the Algerian War, was also close to the Situationists at this point.

In its later, most directly political incarnation of the period 1966 to 1968, the Tunisian Mustapha Khayati, although technically a member of the 'French section', not only provided the Situationists with a nuanced and sophisticated guide to the political realities of the non-European world but was to play the leading role in such key events as the 'scandale de Strasbourg' — the strike at the University of Strasbourg which was organized by Situationist sympathizers. Most importantly, in two key articles of 1965, both of which were circulated in a clandestine manner in Algiers and Oran, the Situationists called upon the Algerian people to recognize their responsibilities, which were to provide a revolutionary model that Western Europe could no longer generate itself.

It was no accident that the incendiary text 'Address to Revolutionaries of Algeria and of All Countries', written mainly by Mustapha Khayati, had been published in the same edition of the journal *Situationist International* alongside a long theoretical piece by Guy Debord, 'The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy', which praised the rioting blacks of Watts for throwing back the cheap gifts of the spectacle in its face in the purest form of potlatch — a word which had entered the French language via Marcel Mauss, who had discovered the term in his study of Amerindian habits at the turn of the nineteenth century, and then Georges Bataille. It described a game, made illegal by the US authorities, which fundamentally destabilized the economic systems of organization on which white traders depended. Two or more tribes would meet to exchange a series of gifts that

had to be of increasingly higher value but which could not be reciprocated; it might start with the exchange of a necklace and end in the burning of a village. It was pure economic war, an entirely negative gesture that offered no way back to the original exchange value system. It was this exemplary form of warfare, based entirely on negative principles, which the Situationists invoked when they described themselves as the 'avant-garde of presence'.

The imperative for Algerians and black Americans was the same:

> The first gestures of the coming revolutionary epoch … embody a new content, visible and hidden, of the critique of present societies and new forms of struggle and also the irreducible moments of all old revolutionary history that has remained in abeyance, moments which reappear like ghosts. The dominant society, which prides itself so much on its constant modernization, is going to meet its match, for it is at last beginning to produce its own modernized negation.[4]

To illustrate the return to real lived experience as the origin of revolutionary action, the article was accompanied by a burnt-out car in the streets of Algiers that was covered in FLN graffiti.

Algiers now: 'Ghosts in daylight'

Like most first-time visitors, most of what I thought I knew about Algeria had been leaned in the cinema. This included obviously the 1930s French gangster classic *Pépé Le Moko*, but also its American remake of 1938, starring Charles Boyer and Hedy Lamarr, and called simply Algiers — as if the name of the city were enough to conjure up the strange mysteries of the place. This film was of course also the model for the classic *Casablanca*, in which Humphrey incarnates the laconic, existential hero, trapped in an Oriental wilderness. I loved too Gillo Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger*, which tells the story of the Algerian War of Independence as a gripping and heroic epic. More recently, the 2010 film *Hors la loi* (Outside the law) sets the stories of three Algerian brothers against the background of the war against the French from 1954 to 1962. It had a mixed reception, not least because for all that it was thrilling and breathless, it is also firmly of the older French tradition which glamorized the country and its violent ways.

Actually, however, one of the best films set in Algeria in recent years is not about war, politics, or terrorism but is a sophisticated and bittersweet comedy called *Délice Paloma*. It stars the Algiers-born actress and singer Biyouna as an ageing prostitute who runs a variety of scams in the city. Witty, fast-paced, and sexy, with a scabrous view of the Algiers' underground

scene, this film has more in common with the films of Pedro Almodovar than Gillo Pontecorvo's movie.

But although it is a comedy, *Délice Paloma* is laced with sadness. The most powerful scene is at the end, as Madame Aldjéria sits outside a seedy nightclub, swigging bottles of beer with a male friend, a pimp, both of them ruminating on life's disappointments. She recalls her time in prison, all the working girls she has met who had been kicked out of France, Spain, Italy, even Iran and Egypt. 'But Madame Aldjéria,' says her companion, 'Do you know anywhere in the world that likes Algerians?' 'Of course not,' she replies, 'It's like that song by Clo-Clo, *Le mal aimé* (The unloved) — we are always the mal-aimés.' This is a poignant and arresting moment of cross-cultural traffic. Of course with their French cultural heritage, Algerians know of and identify with the schmaltzy French singer Clo-Clo (the nickname of 1970s *variété* singer Claude François). But the real point is that, as Madame Aldjéria confesses with a sigh, these days the French, and the wider world, seem to know little of Algeria, and care even less. The scene ends with the old whore throwing beer bottles at a passing taxi cab before staggering off into the night.

This seems an apt metaphor for the rage that Algerians often feel towards the world and France in particular. At the mid-point of the twentieth century, the Algerian War of Independence, fought for less than ten years by Algerian nationalists against the occupying French authorities, held the attention of the world. This was the most vicious of all the wars of decolonization, with no quarter given on either side, and its outcome — it was argued at the time — would determine the rest of world history. It was a Frenchman, the economist Alfred Sauvy, who coined the term 'Third World' in 1952 to describe the countries that, as they emerged from colonial government, did not align themselves with either side in the Cold War.[5] Like the Third Estate during the French Revolution, they would claim their own place in the world. Throughout the 1960s this very '*tiers-mondisme*' as it was called became a safe haven for French intellectuals who felt stifled by the constraints of classical Marxism. Algeria would lead the way.

But this is not what happened. The Algeria that emerged from the war and from the French was poor and psychologically damaged. Instead of following a policy of Third World leadership, the country sought to heal itself with a 'return to its sources'. This meant Arabization of culture, accompanied by a resurgence of Islam as the arbiter of the non-European values of the new Algeria. Western intellectuals slowly deserted Algeria as a cause and the country quietly slipped into a role as a backwater in the Arab world and elsewhere.

History returned with a cruel vengeance in 1992. This is when the army took control of the country in the wake of elections that had apparently been won by the Front Islamique du Salut (the Islamic Salvation Front or FIS). The FIS had vowed to lead Algeria into an Islamic Revolution on the Iranian model; this was clearly unacceptable to Western governments and the oilmen in the south of the country, as well as to the stagnating but still deadly remnants of the government who had taken Algeria to independence. When the results of the elections were effectively cancelled by the government, the hard men of the FIS took to the mountains. Ordinary people blamed the French once again for stifling their voices, and the Second Algerian Civil War — this time between the Algerian government and dissident Islamists — began.

Nobody knows how many people died in the following decade, although sensible estimates are never much short of 200,000. Nobody knows how much of the violence was orchestrated by the government to terrify the population into giving them support. But a flavour of the viciousness of the violence is contained not in the figures but the details. These include, for example, a primary school teacher who was raped outside her humble classroom in a village outside Oran. She was then beheaded in front of her class, all of whom were under the age of ten, and her severed head placed on the desk at the front of the class 'as a warning'. This is not warfare but psychosis.[6]

How to explain this? The supreme theoretician of the Algerian War of Independence is Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist from Martinique who detested French colonialism and worked for the Algerian side until his death in 1961. According to Fanon, colonialism was a form of psychic violence that destroyed the identity of the colonized. As a response to this, Fanon advocated total rejection of European civilization. By this, Fanon meant the creation of a new culture defined by force of arms if necessary.[7]

Fanon was right about the devastating psychological effects of colonialism, even if the means of resistance he advocated are arguably just as destructive. The origins of the Algerian trauma are however particularly unusual in that there has always been a long historical complicity and intimacy between France and Algeria. This is not as simple or as straightforward as the binary relationship between colonizer and colonized: rather the question of Algerian identity, for Muslim and non-Muslim, has always been fraught with double binds and contradictions.

These tensions are indeed the defining feature of the work of Albert Camus, who is undoubtedly the most famous writer to have been born on

Algerian soil and whose life and career is entirely marked by his experiences there. It is no accident that his greatest book, *L'Etranger*, a classic account of the alienated mind, takes place in Algeria in the late 1930s, and that its central motif is the pointless shooting of an Arab by its icy narrator Meursault. In one of the most chilling scenes, Meursault is thrown into a prison cell packed with Muslims. He is asked by one of them what he has done. 'I killed an Arab,' he says.

Like most Europeans or Americans of my generation, I had first come across 'Algiers' and 'Algeria' in Camus's writings, not just in *L'Etranger* but also his memoirs and essays. And like most readers who approach Algeria through the prism of Camus, I was puzzled by this place which, as he described it, was so French that it might have been in France but was also so far, foreign, and out of reach.

Part of this difficulty arises from the fact that the Algeria Camus describes is only partly a Muslim country. Instead Camus sees Algeria as an idealized pan-Mediterranean civilization. In his autobiographical writings on Algiers and on the Roman ruins at Tipasa, he describes a pagan place where classical values were still alive and visible in the harsh but beautiful sun-drenched landscape. This indeed is the key to Camus's philosophy of the Absurd, which is often associated with the Existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, but really is a more nuanced evocation of older and sterner moral choices about life and death. In Camus's Algeria, God does not exist, life is an endless series of moral choices which must be decided by individuals on their own, with no metaphysical comfort or advice, and with little or no possibility of knowing they ever made the Absolutely correct choice.

It is easy to see here how Camus's philosophy had appealed to the generation of French Leftist intellectuals which fought in the Second World War, a period when Occupied France was shrouded in moral ambiguity as well as in the military grip of the Germans. Camus's philosophy was less effective, however, in the post-war period, as Algerian nationalism began to assert itself against France, modelling itself on the values of the French Resistance. Camus was sympathetic to the cause of Muslim rights. However, like most European 'Algériens' on the Left, Camus spoke no Arabic and had little patience with religion, including Islam. Most importantly, throughout the 1950s, as the violence between the French authorities and Algerian nationalist intensified, Camus found himself endlessly compromised. His intentions were always noble but by the time of his death in a car crash in 1960 he acknowledged that he no longer recognized the country of his birth.

During the 1990s it became all but impossible to visit Algeria. By now reading Camus as a way into this Algeria was simply a waste of time. This was a country dominated by terror. Algerian Muslims were regularly massacred by Islamist and other unknown forces. Foreigners were declared enemies by the Islamists and targeted for execution. The government could not be trusted either. The only non-Algerians who braved the country were hardened war reporters like Robert Fisk, who described disguising his European face with a newspaper when travelling by car in Algiers and staying no more than four minutes in a street or a shop — the minimum time, he decided, for kidnappers to spot a European. In Algiers in the mid-1990s, in this formerly most cosmopolitan of cities, less than an hour's flight or so away from the French mainland, for Algerians and Europeans, kidnap and murder were only ever a matter of minutes away.

When I arrived in Algiers for the first time in 2009, the city I found was not like this. The ceasefire and amnesty had been in place for several years and you no longer had to hide your status as European. As recently as 2007, however, there had been a wave of deadly bombings and assassinations and the city was still tense. On the drive from the airport I passed no less than six police or military checkpoints, all manned by heavily armed men. It was getting dark and Algiers was emptying out for the night. During the long nightmare of the 1990s nobody had dared to be out of doors after dark and the habit still remained.

As we drove against the rush-hour traffic towards my hotel in the centre, you could see that, along with Marseille, Naples, Barcelona, and Beirut, this was one of the great Mediterranean cities — in the dusk I could still make out the pine forests of the surrounding hills and the magnificent dark-blue sweep of the bay. Unlike any of her sister cities, however, with maybe the exception of Gaza, Algiers went into lockdown at the first shadows of evening.

It was at this point that I decided to apply some of the active principles of 'Psychogeography'. I began, over the next few days, by crawling all over the city, walking the boulevards, climbing steep streets and staring out at the sea from the heights. I spoke to everyone I could — teachers, shopkeepers, students, journalists, political activists. They were all remarkably frank and impatient to tell their stories to an outsider. Their suffering during the years of Islamist terror had been incalculable.

In the sessions on 'psychogeography' which I organized, an elegant university lecturer, a specialist in Marxism and feminism, told me how she went every day to classes at the university, driving past the headless corpses which were regularly pinned to the gates of the institute. A journalist recalled the vicious

paranoia of everyday life in Algiers in the 1990s, and how, as he walked down the street strangers, bearded young men, would hiss at him and make a throat-slitting gesture. A young female student who had grown up in the so-called 'Triangle of Death' — the villages and suburbs controlled by terrorists just outside Algiers — recounted a childhood memory of washing other people's blood off her feet, having waded through the muddy streets of her village after a massacre.

Despite the horror stories, my exhilaration at first overcame fear. I had waited a long time to be here. In the past two decades I had worked and travelled extensively in the sister-countries of Morocco and Tunisia. All the time I had been dreaming of visiting Algeria, seeing Algiers: the capital of French North Africa.

Most of all, I wanted to see the Casbah, the old Ottoman city which runs from the hills of Algiers down to the sea. These days the Casbah is a rotting slum. Its narrow and ancient streets stink of sewage. There are gaping holes left by unfinished renovation projects or by unloved houses that have shattered and collapsed from neglect. Many of the inhabitants mutter that the authorities would like to see the complete destruction of the Casbah, which they see as a haven for criminals and terrorists. There is talk too of property speculators who want to build hotels and shops on prime real estate. Still this is the most iconic and historically significant space in North Africa.

Walking down through Algiers from the Casbah is an eerie experience. This is not because of the usual clichés about Arab or Ottoman cities — that they are 'timeless', 'medieval', and so on. These clichés are meaningless European notions of chronology, urban order, and modernity that have been grafted onto the living reality of twenty-first century Muslim life. Rather, the sense of the uncanny you meet during a first visit to Algiers here is classically Freudian: it is the dreamlike sense that without knowing it, you have already been here before. This is partly because of the myriad films, books, and paintings about and of the city, which have made Algiers probably the most-known un-visited capital in the world. It is also because walking through Algiers is like walking through the wreckage of a recently abandoned civilization whose citizens have only just departed in a hurry, leaving behind them their most personal possessions which you immediately recognize.

As you step down to the packed streets leading towards Place des Martyrs, the ruins of the French city begin to reveal themselves. As you go down past the Turkish-style mosque and as the city widens towards the sea,

the arcades, passages, and the streets are constructed with the geometric precision to be found in any French town. The centre of gravity of the French city was here, between the Rue d'Isly (now Rue Ben-M'Hidi) and Rue Michelet (now Rue Didouche-Mourad).

The streets may now be named after heroes of the war against France but Algiers is as purely French here as Paris, Lyons, or Bordeaux. This much is revealed in the details — the signs, the streetlamps, the carefully constructed squares, the blue-shuttered balconies, the old tram tracks, and the cobbled paving stones. At the dead centre of the city, on the Boulevard Khemisti, is the Jardin de l'Horloge, a compact garden terrace which looks out directly onto the harbour, and where the monument to the French dead who gave their lives for 'Algérie Française' has been covered up. I loved the fact that, as in Venice or down by the port in Marseille, passing ships seem so near that you could walk onto them.

In any other circumstances, Algiers would be called by French historians a '*lieu de mémoire*' (place of memory). This is a theory of history dear to many contemporary French historians, which deciphers historical meaning not only from books and archives but also geographical sites. The landscape of France, from this point of view, from the châteaux of the Loire to the battlefields of the First World War, can be read by the historian as a complete text, a text which has been memorialized and made legible to the present.

The trauma of Algerian history cannot yet be classified in this way. As you enter the city for the first time, you notice that the bay is dominated by the Monument aux Martyrs, a brutal concrete sculpture on one of the heights of Algiers. It is shaped — surely an accident? — like a huge gallows. It is meant to commemorate those Algerians who gave their lives for independence. The ugliness of the Monument aux Martyrs is in fact terrifying. But this is why it is such a suitable emblem for a city, and a country, haunted by past and present fears. Algiers now is a site of impossible mourning for both French and Algerians.

Spectacular blindness

In his book *Covering Islam* Edward Said reiterates the point first made in Orientalism that Western discourse on Islam is fragmented and dangerous largely because of the way it is processed into partisan opinion by self-appointed experts in the media and the academy. To underline this point Said gives us several examples of Western public commentators on the Arab world whose poor knowledge of the language and culture of the countries under discussion would be easily revealed and considered disgraceful if

applied to European or US models. The real problem here, argues Said, is not simply generalized ignorance about 'Orient', but that all forms of knowledge about Islam in the West are necessarily incomplete because they are formed outside a cultural context in which Islam is not an object for study but a living active agent.

Guy Debord is never mentioned in *Covering Islam*, and there is nowhere in any of Said's other writings to suggest that he read Debord. There is however, I wish to suggest, an interesting parallel, even if there is no direct relation, between Said's description of the deliberate construction of Western media blindness and the 'la société du spectacle', theorized by Debord. More precisely, in his book Debord identifies the 'spectator' in the 'society of the spectacle' as one who is marginalized and excluded from the movement of the History. Human beings in the 'spectacular society' have no sense of purpose or any tangible feeling of authenticity. They are 'separated' from themselves and their products. This is because everywhere and in all spheres of human activity reality is consistently being replaced by images. These images then become reality.

This much is an obvious truism to those from the East and the West who have grown up in the 'society of the spectacle', the world of globalized media chatter, predicted by Debord. But there is also a bigger question: how far the 'spectacular society', theorized by Debord, can really organize, control, and ultimately dominate political and philosophical discourse, such as 'Islam' or the 'Arab World', which have apparently a singular hegemonic meaning in the West, but which suddenly become plural, ambiguous, multilayered, or all three at the same time — especially when seen from the so-called margins, those cultures which are outside and impervious to the language of the 'spectacle'.[8]

What brings both Debord and Said together is that they are both thinkers who are concerned with the political consequences of media image and illusion. For Said, following Foucault, the greatest issues of our time are not to be found in debates over historical methodology but rather in questions of representations. This is how Said can still say that the postcolonial moment, which he consistently interrogates, is opposite to, if not in opposition to postmodernism. He says this because although the two movements share a concern with textuality as the key to interpretation, those who initiated and continued the postcolonial project never rarely lost sight of the grand narratives so famously abandoned by largely Euro-centric postmodernists, even if these narratives had been deferred or in abeyance. In the contemporary setting, this means that, as the Situationists

indicated in 1967, that artists, writers, intellectuals in the West carry the responsibility of not only recognizing this fact but acting upon it. The alternative, as Edward Said's thesis about the Western media ignorance of Isla clearly demonstrates, is that the 'society of the spectacle', prophesized by Debord in the 1960s at the height of the Algerian revolution, consumes not only thought but the possibility of real meaning or change.

In 2014 most Algerians complain, either secretly or just below the surface of the 'spectacle' of official politics, that their country suffers from stagnation. Throughout the spring of the past year, rumours have been reaching Paris that Algiers was again preparing for radical change, possibly even revolution. French television showed scenes of young men confronting the police — and meeting less resistance than usual. I spoke to intelligence and diplomatic sources in Paris and they told me that although the police were not 'cracking heads' the way they had done in the 1990s, that the government had the situation under control. There was no possibility of an uprising as had happened in Tunisia and Egypt.

The Algerians who have made it in France can find the atmosphere strange and unfriendly when they come back. The DJ and rapper Sinik from Seine Saint-Denis, came over in the summer of 2008 and swore that he would never come again: he was met by heckling crowds and general indifference. For a whole generation, so-called democracy has made Algeria feel like a prison. They don't need to be taunted by those who have escaped.

No one knows exactly when the last 'war for liberation' ended. All everyone knows is that the rate of killing has slowed down but nobody feels free. The tension hangs in the air, waiting to be transformed again into an electric storm.

'Psychogeography' offers no cures or concessions to this feeling. It is simply a manner of diagnosing what it means. It is this indeed tension which continues to inform the present mood in Algiers.

Notes

1. See Guy Debord, *La Sociéte du Spectacle* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1967).

2. See Andrew Hussey, *The Game of War: The Life and Death of Guy Debord* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2001), pp. 67–69.

3. Ibid., pp. 120–23.

4. Mustapha Khayati, quoted in Ibid., pp. 256–57.

5. Alfred Sauvy, 'Trois Mondes, Une Planète', *L'Observateur* (14 August 1952), p. 14.

6. There are several convincing and accurate accounts of this period in Algerian history. See for example, Martin Evans and John Phillips, *Algeria, Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 177–215; Robert Fisk, *The Great War For Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (London: Vintage, 2005), pp. 631–720; Luis Martinez, *La Guerre Civile en Algérie* (Paris: Karthala, 1998); Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield, Algeria 1988–2002* (London: Verso, 2003); Mohammed Samraoui, *Chroniques des Années de Sang* (Paris: Denoël, 2003); James D. Le Sueur, *Between Terror and Democracy: Algeria Since 1989* (London: Zed Books, 2010); Mohammed Samraoui, *Chroniques des Années de Sang* (Paris: Denoël, 2003); Youcef Zirem, *L'Algérie, la guerre des ombres* (Brussels: GRIP, 2002).

7. See Frantz Fanon, 'Concerning Violence', in *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp. 27–75.

8. Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage, 1997).

Bavures and Shibboleths: The Changing Ecology of Language and Culture in Morocco

Martin Rose

The Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun recently addressed an open letter to the President of France about the state of French-Moroccan relations.[1] 'No French politician,' he begins, 'would have dared to compare Algeria to an old mistress whom one no longer loves, but with whom one is obliged to sleep. Nor would a magistrate ever have sent to the residence of the Algerian ambassador a court summons for a senior representative of that state.' Nor, he might have added, would the Algerian Foreign Minister have been subjected to a body search (whatever that really meant) at Charles de Gaulle airport. Yet these are only three of the catalogue of perceived insults to which Morocco has been subjected in recent months. Even as I write this, another shock wave ripples the newspapers: General Bennani, gravely ill in a Paris military hospital, has been insulted in his bed by a Moroccan intruder — and this too has been added to the catalogue of insults that France is supposed to have permitted, or facilitated, or failed to prevent.[2]

In Ben Jelloun's view, Algeria snarls and is respected, but Morocco is altogether too indulgent, and gets only disrespect in return. He writes of 'a lack of sensitivity, a sort of casual taking-for-granted, and above all a misunderstanding of the Moroccan soul'. Morocco is not, he says, 'the sort of country that one can treat with offhand scorn (*qu'on traite dessus la jambe*)'. He is clear that Morocco needs respect, and isn't getting it — but he is looking for solutions, for a personal visit to Morocco by the President to mend fences with the King. He wants Franco-Moroccan relations restored to their old equilibrium, and stresses that, however distracting events in Europe may be, France needs to understand that 'Morocco is worried too by the future of a Europe now taken over by populist-extremists and xenophobes. Morocco needs its exports defended and its identity respected. I'm talking of tomatoes and oranges, of fishing and development, of investment and progress.'[3]

This is mild enough, but there's a curious undercurrent. The cavalcade of perceived insults by France to Morocco, no doubt exaggerated and groomed by the press into a single narrative for political purposes, is nonetheless deeply hurtful, as demonstrations outside the French Embassy, and reactions

in the Moroccan press and parliament have made clear. It is widely seen as a shift in French attention away from Morocco and towards those 'snarling' Algerians, driven by the needs of Sahelian geopolitics.

Quite how hurtful this estrangement is, is indicated by Ben Jelloun's choice of the word *bavure* to describe the incidents that punctuate it: *La tension dure, les bavures continuent et M. Hollande ne bronche pas*. The word is of course an old one, meaning 'a blot', but it is a reference too, measured or subliminal, to the police unit to which *bavure* also alludes, the Brigade d'Agression et Violence (les BAVs), which was formed in 1958 to confront and control Algerian demonstrations in Paris. The BAV became famous for its ultra-violent tactics, culminating in the wholesale killing of at least forty, and perhaps over one hundred, unarmed Algerian demonstrators on 17 October 1961. *Bavure* is a word used to describe gratuitous police violence — in this most famous case, a massacre in the centre of Paris. Chosen with precision in this context by a great Moroccan wordsmith living in that same city, the word suggests that there are dark and deep undercurrents in the relationship.

What strikes me after four years in Morocco is the way in which the Franco-Moroccan relationship is changing. In some ways this is simply a natural evolution as Morocco begins at last to escape, definitively, the cultural hegemony of its former colonial power. But in this natural distancing there is a vein of bitterness, not only amongst the old who remember earlier times, but amongst the young, who don't. Emerging from the same deep, dark undercurrents is the resentment that the PJD showed in describing (in French) the new French *bac* as *une grave violation de la souveraineté nationale*, and the more chaotic youthful resentment of France that one finds widely amongst the publicly educated young. 'I hate French,' a young student said to me in the margins of a conference recently, and his twenty or so young companions all nodded firmly in agreement.

It is the very closeness, the deep cultural affinity for France amongst the older French-educated Moroccan elite, which makes being treated *dessus la jambe* so very painful. As for the young, something else is going on — a straining to be free of a form of society in which opportunity, power and respect are all words written in French. Now is a moment of great change for Morocco, an opening-up to a wider world of opportunity in which Morocco can, if it has the will and determination, prosper.

I don't mean that the two ageing lovers are heading for separation — far from it. But I do think that much of what has been taken for granted by France in Morocco in the six decades since Independence will have

increasingly to be earned and paid for; and I believe that the old notion of North Africa in general, and Morocco in particular, as a *chasse gardée* is fading very fast. I also believe that Morocco is moving, erratically but definitively, into a much richer, more variegated linguistic and cultural environment, an environment in which it can flourish at last. What I shall do in this short essay is to offer some reflections on this fast-moving shift in Morocco's cultural ecology, and what it means for the future.

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The most obvious bellwether of this change is language. The Moroccan elite is francophone, and has been so to a growing extent since well before Independence. Language is a carefully curated barrier to social mobility, and one which has long helped to sustain the cosy interpenetration of the French and Moroccan elites. Language has also held back the large section of the population which doesn't speak French, and which since the 1980s has been forcibly educated in classical Arabic. Well-educated Moroccans, particularly of an older generation, speak an exquisite French, mannered, elegant and intricate, which is a pleasure to the ear, but which is also an ineradicable class-marker. Of this language frontier the Moroccan critic Abdelfattah Kilito writes (in an essay called 'Le Rempart', in which the Andalusian Wall of Rabat's medina is the symbol of a cultural and linguistic, as well as a physical, division) that as a schoolboy in Rabat in the 1960s he learned French at school, but only at school: 'Outside my school, it simply didn't wash. Between themselves, the schoolboys didn't use it, and at home it was forbidden. It was the language of separation: for the first time in the history of Morocco, children were learning a language unknown to their parents.'[4] But even this uncomfortable, if effective, access for children outside the elite has narrowed dramatically since Kilito's childhood, with the Arabization of the public system and the deterioration in the quality of French teaching within it.

French is, and has remained until today, the language of power, the language of success. Some see this as accidental. Others, like Mohamed Chafik, as something much more fundamental to the architecture of independent Morocco, and as the guiding principle of a deliberately divisive education system: 'One is tempted to believe,' he writes, 'that [the political architects of Moroccan education] wanted, as in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, to create an impoverished Beta class for the masses, and a privileged Alpha class for them and their children.'[5] One doesn't need to attribute quite such deliberate malice to the framers of Moroccan education policy, but it is all too visible that the Moroccan elite, by and large, continues to

send its children to the archipelago of more than thirty French lycées de mission, education at which provides a vertiginous ladder on the snakes-and-ladders board of life. That the minister of education responsible for the accelerated (and, many feel, botched) Arabization of the public system in the 1980s sent his own children to a French lycée de mission is perhaps not insignificant. One researcher, crunching the graduation statistics for these foreign lycées since Independence, shows that 45% of Moroccan graduates from the lycées de mission since 1956 come from 500 families; 34% from 200 families, 27% from 100 families, 21% from 50 families, and 15% from 20 families.6 They are, in other words, to a large extent a support system, and a filter, for the elite. Their graduates move easily into higher education abroad, and attend recruitment fairs in Paris for management jobs in Casablanca. And they prosper.

Of course this isn't the whole story, and like the chain of *bavures* in the Moroccan press, Morocco's education and language policies can be seen as accidental outcomes of the colonial past, or can be crafted into a hostile narrative, according to one's polemical stance. But the fact remains that postcolonial Morocco has been joined at the hip with France in a way that seems increasingly strange — and increasingly anachronistic. The weekly news magazine *TelQuel* recently ran a long feature examining some of these questions, called 'France: un ami qui nous veut du bien?'.[7] Under the subhead *Un bulldozer culturel*, its authors examine this interplay of culture, education, and the francophone elite. They note some of the basic statistics that need to inform any discussion. French cultural spending in Morocco is amongst its highest anywhere in the world (just as its embassy in Rabat is — amazingly — amongst its largest). Each year, some 1,500 Moroccans of the 20,500 inscribed (2014) in the thirty-nine institutions accredited to the French Ministry of Education pass the French baccalaureate, bypassing their own national qualifications system. Encapsulating the negative view, the article quotes leftist academic Youssef Belal as saying, 'The French cultural and academic presence in Morocco is encouraged by the Moroccan state's power centres, and more generally by the economic elite. This presence perpetuates a neo-colonial situation which profits the French state to such an extent that it makes the most strenuous efforts on political and economic levels [to sustain it].'

There seem to me to be two levels here of interaction. The first is about the way in which this snug relationship benefits elites in both countries; the other about the way in which it distorts Moroccan society. At the binational elite level, it is all too clear (though not my purpose here to explore): French

industry has an inside track, French diplomats and politicians — until recently at least — a fairly clear run. Moroccans of a certain class move easily between the educational systems, and the social structures, of the two countries at the highest level. As *Maroc Hebdo* once put it, 'The Moroccan elite only recruits amongst the graduates of the French *grandes écoles*,' and while this may be an exaggeration, it is not untrue. There are some thirty thousand Moroccan students in France, the largest single national group; the thousand or so who make it into the *grandes écoles* are the crème de la crème. The Moroccan elite of the post-Independence period is francophone, French-educated, and French-orientated; and it is very much in the interests of France to keep it so. A largely shared culture of business, recreation, education, and language maintains the intimacy of the colonial period into the postcolonial. Morocco is a jewel in the crown of *la francophonie*.

The second level is more interesting, and echoes my point above about the role of language and culture in making and reinforcing distinctions between Moroccans. The modern elite in Morocco is defined by its French-ness, and by its self-conscious distance from other forms of Moroccan-ness. Sylvain Beck reckons that 'Franco-Moroccan relations should really be seen as purely Moroccan-Moroccan … the French are just intermediaries in these relations'.[8] By this he means that each Francophile cultural choice made by an actual or aspiring member of the Moroccan elite is a deliberate marker of distinction from those Moroccans who don't, or can't, make the same choice themselves. The 'problem' of France in Morocco is actually the problem of Moroccan society itself, and its costive class structure. Beck calls this 'a social elevator running at two speeds, where francophony and francophily become not just cultural capital, but also weapons of domination between Moroccan citizens'.[9]

It is very noticeable how easily Moroccans can place each other by listening to spoken French: it is replete with social and educational signals and shibboleths, some obvious to a non-francophone foreigner, others quite obscure. This isn't intrinsically strange — the same is true of Englishmen listening to each other speaking English, after all: but what is really bizarre about it is that this process of class-judgement is done entirely through the medium of a foreign language. Coded in this way it is a way of doing down the Other — a language whose sophisticated deployment is as much designed to exclude as to communicate. And in doing so it delineates a damaging schizophrenia in Moroccan society.

At the most trivial level, my son, out running in a Rabat park a couple of years ago, was accosted by a slightly truculent group of young Moroccans

who jeered at him as he ran past them: '*Sale français! A bas Sarkozy!*', or something of the kind. He ran on round the park and it happened again on the next circuit. Irritated, he stopped and said in his fluent Brussels-accented French that he was English, and pissed off at their rudeness, at which the Moroccan kids code-switched and apologized, warmly, in English, and shook his hand politely. This is interesting not just because it offers a glimpse (oft repeated in other circumstances) of some young Moroccans' attitudes to France, but because it also shows Moroccans deftly using different linguistic tools to deliver labile, shape-shifting messages of which the language in which they are expressed is an intrinsic part.

A language gambit that is designed to keep people down by marking them as outsiders is bound to create and sustain resentment. By taking on this role French becomes associated dangerously closely with an elite that may itself be coming under social and cultural, if not yet perhaps serious political, pressure. Language-choice becomes a political act which of course it always is, in one sense (and I write after long periods working in both Belgium and Canada). What I have seen in my four years in Morocco is a fast-changing attitude to the two foreign languages with which I am familiar — English (of which I am a native speaker) and French (of which I am a more or less competent non-native speaker). It is certainly true that French is currently the more useful, and much of my business in Morocco is done in French. But I have watched the demand for English growing very quickly indeed and — even more interesting — arrived at a clearer and clearer view of the multiple reasons why this is so.

The most interesting reason is that English escapes the caste-signs of French. If, as I observed above, one Moroccan can always judge another by his French, the same is not true of English. English provides a neural bypass around the sociocultural blockage that French erects. When speaking English, you betray little about yourself to another Moroccan. Judgements made on this basis about your social class and education are generally crude and contextually irrelevant, and so are not made. Language mistakes are not serious. Where failures of grammar, conjugation, or gender are social disaster in French, the equivalent errors in English are venal sins, if they are noticed at all. International English — Globish, as it is sometimes called — is a forgiving language with a large bandwidth of register which cares little for accuracy. Right now, and increasingly since the youthquake of the 2011 spring, young Moroccans seem to care less for perfection of form and much more for unmarked communication. On Facebook I see young Moroccans 'speaking' a lithe, promiscuous mixture of French, Darija, and English (as

well as 'MSA'), an e-macaronic that is concerned with meaning, humour, and reference — not with the intricacies of form. It is perhaps a little like the way in which some Indians convert from Hinduism to Islam and Christianity, in part at least because these two religions offer them ways out of the Indian caste system. English in Morocco is, it seems to me, increasingly popular because it makes the same offer: speak me and you step aside from Beck's 'weapons of cultural domination'.

The last three years in particular, with their explosion of social media (by late 2011, 10% of Moroccans were on Facebook, 80% of these under thirty years old, and 40% of them women[10]) have given impetus to the growth in Morocco of a language that is simple, universal, and flexible. Classical Arabic couldn't offer this because it is complex, regionally and religiously specific, and not very flexible. The low quality of its teaching in Moroccan schools is illustrated by literacy figures that even by UNESCO's almost-meaninglessly easy standards, show that scarcely 60% of Moroccans can 'read and write a simple sentence about their daily lives'. Arabic and French between them have made of Morocco a society that is substantially *analphabète* and overwhelmingly *illettré*. English, the lingua franca of today's world, may perhaps be able to help fill the gap.

The relative appetites are remarkable. Visiting English classrooms around Morocco I am constantly struck by the fact that the quality of spoken English is so high. 'How long have you been learning English?' I often ask, and am surprised to be told, 'Only a year, sir' or 'Only two'. Teachers confirm that progress in English is spectacularly faster for most children than in French, reflecting a real appetite to learn, and a real sense of positive value. In part of course this is the impact of music and films in English. But it also reflects two other understandings: that English is a very useful commodity on the job market; and that it is symbolic of dissent, of modernity, of change, and of youthful aspiration. 'English,' a small-town language school proprietor told the BBC last year, in accounting for rocketing demand, 'is a language for everyone, of every social background.' French is not seen the same way: the same teacher says to camera, 'French is considered the language of the elite'.[11]

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Of course there is a top-down aspect to all this, too. Young Moroccans may be pulling, but Moroccan policymakers see very clearly the need for language change, and are pushing, albeit a little spasmodically. Debate about language is hobbled by religio-political hobby horses. Arabic and Darija slug it out in depressingly barren debates (which remind one painfully of Jorge

Luis Borges's wry comment on the Falklands War, 'Two bald men fighting over a comb'). There is intemperate to-and-fro in parliament, as though the debilitating, illiteracy-generating diglossia forced on all Moroccans, both arabophone and berberophone, were a subject for leisurely polemic, rather than the pressing national disaster that it actually is.

Solutions really are hard to arrive at because the cultural identity arguments on each side routinely outweigh the fact that huge numbers of Moroccans await access to the written word altogether. In a country of at least 32 million, where the total circulation of all newspapers does not exceed 350,000 a day, and where the average print run of a new book is 1,500, to talk of foreign languages seems almost self-indulgent, but talk we must. The abject state of the education system owes much to linguistic confusion, with Arabic (itself in some ways a foreign language) introduced from year one, French from year two and a second foreign language, generally English, from year nine.[12] As most university professors will assure you privately, the 13% or so of primary-school starters who survive to pass their baccalaureate arrive at university without, for the most part, usable Arabic or usable French. Having studied all the way through school in Arabic (though teaching has not infrequently to be paraphrased in Darija for the children to follow), students who want to study maths or science must suddenly begin to study in French at university. It is hard to imagine a more destructive formula for education. But at the same time it is all too clear what has happened: the senior, most prestigious branch of study — maths and science — has managed to defend its francophony, its prestige and its access to higher education in France. Another class divider, another linguistic minefield artfully maintained. Charis Boutieri quotes a Moroccan teacher as saying that 'French is [the pupils'] passport to the *grandes écoles* … we don't hide it from them — the key to success is math and French'.[13] And so indeed it has been.

In August 2013 HM the King made a resounding speech about education.[14] He said that despite some progress:

> I am indeed sad to note that the state of education is worse now than it was twenty years ago. … We still have a long, arduous journey ahead of us if we are to enable this sector to actually play its role as an engine for the achievement of economic and social advancement. In this connection, we cannot but ask this pressing question: why is it that so many of our young people cannot fulfil their legitimate professional, material, and social aspirations? The education sector is facing many difficulties and problems. They are mostly due to the adoption of some syllabi and curricula that do not tally with the requirements of the job market. Another reason has to do with the disruptions caused by changing the language of instruction from Arabic, at the primary and secondary levels, to some foreign languages, for the teaching of scientific and technical subjects in higher education. Accordingly, students must be provided with the necessary linguistic skills so that they may fully benefit from training courses. … Moroccans should, therefore, be encouraged to learn and master foreign languages, in addition to the official languages specified in the Constitution.[15]

This is an appeal — indeed an instruction — for much greater linguistic diversity. It has been answered, interestingly, in a number of very different ways (even leaving aside the affirmation of Tamazight under the 2011 Constitution as an official language — and the curious position of 'official' Tamazight itself as a standardized, constructed, and as such not, yet at least, very widely spoken, language).

First of all, an experimental French-language version of the Moroccan baccalaureate has been trialled in fourteen Moroccan schools since September 2013. It has proved very unpopular in some quarters, attracting fierce opposition both from some sections of the PJD, the leading party in the coalition government (*une humiliation de la langue arabe*), and from the Istiqlal, whose leader, Hamid Chabat even went so far, between *bavures* a few months ago, to say that it was high time to replace French with English. Early this year the Ministry of National Education announced the introduction of an English-language version of the Moroccan baccalaureate, to run alongside the French. A Spanish bac is also in the pipeline, and there is much broader language study beginning to take off amongst those who can afford it — in Chinese particularly (heavily subsidized by the Chinese government), as well as other European languages like Italian and German.

At a more professional level (though still more aspiration than policy) we have heard Dr Lahcen Daoudi, the Minister for Higher Education, tell a group of students that a Moroccan student who does not speak English should consider himself *analphabète* (*'comme moi,'* he added, disarmingly but importantly — this is a clear sign that many francophones understand elite culture to be running out of rope). More recently he has announced that registration for a PhD should be conditional on English proficiency, and he has repeated his message about English as the key to education and development, again and again. This is indeed the beginning of the language-diversification that HM the King called for in his 2013 speech, and it could be seen as a simple expansion of the horizon of possibilities.

But there's more to it than that. One interesting pointer is the astonishing growth in demand for English across Morocco. In the last year the British Council has offered online and blended English courses at low prices to Moroccan university students. The immediate take-up has been extraordinary, in the tens of thousands. English is seen as a window on the world, a tool in the toolbox of employability, a statement about oneself, and the mark of a new Moroccan international and intercultural confidence. There is some evidence that speaking English commands a wage premium in the domestic job market, which is particularly intriguing because any such premium would be running rather ahead of actual demand — a sort of anticipatory price rise, like shares appreciating on expectation of future earnings.[16]

Then there is a steadily growing number of Moroccan students at American, Canadian, and British universities. 'I'm too old a dog to learn new tricks,' said an elderly and very grand Moroccan to me recently, in exquisite French, 'but my children are at university in the States because without English they aren't going anywhere.' In Britain this trend is suddenly, and for the first time, noticeable. Beside the thirty thousand or so in France, the numbers are still tiny; but compared to what they were five years ago, they are astonishing. One Russell Group university alone told me recently that it has received almost one hundred and fifty UCAS applications this year — about the same number of Moroccans studying at all British universities combined in 2002. British universities are now beginning to recruit aggressively in Morocco. Later this year there is a delegation of twenty British universities heading for North Africa, and it will be the first of many. 'Why?' I asked a university president here, 'What is attractive about the UK?' 'Simple,' he replied. 'Three reasons. First Moroccan students don't much like the way they are treated in France these days. Second, they particularly hate the French system whereby entry to the first year of university doesn't guarantee entry to the second — they love UK completion rates. And third, they aren't stupid: they can see that the top French university is ranked 65th in the world, while Britain — England — has three universities in the world's top ten.'[17] And these students are almost all coming from the elite lycées, so that this really is a small but growing *trahison des clercs*.

Right at the heart of these stirrings of change is a growing perception of the *francosphère* as constraining, and of the wider world demanding English as its entry ticket. This is very clear in academia, where the minister is undoubtedly correct in his analysis. I have all too often talked with francophone Moroccan academics who lament the closed doors of language as stunting their professional lives; and we have begun to see the senior

management of whole universities shipping off to England for intensive language courses. If corroboration is needed, one need look no further than the agonized debates in France over the last couple of years around the use of English in higher education. One comment stays with me: the then minister, Geneviève Fioraso, pursuing a policy of wider English use in French higher education, asked rhetorically which country was the largest exporter of students in the world, answering herself — India — and noting that France has only 3,000 Indian students. As she put it, *'Nous sommes ridicules'*.[18] The debates in France about the use of English in education are if anything more heated than in Morocco — and I suspect almost as futile. Dr Daoudi put this succinctly, when he said, 'We master neither Arabic nor French … most scientific references are in English … English is the world language for scientific research … French is no longer useful.'[19]

In research the argument is particularly crucial and particularly difficult. Morocco is deeply involved in a network of creative and successful partnerships and structures that link it tightly to research establishments in France (and to a lesser extent Spain). But Dr Daoudi is right to say that 'English is the world language of research', and the rapid broadening of Morocco's research partnerships is very important. The last year has seen a series of postdoctoral research workshops with British institutions, including Cambridge and Imperial (two of those top-three ranked universities) and SOAS. Aside from their very obvious success (in areas from Moroccan history to Big Data, and from nutrition to palaeontology), the most striking thing about them is that they are all conducted in English. When the question of translation into French was raised, the Moroccan partner, CNRST, simply said: No.

The same is true in other areas, perhaps in a more nuanced way. Commerce and finance are increasingly anglophone, and while the currently francophone elite will remain hugely influential, they will increasingly exercise that influence in English. I recently signed a training agreement between the CGEM and a major British logistics organization, whose CEO turned out to my delight to be French. London is a major French city — said to be the sixth biggest in the world, with 300,000–400,000 Frenchmen and women living there. As Casablanca develops its Finance City project; and as Moroccan business expands into West and Central Africa, given a powerful motor by HM the King's recent royal progress, it is important to remember that although the traditional markets of French West Africa are crucial to Morocco, expansion requires movement out into the anglophone markets of Nigeria, Ghana, and elsewhere. Again, language is a prerequisite.

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This is not in any sense a triumphalist argument, and it starts from the position that English is a world language, the language of the international research community and — in another of Dr Daoudi's useful insights — 'the language of employability'. When Morocco is even (as it did three years or so ago) importing Indian labourers because anglophone manual labour is needed in the Tangier Free Zone and can't be hired locally, there is something more global than national at work. The advance of English is a tidal phenomenon — irresistible, as King Cnut discovered, but of course, like all tides, turning at high water. Still, for now the tide is coming in fast.

This incoming tide, though, is doing something more than just washing a new language onto the beach. Because language has been such a determinedly, resolutely maintained barrier to non-francophone penetration of markets and minds in French North Arica and its successor states; and because it has filled the same function in maintaining a class structure and a postcolonial elite against excessive social mobility, the tide will wash away many sandcastles and beach-mermaids too. Much that is loveliest and most evocative of Moroccan society and achievement lives in a francophone rock pool on this beach, and risks being devastated by the tide. The trick of the next decade will be to manage inevitable cultural change in such a way as to preserve what is good and vital, and to make it the centre of a new and more diverse Moroccan cultural richness.

Whatever this is about — and any national cultural institution, French, British, Spanish, American, or German, has a vein of national interest running somewhere through it — it is not about simple competition. The great risk to Morocco today is that cultural change, which will happen willy-nilly, is not being managed assertively and confidently. If Morocco is to avoid the haphazard impact of language change, it must grasp the bull by the horns. This means faster and deeper educational reform at all levels; an aggressive and open-minded approach to literacy, and the cutting of the Gordian knot of the interminable 'language debate'; and a faster take-up of English as the vector of internationalism in the academy, commerce, labour mobility, and — inevitably — leisure.

It also signals change in other dimensions: English offers a neural bypass around the brittle stratification of languages in Morocco, a way to internationalize the mind, and the career, without becoming wholly hostage to the different limitations of la francophonie and of the Arabic-speaking world. English is the workaround to cope with a relatively static, language-defined elite. It offers room for aspiration outside the clerisy of French, opening up knowledge, communication and aspiration to a much broader swathe of Moroccan society. It is a vector of democracy and development, as well as a hotlink to the globalized world of the twenty-first century.

Notes

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2. Mohammed Jaabouk, 'Le roi Mohammed VI, le general Bennani et une trentaine de responsables visés par une plainte de l'ex-capitaine Adib', Yabiladi (21 June 2014) <http://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/27061/mohammed-general-bennani-trentaine-responsables.htmlresponsable> [accessed 3 July 2014].

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6. Moha U'Hrou Hajar, La 'mission' Française au Maroc vs La mission de l'école marocaine: ségrégation ([Errachidia, Morocco?]: Imprimerie Tafilat, 2008).

7. Btissame Zejly and Samir Achehbar, 'France: un ami qui nous veut du bien?', TelQuel, no. 623 (6–12 June 2014) (my translation).

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 32

10. Yves Gonzalez-Quijano, Arabités Numeriques (Arles: Actes Sud, 2012), p. 50.

11 'English speaking in Morocco on the Increase', BBC Canada Videos Official, 4:19 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2OJPBlvZXs> [accessed 3 July 2014].

12. English is the normal 'second foreign language', with Spanish commoner in the former Spanish protectorate. Where Spanish is taught, it is introduced in year ten rather than year nine.

13. Charis Boutieri, 'In Two Speeds (À Deux Vitesses): Linguistic Pluralism and Educational Anxiety in Contemporary Morocco', International Journal for Middle Eastern Studies 44, no. 3 (August 2012), pp. 443–64.

14. 'HM The King Delivers Speech To Nation On Occasion Of 60th Anniversary Of Revolution Of King And People', 20 August 2013, full text: Agence Marocaine de Presse <http://www.map. ma/en/activites-royales/hm-king-delivers-speech-nation-occasion-60th-anniversary-revolution-king-and-people> [accessed 3 July 2014].

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16. The Benefits of the English Language for Individuals and Societies: Quantitative Indicators from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen, Euromonitor International report, April 2012.

17. World University Rankings 2013–14, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2013-14/world-ranking> [accessed 3 July 2014].

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19. Aziz Allilou, 'Morocco's Minister of Education: French is No Longer Valid, English is the Solution', Morocco World News (29 March 2014).

The Potency of a Good Idea: Cultural Innovation across the Maghreb

Claire Spencer

With the inevitability of night following day, the 'Arab Spring' has gone sour, and commentators flock to explain why. This is not new: the rot set in in late 2011 with the failure of the Libyans to pick themselves up and create a whole new set of public institutions to replace the quixotic inventions of the late Muammar Gaddafi. Everyone knew that the 'people's committee' structures were not remotely transferrable to a post-Gaddafi era, yet the Libyans' otherwise logical retreat into regional tribes, extended families, and militias continues to dismay external observers lamenting the slow emergence of anything resembling a modern state structure. The name of the game now for many Libyans is inventive survival in an atmosphere so bereft of law and order that allusions to the 'Wild West' hardly seem to do it justice. But strange and interesting things still happen. At a Maghreb investment conference in London in early 2014, I sat next to a very calm British civil engineer who related that his large public building project in Libya's capital Tripoli was advancing very smoothly, thank you, with no security scares of any note, and that 50% of the overall budget had been paid up-front. Asked if he had any concerns about working in Libya, his response was that if you can stand the strain of the unexpected and the bizarre, there is a lot to be gained by engaging with Libyans focused on the future not the past.

As the internal struggle continues in Libya, unresolved, the comment about the future reminded me of how different things feel for all sorts of reasons when one is in the thick of the extremely complex and paradoxical societies of contemporary North Africa. It constantly seems as though a layer-cake of conflicting influences and references are juxtaposed, almost at random, within very close verbal or spatial proximity. On the ground, this means observing how modern construction and transport projects emerge only a stone's-throw away from the *bidonvilles* that preceded, and may even outlive, them. In conversations or exchanges online, it means a smattering of linguistic and cultural references and an endless supply of extremely pleasurable (if often unrepeatable) puns and '*jeux de mots*'.[1]

Far from signalling the end of the 'Arab Spring' (or its equally unsatisfactory monikers), this effervescence of energy and diversionary tactics seems to capture its essence. That this dynamic is not going to recede any time soon represents the core of the argument and examples to be briefly explored in this chapter.

Capturing the whole picture, however, is another matter, just as extracting the cultural dimensions of change from its politics (and economics) is as equally as fraught an endeavour. On the politics, the context for the current discussion might best be summed up in some reflections I was commissioned to write in 2007 on the 'fragmentation of the Arab state'.[2] Far from fragmenting, I argued then that the Arab state had shrunk, and had been captured (or kidnapped) by a small set of inter-related elites. When faced (as a number of them went on to be in 2011) by the vast majority of excluded quasi-citizens, the elites had the choice of hounding down the 'subverters' or engaging with the 'side-steppers'. Of the two, the 'side-steppers' were — and continue to be — by far the most numerous, representing the mainstream of people getting on with their daily business in a politically evasive (but not necessarily politically uninformed) way. The 'subverters' were, and are, what we think of as the jihadists and subversive armed opposition movements of various kinds, far more active within and across the borders of the Middle East since 2011 than they were in 2007. Where the 'subverters' now appear to be running — and ruining — the show in evermore horrific fashion in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Gaza all over again, it is often the elite-captured states which continue to wreak most of the human damage — and are directly responsible for the majority of the grisly death tolls reported daily.

The focus here, however, is on the elusive majority of 'side-steppers', or more precisely on the potential of a creative few amongst them to change things for the better, whilst exploding a few local myths in the process. The real political significance of the Arab Spring lies in the quest to enlarge and wrench the state back from its kidnappers through less dramatically newsworthy and violent means than the naysayers of the Arab Spring have yet grasped. The roots of this quest also long pre-date 2011. That cultural and economic exploration and inventiveness of various kinds should be the most appropriate vehicles for this endeavour is where the real revolutionary tendency lies, even if, as for most revolutionary episodes, the long-term results are likely to creep into view rather than announce themselves as anything more than responses to immediate and tangible needs. Intrinsic to these developments is that the main agents of change are often not consciously engaged in politics at all, and might even be horrified by the suggestion

that they are. From the outside, they are barely discernible as catalysts, since the focus of the outside world on political developments remains, as it was prior to 2011, on official political systems struggling to adapt, and on the 'subverters' seeking to displace them through conventional, if ultimately ill-fated, means.[3]

The perception gap

While not unique to North Africa, the examples explored below may indicate that it is only in the heartland of the Maghreb that anything tangible is likely to emerge any time soon from the hidden revolutions currently underway. In the industrial production of pessimism accompanying the truly epic diplomatic and human disasters witnessed across the Levant since 2011, it is easy to lose sight, and even be unaware of the indicators of more positive change. For three years now the attention of European and American media reporting on the Middle East has reverted to the seductive terrain of conflict and terrorism, along with the apparent inevitability that Islamist movements will degenerate into jihadist recruitment agencies for the disaffected youth of the Muslim world and their diaspora counterparts. Even where violence is not the norm, statistics and numbers raise eyebrows even in promising cases like Tunisia, which is singled out as having the region's highest proportion of unemployed graduates (30%), for example. Egypt, we are told, needs to create upwards of 850,000 jobs a year just to stand still, and as a colleague has recently calculated, if the financial grants the Egyptian government currently receives from the Gulf were to be removed tomorrow, the Egyptian economy would register a net deficit in income equivalent to nearly 20% of GDP.[4] The numbers of poorly educated un- and under-employed youth — above all graduates — has exploded since 2011 and in the absence of a culture of trust in the private sector (discredited through crony capitalism), the media (dominated by cronies), or the political classes (too old, co-opted, and under-representative of young people's concerns), it is only a matter of time before things burst out on to the streets again.

It is worth dwelling on at least one of the responses to an eloquent exposé of this catastrophe-in-the-making to see how far the detail of socio-cultural debates and creative developments now escapes the big picture analysis of much post-Arab Spring commentary in Europe and the US. The cover page of the *The Economist* magazine of 5–11 July 2014 makes no bones about legacy being at the heart of what its cover announces as 'The tragedy of the Arabs, a poisoned history'. Drawing on appropriate regional examples, the related inside article goes on to explore in some depth why the ambitions of the

'Arab Spring' were bound to fall victim to the entrenched contradictions of the Arab world's recent past, it being 'a particular pattern of 20th-century modernisation, rather than its absence, that lies behind the region's political failure'.[5]

Notwithstanding the hazards of assessing a whole region comprising twenty-two states and peoples (corresponding to the membership of the Arab League, Palestinians included), the online responses to this piece chose either to compound the already well-served generalizations about Arab politics or to focus on exceptions to the 'Arab-destiny-trapped-by-history' rule. Of the latter, the following (edited for length), apparently penned by a Tunisian, deserves particular attention:

> I would take issue with the claim that the Arab spring failed. In its birthplace it thrives. For some reason [*The Economist*] keeps brushing over Tunisia's progress, however (encouragingly) slow and painful. … As [for] the reasons behind the mayhem, I have a simple theory. The Arabo-Muslim civilisation has finally come to breathe its final breath. It is a civilisation that has been going through a long and agonising death. Its last moments are violent. The 400m 'Arabs' of all shades contribute next to nothing to a world going through huge technical, scientific and philosophical changes. Instead, we choose to fight it. This is a civilisation that will emerge in a new confident and diverse format. Maybe the reason Tunisia is scraping through its issues to build a lasting democracy is due to the fact that the Tunisian Mind, in a Hegelian sense, has come to realise that change is inevitable and yesterday's battles are no longer worth fighting.[6]

Apart from the interestingly non-'Arabo-Muslim' reference to Hegel in this comment, it is precisely its author's challenge to a defunct version of a lionized civilization, and the determination either to 'fight' for its survival or debunk the myths inherent to its perpetuation that will be familiar to outsiders engaged with the eclectic mix of views that now animate the societies of the Maghreb. That this diversity is impossible to capture through the kind of statistics and nationally representative examples that make for convincing copy does not make the sense that something new is afoot any less tangible. Relative to ten or fifteen years ago, the proportion of those whose energies are now focused on doing things significantly differently from the past is perhaps, unsurprisingly, roughly consistent with the majority of North Africans now aged under twenty-five. Unscientific an assessment as this is, it concurs with what a self-confessedly 'ageing'

Algerian colleague (in his early forties) observed to me recently (in French) about the chronological cut-off point for Algerians' obsession with their colonial past: 'My generation won't break free of the complex relationship we have with France, any more than our parents have, but the twenty-five year olds will: their outlook and references are entirely different from ours.'[7]

In at least one highly significant respect the acceleration of cultural change in the western Maghreb has been linguistic and inspired by the spread of English as the language for global, educational, and online engagement, as Martin Rose explores elsewhere in this volume.[8] In the following two examples, it is taking place in areas where national myths have been strongest and where the structural impediments to breaking free of the 'poisoned history' of the Arab world are the most hotly debated and contested. The big picture analysis suggests that a disaster is already in the making in the areas discussed; the small picture analysis suggests that either more attention needs to be paid to the potential for good ideas to spread, or that their potency as catalysts for change should remain hidden from view lest they be nipped in the bud by the self-serving incumbents of the region's captured states. The reality is likely to be a combination of the two, but taking a precautionary view, I have lightly anonymized, if not entirely disguised the actors involved in the following 'myth-breaking' accounts.

Myth no. 1: State-run universities are not fit for purpose in Morocco

The problems attendant on tertiary education in Morocco could easily be summarized in 100 pages or more, and probably already have in the debates which have continued, without any clear consensus for future action, over the past several years. The most trenchant critique of the failings of the education system as a whole came from none other than King Mohammed VI himself, who publically declared in August 2013 that 'the state of education is worse now than it was twenty years ago'.[9]

The abbreviated and vulgar version is that unless you are educated in and fully conversant with French, you will neither qualify nor have the right contacts to secure the best jobs in the public and private sector; the public education system (school and universities) educates primarily in modern standard Arabic, which few speak well (as opposed to *darija*, or colloquial Arabic, and/or one of Morocco's Amazigh [Berber] languages) and which equips them badly for any job requiring technical, analytical, or scientific skills.

There are nuances to this situation, but the crux of the matter is that only if your family can pay for a place at a private university (in English, French, or abroad) or you qualify for and receive a highly sought-after grant for the

same, you will remain stymied in the job market by an education that fails to equip you with any of the skills that employers need, and in a language that marks you down both socially and professionally. That many Moroccan graduates contest this reality explains the longevity of the phenomenon of the *chômeurs diplomés* (unemployed graduates), who for the past fifteen years or more have staged sit-ins outside the Moroccan parliament in support of their assertion of the right to a job — any job — in a government ministry.[10]

In the Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences of a large university in the outskirts of Morocco's main commercial city of Casablanca, a quiet revolution has been challenging the logic and outcome of this system over the past eight years. Taken on by its current Dean as a public faculty that accepted all comers followed by a high dropout rate, Jamila (as we will refer to the Dean) set about restructuring everything from the admissions process to the content and scope of degrees offered. Her overall objective was to improve both the quality of the educational experience and student success rates through putting students at the centre of a fitness-for-work and professional training strategy.

First to come in were some local artists, above all sculptors, to improve the drab and concrete-dominated environment of the ageing Brutalist-style faculty buildings and grounds. To this was added a sculpture and shrub garden which students were actively encouraged to tend, along with volunteering their own artistic contribution in the form of paint-drenched hand- and footprints on the courtyard pillars against which they usually lean to take their breaks. Next came contributions from the local and Casablanca-wide business community and municipal council, which provided a fully equipped language laboratory, and later, the complete refurbishment of a large lecture theatre for the public and community, as well as faculty events. Jamila has made no secret of her lobbying efforts and use of well-wishers and friends to get what she has needed, second-hand or borrowed if need be. Her budget has been no higher than any other Dean in a similarly daunting public educational setting. Yet her faculty-improvement schemes are so impressive that she has inspired a line that often runs through my head when assessing new situations in Morocco: 'where I see art, I see someone who knows what they are doing.'

Her focus on aesthetics has had a much wider purpose, as she explains:

> (T)he thing that most sapped success among the students before was their lack of self-confidence; providing them with an environment they can be proud of and contribute to through a whole range of cultural activities is only part of what we call their *"education citoyenne"* (civic and citizen-focused education). They are also all required to take part in community education projects, back in the challenged neighbourhoods from which many of them originate. This is not formal teaching, but takes the form of mentoring and offering remedial help to much younger pupils in a local primary school we have partnered with, who look up to them for inspiration in return. The recognition that they have become role models for the next generation has done more than anything else to boost the students' self-confidence and personal success.'

For the students to take this on required being honest with them about what they would be up against right from the start. Rather than curtailing the open-admissions system, Jamila and her staff put all applicants through an induction process which spells out just how committed students have to be to get anywhere, and for the latter to gauge — for themselves — whether they are really willing to waste a year or two of their lives if they then drop out as many of their predecessors had done. Those who are not deterred effectively sign up to a compact of principles and working practices that is fully supported in turn by a peer-group mentoring and bespoke tutoring system designed to see each student through his or her toughest personal hurdles to success. All of this is voluntarily provided by the more senior students, backed up by Faculty staff, in individualized programmes previously unheard of in Morocco's top-down, French-inspired 'mass production' university system.

The meat of the matter has been in linking the course content with longer classroom contact hours, 100% in-course work placements and exposure to external speakers from the real world of work, all of which delivered unashamedly in French. By the time they leave secondary school, most publically educated students from deprived neighbourhoods have a grasp of French that ranges from functionally illiterate to moderately coherent. Jamila's system was having none of this: intensive and remedial French is now part of the bespoke education on any of the courses offered at the Faculty; the failure to read, write, and respond in French by the end of the first year makes progression to a second and third year problematic, to put it mildly. For those who thrive, intensive English and Spanish are also then offered. Like the artwork and sculptures, work placements are procured from Casablanca's business community, and increasingly tracked down by the students themselves. On the newly minted MA course in European Studies, for example, one student has succeeded in securing her own internship with the European Commission, visa hurdles to

Brussels notwithstanding. The spirit of self-help and ambition permeates the Faculty, where previously students would have lamented their lack of *wasta* (networks of influence) and lost heart.

And it works: on all levels, Jamila's inspired leadership, discipline and belief in her students and staff have seen indicators rise in everything from course completion rates to post-graduation employment levels. Of the first cohort of 'new' students to graduate in 2010, 61% were employed within three months of graduating and 93% of 2011's cohort within eighteen months of graduation. In a market comprising 400,000 students in 2010–11, rising to a projected 700,000 by 2020, Jamila's graduates may continue to quietly outperform many of their pampered, privately educated competitors, and in an attitudinal sense, will certainly do better than the outmoded '*chômeurs diplomés*' of Rabat.

Myth no. 2: There is no private sector worthy of the name in Algeria

Algeria is well known as the region's rentier state par excellence. 98% of Algeria's annual foreign earnings are derived from its combined exports of oil and gas, and the vast majority of goods and services consumed in Algeria are imported, with many heavily state-subsidized. Internal distribution networks are tightly controlled by a series of overlapping and self-reinforcing beneficiaries close to, or integrally part of, the 'captured state' model described above. Nothing really exchanges hands on free market terms, nor do any of the large-scale parastatal industries that have survived since the 1960s produce anything anyone wants, except jobs to keep various influential networks happy, above all the state-linked national trade union, the Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (UGTA). The notion of free-market enterprise is not only anathema to the state-centric development philosophy that persists from the early 'Socialist Republic' days of Algeria, but the whole concept of a private sector has been captured more recently by a series of self-serving oligarchs who want nothing more than to block new entrants and limit any competition to their business interests.[11]

As if the very human impediments to new private sector actors were not enough (and predatory and endemic corruption is clearly amongst these), there are also considerable structural and legal barriers too: since 2009, a series of protectionist investment laws now require all joint venture investments in Algeria to be 51% owned and capitalized by Algerian nationals, leaving foreign investors with a minority 49% stake-holding. The Algerian government also has first refusal on buying companies up

for sale, making an exit strategy for foreign investors problematic if the value of assets is contested. To this might be added the difficulties (through currency controls above all) of repatriating profits on any foreign business transactions in Algeria, limited intellectual property rights protection, bureaucratic and customs delays, and infrastructural deficiencies, and a constrained access to everything from land and electricity to credit from the heavily state-dominated banking system. The latter often cancels the debts of state-owned industries and offers them credit on terms unfavourable to open market competition, in an economy that sees an estimated 45% of transactions conducted 'informally', outside both official regulation and the obligation to pay taxes. Unsurprisingly Algeria's World Bank Rating for 'Doing Business' has decreased by a couple of points to 153 on a scale of 189 economies rated in 2014.[12]

Nevertheless, over the past decade, a few brave pioneers have successfully set up private enterprises, often with foreign partners given the hazards of raising capital domestically. In a market that traditionally looks to France and Spain, the creeping number of northern European investors might surprise observers. As in many human endeavours, local entrepreneurs have employed creative ways around the hurdles facing them, and have done so in a spirit of enterprise equal to any in the region. On the 51%/49% ownership front, at least one Algerian investor pointed out to me the merit of the Algerian side actually having to stake their own funds in the proposed venture: '(T)his is not a "tick box" exercise provided by a local national as in the Gulf: we really do have to produce 51% of the working capital, before setting up secondary operating and profit-sharing agreements with our foreign partners. Both of these give them exactly the kind of guarantees they need to proceed, and with the right partner, it works very well.' Another way round this is to split the Algerian holding into two parts: with a majority/minority partnership arrangement for 51% of the capital, leaving the foreign investor with the lion's share in their 49% holding.

Operationally, conditions are nonetheless stiff: one factory-owner had to set up his own transport company and in-house sales team within three years of starting production, since 'a lot of the merchandise kept disappearing en route to the clients. With our own networks in place, we can now track the trajectory of orders from start to finish.' Another issue has been to avoid attracting too much attention if the business proves successful; everyone knows what the threshold of business turnover is in their particular sector to avoid being referred to the Competition Council. Officially set up to oversee mergers and prevent cartels, the Council also

provides an unwelcome scrutiny of balance books by the authorities, as one successful entrepreneur outlined: 'as a businessman, I want to do well, but not at the price of being co-opted by the powers-that-be if I do too well. I keep asking myself how I would face my children if they were to know that my success was at the price of becoming a dishonest man; will they respect me more for being less successful, but honest?'[13]

Small-scale entrepreneurs and start-ups have nevertheless quietly started extending their tentacles into new and established markets over the past decade, even if a large number will fail.[14] As a pharmaceuticals entrepreneur put it: 'what do we have to lose? Ten years ago there was no private sector in Algeria at all, but it is now the second biggest pharmaceutical market in Africa. As an independent operator, of course it's hard to avoid all the pitfalls, and you have to spend hours dealing with the licensing and bureaucracy required just to stay legal as well as compete with the informal sector. However, with 70% of the population under thirty and virtually all pharmaceuticals now imported, my business has been growing into what are essentially virgin markets.'

This new generation of entrepreneurs has also begun combining forces in newly created associations to foster a 'start-up' culture and explore mentoring and new business practices. Among its other new generational initiatives, one of them, Nabni, functions as something of a business lobby to improve the operating environment for the independent private sector.[15] Old habits, however, die hard, as competitors still split votes in their efforts to gain a representative foothold in traditional business councils; according to one who recently failed to be elected by his peers to rejuvenate their local business council: 'we're not very good at allowing one of our own to represent our collective interests where personal jealousies abound, but we'll get there eventually.' In practice, more people are using skills they have acquired in Europe and elsewhere to position themselves strategically, and for many, this still means keeping their heads below what remains a very large state-dominated parapet.

Unnoticed for now, non-hydrocarbon sector growth in Algeria rose by 6% in 2013, and this was not entirely due to the big, state-linked operators and oligarchs. The state-run Algerian National Council for Investment (ANDI) openly admits that with $190 billion in official reserves and a quietly expanding middle class, everything is for the taking in Algeria, and that foreign investors can expect to recoup their investments within three years — even if it takes them two to three years to gain approval to operate.[16] Leather and footwear manufacturing, offshore manufacturing, and car

assembly plants, pharmaceuticals, cabling companies, electro-chemicals, renewable energies, and telecommunications are all ripe for development in coming years. The expansion of Internet services are also in their infancy, with only around 15% of Algerians currently online, but this still represents a market of 6 million people. The Algerian government has finally woken up to the need to fund technology hubs and 'incubators' to explore the potential in this sphere.[17]

For the patient and determined few, however, finding ways around the formal and informal barriers to success in Algeria is a challenge they approach with the same dogged application their national football team displayed right through to the quarter-finals of the 2014 World Cup. The more unpropitious the environment, the more creative and inspired the solutions appear to be. As in Morocco, as indeed in Tunisia, the results may not become immediately apparent, but that too is part of a strategy of preparing the ground for a generational change that will have to come eventually. The younger and more globally inter-connected this quiet revolution is, the stealthier the advance of cultural change across the Maghreb will be — including, one sincerely hopes before too long, in Libya.

Notes

1. The recently minted Moroccan slang word '*killimini*' has been relayed to me as having both French and Arabic origins; from French, the word is a corruption of '*qu'il est mignon*' (isn't he cute?) to denote the spoilt young 'Mummy's boys' of Morocco's wealthier classes; Hicham Chentoufi explains the Arabic roots as follows: '(t)hree Arabic words were blended to make the term *killimini*. We have /*akala*/ which literally means "to eat" and the phrase /*minni*/ which can be translated verbatim as "from me". Thus, *kilimini* means "*akala mini*" or, literally speaking, "he eats from me" which can be domesticated to the English reader as "he embezzles my money" or simply "a public funds embezzler". The corollary word "*bouzabal*" is the slang for "trash", at the social antipodes of a "*killimini*".' See Hicham Chentoufi, 'Marx and the Bouzabal-Killimini Split', *Morocco World News*, 6 August 2012 <http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2012/08/50732/marx-and-the-bouzabal-killimini-split/> [accessed August 2014].
2. Claire Spencer 'Toward a Genuinely New Middle East', *Bitter Lemons International*, Edition 10, Volume 5, 8 March 2007 <http://www.bitterlemons-international.org/previous.php?opt=1&id=171#699> [accessed August 2014].
3. This reflection owes its genesis to Asef Bayat's seminal work of political sociology, published as *Life as Politics* by Amsterdam University Press in 2010. Using detailed case-study research, he wrote of the 'Quiet Encroachment of the Ordinary' (Chapter 4) in the Middle East as one of the ways in which the political engagement of everyday life, which then seemed invisible to those watching its elite manifestations, was as pervasive as its supposed absence seemed to be at the time, above all in Egypt and Iran: *Life as Politics: How*

Ordinary people Change the Middle East (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010): <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/15229/A.+Bayat+-+Life+as+Politics.pdf?sequence=1>.

He has his own cautionary tale to add, two years on from the Arab Spring: 'rather than looking for quick results or worrying about set demands, we might view the Arab uprisings as "long revolutions" that may bear fruit in ten or twenty years by establishing new ways of doing things, a new way of thinking about power. Yet at stake are not merely semantic concerns about how to define revolutions, but the hard problems of power structures and entrenched interests. However one characterizes the process — as "long revolution", or as one that begins with the radical transformation of the state — the crucial question is how to ensure a fundamental shift from the old, authoritarian order to inaugurate meaningful democratic change, while eschewing violent coercion and injustice. One thing is certain, however: the journey from the oppressive "old" to the liberatory "new" will not come about without relentless struggles and incessant popular mobilization, in both public and private realms. Indeed, the "long revolution" may have to begin even when the "short revolution" ends.' Asef Bayat 'Revolution in Bad Times', *New Left Review* 80 (March–April 2013) <http://newleftreview.org/II/80/asef-bayat-revolution-in-bad-times> [accessed August 2014].

4. Private conversation, Chatham House, July 2014.
5. 'Tethered by History', *The Economist* (5 July 5 2014) <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21606286-failures-arab-spring-were-long-time-making-tethered-history> [accessed August 2014].
6. 'Egha', 'Tethered by History: Reader's Comments', *The Economist* (5 July 2014) <http://www.economist.com/node/21606286/comments#comments> [accessed August 2014].
7. Private conversation, June 2014.
8. See Martin Rose, '*Bavures* and Shibboleths: The Changing Ecology of Language and Culture in Morocco', pp. 115–28 in this volume.
9. For a full copy of HM King Mohammed VI's speech on the 60th anniversary of the Revolution of King and People, see *Morocco World News*, 20 August 2013: <http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2013/08/101680/full-speech-of-king-mohammed-vi-on-the-60th-anniversary-of-revolution-of-king-and-people/> [accessed August 2014].
10. See Martin Rose's blog 'Risk Adjustment and Jobbery' of October 7 2013 posted on *Mercurius Maghrebensis* <http://marforioromano.wordpress.com/2013/10/>: 'For many young Moroccans, jobs grow on trees. They are things, objects of desire, which can be created *ex nihilo* and distributed at will, with no necessary relationship to function or requirement on the one hand, nor ability or willingness to work on the other.' [accessed August 2014].
11. See Amel Boubekeur 'Rolling Either Way? Algerian Entrepreneurs as Both Agents of Change and Means of Preservation of the System', *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (14 April 2013), pp. 469–81.
12. US Department of State '2014 Investment Climate Statement – Algeria' <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2014/228705.htm> and World Bank 'Ease of Doing Business in Algeria (2014)' <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/algeria> [accessed August 2014].
13. Private conversation, June 2014.

14. The number of new companies registered crept up from 10,400 in 2005 to 13,900 in 2012, in a market that sees only 680,000 companies in a 'country of 38 million when comparably sized countries have at least 1.5 million'. See Paul Schemm and Aomar Ouali 'Algeria Faces Struggle to Attract Investment', *Associated Press The Big Story*, 2 June 2014, quoting Algerian economist Abdelhak Lamiri <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/algeria-faces-struggle-attract-investment> [accessed August 2014]; and 'Algeria' in *The Little Data Book on Private Sector Development 2014* (Washington, DC: World Bank) <doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-0179-2>.
15. Notre Algérie Bâtie sur de Nouvelles Idées (NABNI) (Our Algeria built on new ideas) <http://www.nabni.org/>.
16. ANDI representative, speaking at an Algerian investment event, London Stock Exchange, 10 February 2014.
17. Aline Mayard 'Is Algeria Ready to Join the Entrepreneurial Race?', *WAMDA*, 7 May 2014 <http://www.wamda.com/2014/05/is-algeria-ready-to-join-the-race> [accessed August 2014]; Internet World Stats puts Algeria's Internet penetration at 16.5% (December 2013 figure) in a population of nearly 39 million, which is currently well below neighbouring Morocco, with a 51% penetration rate (2012 figure) in a smaller population of just under 33 million <http://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm> [accessed August 2014].

Authors' Biographies

Khalid Amine is professor of Performance Studies, Faculty of Letters and Humanities at Abdelmalek Essaadi University, Tetouan, Morocco. He was Research Fellow at the Institute of Interweaving Performance Cultures, Free University, Berlin, Germany (2008–10), and winner of the 2007 Helsinki Prize of the International Federation for Theatre Research. Since 2006 he has been Founding President of the International Centre for Performance Studies (ICPS) in Tangier, and convener of its annual international conferences. A member of IFTR Ex-Com (2011 and 2015), he is head of the Arab Theatre Festival jury (6th Edition, Sharjah 2014). Among his published books: Beyond Brecht (1996), Moroccan Theatre Between East and West (2000), Fields of Silence in Moroccan Theatre (2004), and Dramatic Art and the Myth of Origins: Fields of Silence (2007). He has numerous publications in international theatre journals, including TDR, Theatre Journal, Documenta, Etcetera, Journal of Middle Eastern and North African Intellectual and Cultural Studies, and FIRT Journal. Among Amine's edited books contributions is 'Performing Postcoloniality in the Moroccan Scene: Emerging Sites of Hybridity', which appeared in Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research (Palgrave 2010) while his most recent contribution is 'Postcolonial Modernity: Theatre in Morocco and the Interweaving Loop' in The Politics of Interweaving Performance Cultures. Beyond Postcolonialism, edited by Erika Fischer-Lichte, Torsten Jost, and Saskya Iris Jain (Routledge, 2014). Amine is co-author with Marvin Carlson of The Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia: Performance Traditions of the Maghreb (2012) and editor of The Art of Dialogue: East-West (ICPS Publications, 2014).

Born in Morocco in 1961, professor, writer, and visual artist **Youssouf Amine Elalamy** is the author of seven books (five novels). Initially written in French, his books have been translated into several languages including Arabic, English, Spanish, German, Dutch, and Greek. Three of his novels, *A Moroccan in New York*, *Sea Drinkers*, and *Nomad Love* have been published in the US (Lexington Books and Dialogos Books). His novel, *Amour nomade*, was first been 'displayed' as an urban literary installation in Rabat, Rotterdam, Copenhagen, and Cologne, and his artworks have been exhibited both in Morocco and in Europe.

Elalamy lives in Rabat and is a full university professor at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra, Morocco, where he teaches Arts, Literature, and Communication. He holds a PhD in Media and Communication. In 1991 he was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study the aesthetics of commercial culture. Affiliated with NYU, (The New York Institute for the Humanities), he also gave courses at FIT. (Fashion Institute of Technology) and the Parsons School of Design. After three years of studies in New York, he returned to Rabat and published his first book *A Moroccan in New York*. Elalamy is the winner of the 2001 Grand Atlas literature prize and the 2010 Le Plaisir de lire Prize for his novel *Les Clandestins* (translated into six languages). Elalamy is also the winner of the first edition of the British Council literature prize held in Rabat in 1999 (category: travel writing). He is also a founding member and the current president of the Moroccan PEN.

A specialist in security, energy, and political trends in North Africa and the Western Mediterranean, political scientist **Francis Ghilès** is an Associate Senior Researcher at the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs. He spent eighteen years writing for the *Financial Times* and he has also freelanced for a number of newspapers including the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Le Monde*, and he has published numerous articles in French, English, and Spanish, and is a frequent commentator in print and broadcast media. Following his graduation with distinction from SciencesPo Grenoble Ghilès earned advanced degrees at St Antony's College, Oxford and the University of Keele.

Andrew Hussey OBE is Professor of Cultural History in the School of Advanced Study, University of London and the Director of the Centre of Post-Colonial Studies, University of London.

He is the author of several books on 'extremist' cultures in France, including most recently *The French Intifada* (Granta).

George Joffé lectures at the University of Cambridge on the international relations of the Middle East and North Africa. Previously he was the deputy-director of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House). He has specialized in the contemporary history of North Africa with a special interest in the Jbala region of Morocco where he has studied the rural world during the colonial period. He has also been engaged in the histories of independent Libya and Algeria and, most recently, has studied the evolution of the media in Tunisia in the wake of the Arab Awakening there.

Mohamed Laamiri holds an MA (1983) and PhD (1989) from Queen Mary College, London. Professor of English at the University Abdelmalik Es-Saadi in Tetouan, Morocco, he was the founder and first chair of its English Department in 1984. In 1991 he was appointed vice-dean of the Faculty of Letters in Tetouan and later dean of the Faculty of Letters, University Mohamed I, Oujda, Morocco (1993–2005). His research has focused on British writings on North Africa with a special interest in travel texts dealing with Morocco. In Tetouan, he founded and chaired The Research Group for Moroccan Studies in English (REGMOSE). He is co-editor (with Sara Mills) of a special issue on Morocco in the electronic journal *Working Papers on The Web* at Sheffield Hallam University.

Laamiri has published many articles in English, French and Arabic mostly dealing with the image of Morocco and North Africa in British writings; he was also the instigator and the coordinator of a number of conferences on the same subject. His publications include articles on Tangier, Moroccan women in British texts, and on Moroccan literature in English. He is also co-author of the forthcoming translation from Arabic into English of the debates of the royal committee in charge of updating the Moroccan Mudawana, as 'Preliminary Work on the Moroccan Family Code'.

Martin Rose was educated at Oxford (Magdalen and St Antony's) and completed an M Phil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies. After working in academic publishing and banking in Africa and the Middle East, he joined the British Council in 1988 and has since served in Baghdad (1988–90), Rome (1991–96), Brussels (1999–2004), Ottawa (2006–10), and Rabat (2010–14) during a twenty-six-year career. He was the founding director of the Anglo-Italian Pontignano Conference (1992 to the present), and of the cultural relations think-tank, Counterpoint. He took a student expedition to the Canadian Arctic by sea to look at climate change in 2008, and has directed a major project called Our Shared Europe which addressed the integral place of Europe's Muslim communities. He now works for the Council in London as a consultant on MENA. He writes and speaks about the region, Cultural Relations, interfaith relations, and education, and blogs as Mercurius Maghrebensis. Martin is a Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, and a Visiting Fellow of the Centre for Islamic Studies at Cambridge.

Claire Spencer is the Head of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Programme at the foreign policy institute Chatham House. She was previously Deputy Director of the Centre for Defence Studies at King's College, where she

set up and ran the Mediterranean Security Programme, and Head of Policy for the Middle East and Central Asia for the development agency Christian Aid. Since 2011, she has acted as external advisor to the British Council's Young Arab Analysts Network International (YAANI), engaging young North Africans, Egyptians, and Jordanians in analysing and formulating local policy.

Educated at Bristol University (BSc Politics) and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (PhD), Spencer's core research interest is in EU policy towards North Africa and the Mediterranean, on which she is currently writing a report proposing a radical rethink. Having lived in France during protests, Morocco during a monarchical succession, Israel at a time of war and Spain during its democratic transition, a highlight of 2011 was being invited to Chile to explain the significance of social movements in the Arab world just as half a million Chilean students took to the streets.

Spencer's recent publications and commentary include *Gaza: the Risk to Europe*; *Egypt: the Politics of 'Normalization'*; 'Tunisia: Politics as Usual' (*Foreign Policy*, October 2013); 'Syria: The Real Cost of Diplomacy' (*Prospect*, June 2013), *Combatting Terror Across the Sahel*; *The Changing Role of Civil Society in the Euro-Mediterranean Area*; *Time to Build Bridges over the Mediterranean*; and *The Changing Dynamics of West-GCC Cooperation*.

Born in 1966 **Pierre Vermeren** is one of the leading historians of the twentieth century and contemporary Maghreb. An alumnus of the École Normale Supérieure Fontenay, he spent eight years in the Arab world, including teaching a at the Lycée Descartes in Rabat between 1996 and 2002. He has lectured in Contemporary Arabic Studies and Maghrebian history at Paris 1 Sorbonne University, where he is now educational director of a new Masters, 'Africa Middle East: History, International Stakes, Cooperation'. His books include *Maghreb: Les origines de la revolution démocratique au Maghreb* (2011), *Le Maroc de Mohammed VI, la transition inachevée* (2011), *Misère de l'historiographie du 'Maghreb' post-colonial* (1962-2012) (2012), and *Idées reçues sur le monde arabe* (2012).

Imen Yacoubi is a full-time faculty member at the University of Jendouba in Tunisia, and a doctoral student. She is an alumna of the Civic Education and Leadership Fellowship at Syracuse University, and the Young Arab Analysts Network International. She has been involved in motivating and magnifying the voices of young people in post-revolution Tunisia.

Imen is a contributor for several online platforms, including HumanRightsTV, Mideast Youth, and Sharnoff Global Views.