MAGHREB REGIME SCENARIOS
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This article reviews three possible regime scenarios for the three principle Maghreb countries of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. The three scenarios include: the Islamization of the political sphere, the continuation of the authoritarian status quo, and accelerated evolution towards democracy.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the days of the Greek and Roman Empires, northwest Africa has been a well-defined region–geographically, demographically, culturally, and historically. The Muslim conquest in the late seventh century A.D., followed by the region's complete Islamization and partial Arabization, inextricably linked the area to the East; but it did not erase its own particularity, even in the eyes of their now-fellow Muslims.[1] Just as the 'Middle East' is a concept that was formulated by Europeans looking eastwards, the 'Maghreb' ('West') was a concept formulated by Muslims sitting at the center of the classical Islamic civilizations determining a definable 'Other,' albeit an Islamic one. The French-colonial experience, which began in the 19th century, added an additional important layer to the Maghreb's uniqueness. (Italy's occupation of modern-day Libya is a separate story.) The Maghreb states, particularly the 'core' countries of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, currently face similar political, socio-economic, and cultural challenges:

1.
    1. How are they to best supply the basic needs to their young and growing populations?
    2. How can the regimes reinforce their legitimacy after a half-century of independence; or, in the words of long-time Maghreb observer, I. William Zartman, how can they best achieve a 're-contracting' of the increasingly frayed social contract with their societies?[2]
    3. How should they approach their respective Islamist opposition movements?
    4. What is the best way of coping with the many challenges posed by the myriad processes of globalization?

In seeking to address these question, one can envision three different political scenarios during the next five years in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia:[3] (1) the continuation of the authoritarian status quo, whose legitimacy formula is based on a mix of state and Arab nationalism (the particular mix is different in each of the three countries); (2) the Islamization of the political sphere, with Islamist movements gaining increasingly central roles; and (3) an evolution towards a more genuine democratic system, in which the process of reform strengthens civil society and authentically democratic forces.

The background for this analysis is the United States' Greater Middle East Initiative, a policy designed to address the root causes of Middle Eastern instability, violence, and anti-Western terrorism. Although the bulk of U.S. attention has been directed towards the eastern Asian portion of the Greater Middle East–Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq–the issues at stake are no less relevant for Europe's immediate neighbors just across the Mediterranean Sea and the Straits of Gibraltar. All of the dire circumstances confronting Middle Eastern states and societies–entrenched authoritarian regimes lacking popular legitimacy; strong Islamic opposition movements and smaller groups that engage in bin Laden-style terrorism; economic systems that have lagged far behind other regions in the increasingly globalized economy; large youthful populations clamoring for jobs or visas to the West, resulting in migration and social pressures on

European countries–are present in varying degrees in the Maghreb. At the same time, their civil societies contain the potential for vibrancy, being shaped by numerous cross-cultural currents emanating from Berber, Arab-Muslim, African, and European heritages, the ever-expanding links with Europe, and, increasingly, with the rest of the developed world. Indeed, Maghrebi political and social systems appear more ripe than those in the Arab and Muslim East for the kind of partnership initiatives envisaged by Western policy-makers, which they hope will be transformative in nature.

To be sure, Maghreb states differ widely from one another, both in their historical evolution and in their current realities. Classifying them according to the degree of political pluralism in each country finds that Morocco is at the top, Algeria a close second, and Tunisia lagging far behind. A somewhat different order of ranking results if one examines the degree of societal acceptance of regime policies towards liberalization. In Morocco, there is a fair degree of acceptance regarding the pace of liberalization, and disagreements are expressed largely within a consensus over the rules of the political game. Broad sections of Tunisian society appear to accept with understanding the utter lack of progress towards greater political pluralism. In Algeria, on the other hand, the differences between the regime and various sectors of society (secular and Islamist opposition groups, and activists among the Kabylian-Berber community) regarding the pace of liberalization are a continuing source of tension. Practically speaking, the 'King's dilemma' first formulated 30 years ago by Samuel Huntington, in which autocratic rulers may undermine their basis of power by adopting reforms, but may risk the same result if they do not do so, remains in force in the Maghreb.[4]

MOROCCO

In terms of self-definition, including its institutional and cultural underpinnings, Morocco possesses many of the attributes associated with states possessing a relatively high level of cohesion. Such attributes include: a political and societal center within a distinct geographical core stretching back more than 1,200 years; a ruling dynasty possessing the sources of its own legitimacy pre-dating Western penetration by hundreds of years; religious homogeneity; and a distinct material and popular culture, religious practice, and linguistic configuration, much of which stems from Morocco's Berber population. The colonial experience also contributed heavily to the process of creating a unified national state with a monarchical regime. The first two decades after achieving independence in 1956 were often stormy, but ended with the consolidation of the monarchy's unquestioned centrality, dominating all other political and social forces. Nonetheless, by the 1990s, it was clear that in order to maintain political stability, the regime would have to be pro-active in its approach.

Scenario I: Continuation of the Authoritarian Status Quo

The last years of the late King Hassan's (1929-99) 38-year reign were marked by policies of what he liked to call 'homeopathic democracy', i.e. controlled, measured steps at political liberalization while the *makhzen* (the traditional term for Morocco's ruling security-bureaucratic apparatus), headed by the monarch, continued to maintain overweening control. As Crown Prince, his son Muhammad generated hopes among liberal circles that he would engineer more far-reaching changes in the direction of a Spanish-style constitutional monarchy, �?¯�?¿�?½ la King Juan Carlos. Indeed, the pace of political and social liberalization, and accompanying expansion of civil society quickened after Muhammad ascended to the throne in a seamless succession.[5] The regime's guiding mantra over the last seven years has been 'development and *ijtihad*.' This has meant the modernization of the economy, promotion of social welfare, civil society, and incremental political democratization–all this legitimized and expanded upon by independent, reasoned judgment as permitted by Islamic law, as opposed to mere blind imitation of past practice (*taqlid*).

Nevertheless, the contemporary Moroccan state is, at best, a neo-makhzen entity. Notwithstanding talk of the need for de-centralization of power, the main levers of political and economic power remain in the hands of the palace and its allies in the bureaucracy, military, and economic sectors. Muhammad himself may be a king who seeks to inspire hope and appreciation, rather than fear and trepidation. Yet up until now, 'de-Hassanizing' the society has not entailed a substantive re-ordering of the political playing field. Indeed, Muhammad has sought to establish new mechanisms to promote development and social welfare schemes–foundations which are controlled directly by palace loyalists, apart from the existing political-legal institutions.[6] Co-option of various societal groups and individuals, and balancing them off against one another, has long been a key tool in insuring the monarchy's ultimate authority as the supreme arbiter in Moroccan life, and Muhammad's actions have been a variation on this theme.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the 2002 parliamentary elections, which were heralded as a new stage in Morocco's evolution towards a democratic state of law. Overall, the elections were deemed to have been largely free of government interference. However, the fragmented outcome, in which no party won more than 14 percent of the vote, gave the King the opportunity to appoint a loyalist, non-party bureaucrat, Driss Jettou, to the post of prime minister, instead of the head of one of the political parties. Jettou's appointment marked a retreat from the declared intent of conferring more power on elected officials and contributed to the emasculation of Morocco's already anemic political parties.

What is the likelihood that Morocco will continue on the course of incremental liberalization measures aimed at shoring up regime and personal legitimacy? This strategy is clearly the preferred one. With the example of Algeria's chaotic political liberalization and descent into violence in the 1990s paramount in its thinking, the regime seeks to liberalize enough to satisfy pent-up demands at home and the desires of its patrons abroad (the United States in particular), while maintaining a firm hand on the levers of power. The Casablanca May 2003 bombings served as a wakeup call regarding the dangers of home-grown radical Islamic terrorism, generating harsh measures against Islamic activists as well as steps to engage actively in the religious field, through a reformed Higher *Ulema* Council that actively issues legal rulings (*fatwas*). The authorities have also redoubled their efforts to oversee the country's mosques, particularly its imams, and to modernize their education, including the introduction of courses in the humanities and the study of other religions.[7] At the same time, it has tolerated the officially banned Justice and Charity Movement (JCM) and sought to promote moderate, non-violent tendencies within the Islamist current, giving space to a legal Islamist party, Justice and Development (PJD). The PJD currently holds 45 seats in the 325-seat Moroccan Chamber of Deputies, and is being spoken about as a possible leading vote-getter in the upcoming 2007 elections.

Central to the regime's strategy is the cultivation of constituency groups that can serve as a counter-weight to the Islamist challenge. The propagation of a new family law in 2003-04 was a major breakthrough in the promotion of women's status, and won the King much credit among liberals and women. Berber (Amazigh) activists were heartened by his establishment in 2001 of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) and acknowledgement of Berber culture as a central component of the Moroccan national patrimony and character, an important modification in the country's legitimizing formula. (To be sure, the IRCAM can also be justifiably seen as one more step in the strategy of co-opting, neutralizing, and dividing various Moroccan social forces, and is controversial within the Berber activist community.)[8]

The promotion of social and economic development is both complementary and crucial to the regime's strategy. Not a week goes by during which the king doesn't engage in some type of ceremony inaugurating programs and institutions to benefit the weaker elements in society or important infrastructure projects. The building of a new port complex in the Tangier-Tetouan zone constitutes an unprecedented degree of commitment by the state to the historically problematic northern region. Of course, the fact that this region serves as the jumping off point for illegal immigrants streaming northward from sub-Saharan Africa

towards Europe, and as the source for the bulk of Europe's illegal drugs, makes it especially sensitive, for it impacts directly on Morocco's relations with the EU countries.

Any number of things can be imagined that might cause difficulties for the regime and cause it to fine-tune its existing strategy. Given the country's failure in multiple facets of society, it would be foolish to assume that the stability and incremental change that has characterized Moroccan political and social life over the last 15 years will continue unhindered during the next five. These failures include the economy's inability to achieve sustained high growth rates, its continued dependence on the vagaries of annual rainfall, the extremely high rates of illiteracy among rural women, the widespread dissatisfaction with what is perceived as all-pervasive corruption in public life, the high levels of unemployment–particularly among the young–and the absence of genuine political representation (notwithstanding the plethora of political parties). Yet given the absence of a specific grievance that could mobilize broad sectors of society to demand change, the generally favorable image of the king, and the fear of the unknown, the maintenance of the regime's current approach (maintaining an authoritarian regime while fine-tuning its content in the direction of development and liberalization) appears likely to continue on course. The fact that it is receiving strong support from its patrons abroad (Washington sees Morocco as a model for the kind of long-term processes it would like to see spread throughout the region) gives the regime an additional safety net. The regime's understanding of the need to update its legitimacy formula bodes well for its ability to absorb and manage the inevitable shocks along the way.

Scenario 2: The Islamization of the Political Sphere

Morocco has always been a pious country. Yet few can fail to note the outward manifestations of a new religiosity, expressed most overtly by the increased veiling of women, including a fuller, Saudi-style veil among some.[9] Polling data also shows that a majority of the population support the introduction of more religion in public life. Hence, it should come as no surprise that organized Islamist movements have gained in strength in recent years. One manifestation of this has been the success of the JCM in gaining control of the Moroccan student union on most university campuses. Another has been the electoral achievements of the PJD in both parliamentary and local elections.[10] Both the JCM and the PJD have benefited from the government's calculated liberalization policies over the last decade. They have taken advantage of the expansion of civil space to promote their agendas, and this at a time when Morocco's economic growth rates did not meet the expectations of its international patrons and unemployment rates among urban youth continued to be high. The long-held belief that Morocco was immune from modern-day political Islam has proven to have been false. So it must be asked: Are the traditional government policies of repressing, taming, and co-opting the Islamist trend no longer effective? What is the likelihood that the Islamists will come to dominate the public sphere? From a different angle, should the Casablanca bombings of May 2003 be considered a one-time episode involving small, isolated groups, or a harbinger of things to come? Has the genie been let out of the bottle?

The upcoming 2007 parliamentary elections are already being discussed as a possible watershed in regime-Islamist relations, with speculation that PJD head Saadeddine Uthmani will ride the wave of electoral success into the government, and perhaps even the prime ministership. Up until now, the PJD has been very careful to avoid provoking a confrontation with the authorities, even agreeing not to field candidates in a number of electoral districts. This time, they may be more assertive. In turn, the authorities will be facing a dilemma regarding their degree of involvement in the vote-counting.

Would the inauguration of an Islamist prime minister constitute a veritable revolution? Undoubtedly, the Islamists will promote policies commensurate with their long-term agenda of Islamicizing society. However, to reassure nervous Moroccans and their allies in the West, the PJD speaks of itself as akin to the German Christian Democrat Party. A more apt comparison, in the case of an electoral triumph, would be Turkey's

ruling AKP party. The latter has played by the rules, accepting the principle of political pluralism and democratic contestation, even while testing the limits of the security-bureaucratic apparatus charged with acting as the guardian of the Ataturk legacy. To be sure, militants of the JCM and beyond would be pushing for stronger measures, thus leaving the PJD leadership on the horns of a dilemma. Yet even in the event of significant electoral success, the PJD leadership knows full well that the makhzen will not accept the transfer of real power into Islamist hands and appears more likely to seek to avoid a confrontation instead of provoking one.

More broadly, the political, social, and religious playing fields are ones of active contestation. Liberal elements, concerned with the growing strength of the Islamists, are likely to resist the imposition of an Islamist social agenda. In this, they will be backed by the King, who himself possesses religious legitimacy as the *amir al-mu'minin* (Commander of the Faithful).[11] The particular blend of Moroccan Islam, mixing adherence to the Maliki school with popular Sufi-style practices including the veneration of saints, also places limitations on the Islamist movement's ability to challenge the existing order. Its tame response to the Danish cartoon controversy appears to indicate that Morocco is not on the verge of either an Islamist-dominated publish sphere or a violent confrontation with the authorities. However, the Islamist-makhzen relationship will undoubtedly be fraught with tension and pose serious dilemmas to both sides.

Scenario 3: Accelerated Evolution towards Democracy

The pace of liberalization of political and social life with an accompanying expansion of civil society has quickened considerably during Muhammad's seven-year reign. The impetus has come from both above and from below. On the one hand, it has come from the makhzen seeking to placate various social and political forces in order to re-legitimize its rule and prevent the country's destabilization and radicalization. On the other hand, the impetus has also come from the various sectors harboring grievances and agendas–human rights groups and ex-political prisoners, liberal intellectuals, young Western-oriented technocrats, intrepid journalists and women's organizations, Berber identity activists, and (as mentioned above) members of the Islamist current. Highlights of this process in recent years include the promulgation of a far-reaching change in Moroccan family law on behalf of women's status,[12] the high-profile Committee of Truth and Reconciliation that publicly exposed some of the worst abuses of the Hassan years, the welcoming home of long-time political exiles, and a considerable expansion of press freedom. Hence, an ongoing dialectic between the regime and society continues to play itself out, one which has brought, thus far, tangible benefits. However, the transformation of Morocco into a true Western-style constitutional monarchy with a democratic political system remains beyond the horizon. Existing political party groupings, even the more venerable ones (*Istiqlal*, USFP, *Mouvement Populaire*), have not been able to broaden their existing constituencies or demonstrate real efficacy in policy matters. The regime's long-held red lines–such as forbidding negative references to either the person of the King or his family, or calling into question Morocco's claim to the disputed Western Sahara territory–remain in force, with the regime standing ready to punish violators. For example, the authorities have continued to hound gadfly liberal journalist Ali Mrabet through imprisonment, fines, and publishing bans for failure to observe these rules.

More recently, it has imposed crippling fines on the independent weekly *Le Journal Hebdomadaire*.[13] The privatization of the economy has not changed the essential fact that the country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few score families, with the Royal Family being the richest of them. The declared goal of de-centralizing power for the benefit of local communities appears to be more designed to strengthen the central government's links with the local authorities than to devolve power. Endemic official corruption in government institutions insure that making Morocco a 'state of law' remains, at best, a distant goal. However, given the alternatives, the Moroccan public, which has long been depoliticized, appears

unlikely to insist on more radical democratizing measures and incapable, in any case, of engaging in sustained political mobilization. The backing of Morocco's current approach by its international patrons also insures that the pace of change will be gradual, not revolutionary, without a significant alteration in the broad contours of political life.

ALGERIA[14]

Algeria stands as Morocco's polar opposite in many respects. Lacking a historical core identity, the modern Algerian state was forged in the crucible of harsh colonial rule and a bloody war of independence. Its model of government was that of a populist-authoritarian single party dominated by the military, with a revolutionary socialist-Islamic ideology and funded largely by petroleum and natural gas revenues. From the outset, it stood as a geo-political rival to neighboring Morocco. From the mid-1970s until today, this rivalry and competition has centered on the fate of the Western Sahara. In the late 1980s, Algeria experienced a brief explosion of democracy, followed by a long night of violent conflict between opposition Islamist groups and the regime. The regime's triumph, and survival, was assured by the late 1990s, and it has been seeking to stabilize the country ever since. However, a successful legitimacy formula has not yet been re-fashioned out of the wreckage of the civil war, and the maintenance of the existing order is due more to societal exhaustion, the defeat and splintering of the Islamists, and the authorities' overall ability to dominate society than to the forging of broader genuine support from among the populace.

Meanwhile, the degree of alienation felt by the Algerian people finds expression in an Algerian phrase–'*la hogra*,' i.e. contempt for the authorities, contempt that derives from the public's inability to hold the authorities accountable for their actions, and anger of their open violations of human rights.

Scenario I: Continuation of the Authoritarian Status Quo

The recent illness of Algeria's President Abd al-Aziz Bouteflika casts a shadow over the specific contours of Algeria's future political course, but not over the essentials. Backed by the military, which was badly in need of the legitimacy provided by civilian rule, Bouteflika registered much success in consolidating his position since ascending to the presidency in 1999. The Islamist insurgency was finally broken, although not entirely stamped out; Algeria's standing in the international community, which had been damaged during the civil war, improved considerably, and the Kabylian crisis of 2001 was weathered. He was also able to establish some gradual distance, and even authority, over the military establishment by pensioning off senior officials–including Gen. Muhammad Lamari–and promoting younger officers and those more loyal directly to him. His decisive defeat of his former associate and now bitter rival, ex-prime minister Ali Benflis, in the 2004 general presidential elections further strengthened his power base. Eighteen months later, another successful step in his consolidation of power and prestige was the overwhelming ratification of the 'Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation,' by 97 percent of the voters in a referendum. The charter offered a broad amnesty for militants who had handed in their weapons–apart from those who were guilty of murder, rape, and bombings of public buildings–freeing the security services from any possible responsibility for the disappearance of more than 6,000 Algerians. It also offered compensation to the families of the dead and disappeared.

One thing that Bouteflika did not do was fundamentally alter the opaque nature of Algeria's authoritarian system. The military *nomanklatura* (often referred to as 'mafia clans') had come to control much of Algeria's economic enterprises, and although the Algerian economy required major overhaul in order to cope with high unemployment and poverty, and to make it competitive in the global market, fundamental reforms would have threatened to undermine the edifice on which the regime was built. So Bouteflika safeguarded the existing clientelist system–with its enormous income–and the military's (and his own) privileges in it. Limited economic liberalization measures were carried out in ways that did not result in the

breaking up of unofficial monopolies held by various interest groups. Algeria is a *rentier* state par excellence, deriving 95 percent of its revenues from the sale of natural gas and oil. Its destabilization in the late 1980s was prompted by the precipitous drop in oil prices. To Bouteflika's–and the establishment's–good fortune, the spike in petroleum revenues during recent years has provided the state with unprecedented revenues. Profits went from $11 billion in 2000 to over $30 billion in 2004, and could reach $60 billion in 2006. This increase in income creates a cushion enabling the regime to avoid the necessity of adopting far-reaching measures to reform the economy.

Although opaque, Algeria's authoritarian regime is also 'soft,' in the sense that the military-economic-political elites are large enough and diverse enough so as to preclude the accumulation of absolute power in the hands of one particular 'clan.' Internal divisions are thus often reflected in a lively press, which at times features sharp criticism of public figures. Yet neither the pluralist press nor the other elements of secular civil society are sufficiently strong to challenge fundamentally the dominance of the existing order. The 2001 'Black Spring' in Kabylia had generated a massive march to Algiers condemning the *pouvoir* (state authorities) and demanding democracy and human rights, along with fundamental recognition of the Berber language and culture, and seemed to be a possible harbinger for more sustained political activity. However, that energy has largely dissipated, in part due to the authorities' employment of both carrots and sticks, and the Kabylian Berber movement has, for now, sullenly turned inwards.

The authorities have used similar carrot and stick tactics with the Islamist current. They have made gestures to placate traditional Islamic sensibilities in the legal realm. One such example is implementation of only cosmetic reforms in the personal status code. This is in contrast to recent far-reaching reforms in Morocco and to Tunisia's avowedly secular code.�?¯�?¿�?½ Another example is the issuing of edicts banning the production of alcohol and allowing space for Islamist political parties.�?¯�?¿�?½ At the same time, the authorities have continued their pursuit of Islamist armed groups and maintained the ban on a return to public life by former FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) leaders. Notwithstanding its revolutionary socialist image, Islam was always a central component of Algerian nationalism, and the authorities appear determined not to abandon the Islamic playing field to the opposition Islamist current.

One additional and important reinforcement of the current regime's position emanates from the West. The considerable number of radical Muslim terrorists originating in North Africa and the connections between die-hard Algerian jihadi groups and al-Qa`ida-related networks has led Western governments to seek closer strategic cooperation with the regime and to speak approvingly of the latter's struggle against Islamist radicalism. For a regime long accused of at least partial responsibility for the extent of the bloodshed in Algeria during the 1990s, such an embrace is like manna from heaven.

Overall, therefore, the current weakness of all political alternatives, the large cushion provided by the oil and gas windfall, and Western backing seems to ensure that Algeria's authoritarian order will not be seriously endangered in the coming five years. The Algerian 'state' is stronger than the society, and hopes for the development of a strong democratic movement appear premature at best. According to the French-Algerian analyst Fanny Colonna, even the leading intellectuals in the Arabic, Tamazight, and French-speaking communities have not been successful in developing a common Algerian vision.[15] Hence, it is likely that the patterns witnessed in the past will continue in the future: an authoritarian-pluralist regime that from time to time must cope with serious outbursts from various portions of society, and particularly with the continuous tension between Kabylia and the central authorities.

Bouteflika's health appears to be the main wild card in the deck. Yet whatever internal conflicts take place in the jockeying for power, the underlying principles of power are likely to remain dominant. In the best

case, the professionalization of the army, which Bouteflika touts, will continue apace, and the military will partially step back into its role of guardian of the state (reminiscent, at least in name, of Turkey). This would allow for greater civilian political activity, albeit within strict limits.

Scenario 2: The Islamization of the Political Sphere

During French colonial rule, Islam was an integral part of the Algerian nationalist movement's core ideology and constituted a central unifying component to the nation's identity. During its heyday between 1989-91, the FIS trumpeted itself as the true *fils* ('son' and heir) to the ruling FLN's revolutionary ideology. Yet the FIS was never a tightly unified movement, and it splintered into various factions in the face of the authorities' ruthless crackdown and long years of violent upheaval.

Towards the end of the 1990s, the authorities promulgated a 'law on civil concord' designed to give Islamist militants judicial leniency in return for laying down their weapons; the amnesty offered by the 2005 national reconciliation charter extended the regime's efforts to piece the country back together again. The level of violence receded during this period, but never entirely dissipated.

How potent is the Islamic current in Algeria today? The legal Islamist parties are clearly in the authorities' pockets and do not have the potential for generating serious challenges to the regime. To be sure, Abdallah Djaballah, former head of the *al-Nahda* party and current head of the recently constituted National Reform Movement (MRN), made some headway in the 2002 general elections, winning 7.7 percent of the total vote, and subsequently helped achieve parliament's passage of laws forbidding the import of alcohol and voting inside military garrisons. However, he only garnered a scant five percent of the vote in the 2004 presidential elections.

Still, the political and social factors that led large sections of Algerian youth to embrace the Islamist ideology have not disappeared. Widespread official corruption, economic hardship, high rates of unemployment and profound alienation among youth, and the absence of any alternative credible channel for political expression still exist. In addition, the regime's opacity has sometimes resulted in the past in secret negotiations and even agreements between the Islamist opposition and elements of the regime. Kabylian Berber activists have constantly feared the cobbling together of a 'grand deal' between the *pouvoir* and the Islamists, at their expense. However, this fear seems exaggerated: The regime itself has no interest in giving radical Islamists room to breathe. Hence, it has continuously refused to confer legal recognition on the moderate Islamist Wafa party, headed by former senior cabinet minister Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi. At the same time, it is conscious of Islamic sensibilities in society, exemplified by the largely cosmetic changes in the family law and the ban on the production of alcohol.

As for the FIS, its leadership never acknowledged any responsibility for Algeria's violent decade and the country's continued unsettled state, a fact not likely to find favor in the eyes of a war-weary populace. Moreover, the connection between recalcitrant jihadist groups at home and international Islamist terrorist networks renders it easier for the authorities to justify keeping a firm hand on Islamist activity. Hence, while Ali Belhadj–one of the fiery leaders of the FIS in 1989-91–continues to issue defiant declarations and risk re-incarceration, the movement's own fragmentation (and the authorities' determination not to repeat the mistakes of the late 1980s) seems to make the possibility of an Islamist transformation of the Algerian polity extremely unlikely during the coming few years.

Scenario 3: Accelerated Evolution towards Democracy

The regime took a number of steps in 2005 in the direction of strengthening the rule of law and improving the human rights situation.[16] However, these did not portend an imminent breakthrough towards

democracy. Rather, they were part of the authorities' ongoing strategy of coping with challenges within the existing authoritarian framework.

Kabylia, the heartland of 2/3rds of Algeria's Berber population, has long been Algeria's internal hot-spot, often standing in stark opposition to the prevailing national consensus. Berber Culture Movement activists demanding linguistic and cultural recognition, and short-sighted repressive regime policies, have often exacerbated tensions. Kabylian demands have also fallen within the framework of a broader demand for democratization. Most recently, the 'Black Spring' of 2001–in which over 100 Kabylian youths were killed in the street by the security forces–generated an unprecedented outpouring of collective anger and solidarity. It also led to a period of open, albeit largely peaceful rejection of many of the state's symbols and trappings. The subsequent Kabylian-led march on Algiers demanding a true democratic regime for Algeria as well as recognition of the Kabylian Berber language and culture as an official part of the country's patrimony, briefly indicated that demands for expanded civil society and the lessening of military influence were now very much on the public agenda. A particular Kabylian twist to the story was the creation of a new body, the *a`arsh* (literally 'tribes'), outside of the existing Kabylian political parties to negotiate with the government on the community's demands.[17] Some of these demands were in fact subsequently met, after years of talks. However, as of today, these bodies no longer function effectively, and Kabylia too suffers from public exhaustion and political apathy. Still, the Berber issue has shown itself to be a genie that can no longer returned to the bottle, and sooner or later, its demands, spearheaded perhaps by a new group of activists, are sure to be revived.

These demands may well fit into the agenda of enterprising (and sometimes persecuted) journalists, intellectuals, women's groups, and more secular political activists, who seek a more genuine democratic Algeria. If a reformist element within the army arises, seeking perhaps to emulate genuinely the Turkish military, it is possible that a democratic movement for change will grow in strength. Yet right now, at any rate, that scenario appears to be beyond the horizon.

TUNISIA[18]

Tunisia poses a bit of a paradox among Arab states. On the one hand, it has been consistently pro-Western since achieving independence in 1956. It has a history of vibrant civil society institutions, including labor movements, political parties, and women's groups. Its secular ethos was highlighted by the fact that women's rights have been enshrined in Tunisian law from the outset (e.g., it is the only Arab state in which polygamy is officially outlawed).[19] Likewise, populist-statist economic policies were abandoned in recent decades in favor of liberalization and privatization–policies generally deemed favorable for the development of political pluralism. It is a relatively prosperous state, with a per capita GDP of $7,600, high rates of literacy and education, and a significant middle class; and the state itself possesses a high degree of social cohesiveness and historical specificity. On the other hand, Tunisia is currently among the most authoritarian of Arab states, having severely repressed all manifestations of political opposition and independent civil society–whether secular-liberal or Islamic–in the last fifteen years. This has been accompanied by the development of a personality cult around President Zine Abidine Ben Ali.

Scenario I: Continuation of the Authoritarian Status Quo

This is by far the most likely of the three scenarios under consideration. After a brief initial period of political liberalization, reconciliation with long-time political opponents, and the extension of legal public space to the Islamist movement, Ben Ali reinstituted a repressive single-party rule in the early 1990s. He then undertook a series of measures to bolster and consolidate his preeminence, while emasculating all sources of opposition. Moreover, to the surprise of democratic transition theorists, policies of economic liberalization in the 1980s and 1990s did not result in the creation of power centers in possession of a

greater degree of autonomy and an increased will to challenge the political status quo. Nor were the downtrodden rural populations empowered by the privatization of the agricultural sector. Rather, these new policies actually tended to strengthen corporatist clientelist and neo-traditional patterns of social and political organization, and the repression of existing civil society groups.[20] The business sector and the security services constitute the pillars of the regime, while legal political parties have scant financial resources or public following and are dependent on the government's goodwill for their continued existence. As a result, Tunisia remains one of the world's oldest authoritarian one-party regimes, with a deadened public sphere, dismal human rights record, and sham electoral process that has essentially made Ben Ali 'President for Life.'[21]

The background for Ben Ali's repressive regime is two-fold: the success of the Islamist *al-Nahda* party in the relatively free parliamentary elections in 1989, and the horrific violence in neighboring Algeria during the 1990s. Hence, the Tunisian elites and middle class alike, fearful of the consequences of a rising political Islam in a society noted for its relatively liberal and secular ambience, essentially agreed to their indefinite political emasculation in return for the regime's repression of the Islamist movement and the maintenance of a liberal economy and the existing legal and social frameworks.

To be sure, Tunisia has come under harsh criticism by Western governments and NGOs for its human rights record and repression of journalists.[22] The Ben Ali regime's blunt rejection of even modest, incremental political reform has also embarrassed Washington, for it directly clashes with its proclaimed strategic goal of promoting democratization in the Middle East. Yet for now, Tunisian society's quiescence testifies to the regime's successful efforts against radical Islam. With more important fish to fry, it is likely that Washington will occasionally continue to rap the regime on the knuckles for failing to promote political reform while welcoming its cooperation in the war on terror, maintaining stability at home, and advancing women's rights. France, Tunisia's former colonial overlord and main trading partner, is even less likely to be troubled by the continuation of the status quo, so long as the regime remains stable and demonstrates cooperation in fighting the tide of potential migrants seeking to enter fortress Europe.

Scenario 2: The Islamization of the Political Sphere

No organized Islamist opposition operates above ground in Tunisia, although one can safely assume that the Islamist current continues to attract sympathizers, particularly those from the lower socio-economic stratum. The terrorist bombing of the Jerba synagogue in 2002 demonstrated the recruiting abilities of jihadi Islam.

The *al-Nahda* movement was severely repressed, and its main figures are either abroad or in jail. Hence, its political potential appears extremely limited. Interestingly, the movement has shown signs of evolution of its thinking towards the acceptance of a multi-party political system that would include secular parties and movements. To that end, it has begun to cooperate with secular opposition forces in their common Parisian exile. Whether or not there has been a strategic shift in *al-Nahda*'s thinking, or whether its actions can be best understood on the instrumental, tactical level, remains to be seen.

Scenario 3: Accelerated Evolution towards Democracy

Western interest in seeing at least the beginning of a process of political evolution in Tunisia may eventually bear some fruit in the coming years. However, with the Tunisian secular opposition as emasculated as the Islamists, there is neither no one individual, nor any issue, that appears capable of galvanizing a process of genuine democratic reform. Nonetheless, one can assume that the discourse of reform, as voiced both in the West and within liberal circles in the Arab world, is being heard in Tunisia as well.[23] Apparently, the Ben Ali regime will have to either feel sufficiently threatened by continued

stagnation, or sufficiently confident in its ability to control the pace of change before it allows such a process to get underway. For the time being, neither appears to be on the horizon. In the event of Ben Ali's incapacitation, one can envisage his successor initially adopting liberalization measures similar to the ones he himself embraced when he replaced Habib Bourguiba in 1987, in order to legitimize his rule.

CONCLUSION

Whereas the regime in Tunisia is still not prepared to countenance significant measures of political liberalization, the regimes in Morocco and Algeria are busy– each in its own style–seeking policy modifications that will enable them to style–seeking policy modifications that will enable them to successfully cope with the various challenges posed by their societies. The axis of confrontation between the Islamic movements and the political establishments of each of the three countries grabs most of the attention of observers. Nonetheless there exist other civil society forces, among them Berbers, women, portions of the middle class, human rights organizations, and segments of the younger generation who constitute significant pieces of the North African mosaic. The processes of building modern civil societies are exhausting, Sisyphean, and frustrating. The extent of the regimes' abilities to cope with the demands of these forces, and the wisdom they exercise in doing so will help determine the course of political and social life in the Maghreb in the coming years.

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[1] L. Carl Brown, 'Maghrib Historiography: The Unit of Analysis Problem,' in Michel Le Gall and Kenneth Perkins (eds.), *The Maghrib in Question* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1997), pp. 4-16.

[2] I. William Zartman, 'Introduction: Rewriting the Future in the Maghrib,' in Azzedine Layachi (ed.), *Economic Crisis and Political Change in North* Africa (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 1998), pp. 1-5.

[3] Morocco's and Algeria's combined population of over 60 million persons constitutes 75 percent of the five-nation Arab Maghreb Union. Tunisia's population adds an additional ten million persons to the figure. The Arab Maghreb Union consists of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania. Founded in 1989 with great fanfare, amidst expressed hopes for establishing closer regional ties and a regional economic bloc, it has utterly foundered, primarily on the shoals of continuing Algerian-Moroccan differences over the future of the Western Sahara and on Algeria's implosion during the 1990s.

[4] Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT:�?⁻�?¿�?½ Yale UP, 1968), pp. 177-91.

[5] Daniel Zisenwine, 'From Hasan II to Muhammad VI-Plus �?⁻�?¿�?½a change?,' in Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Daniel Zisenwine (eds.), *The Maghreb in the New Century: Identity, Religion and Politics* (Gainseville, FL:�?⁻�?¿�?½ University Press of Florida, 2007, forthcoming).

[6] �?⁻�?¿�?½Daniel Zisenwine, 'Political Elites Amid a Changing Reality in Morocco,' in *The Middle East: The Impact of Generational Change* (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and

African Studies, 2005), pp. 163-74.

[7] 'Morocco: First 50 Women Imams to Start Preaching in April,' adnkronosinternational, March 13, 2006, http://www.adnki.com/index_2Level_English.php?cat=Religion&loid=8.0.275044856&par=0. For a fuller report in French, taken from the Moroccan daily *La Vie Economique*, see 'Les femmes 'imams' ou 'mourchidates' seront op�?¯�?¿�?½rationnelles en avril!,' http://www.casafree.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=5803; Helene Zuber, 'The Quiet Revolution,' *Der Spiegel,* January 2-9, 2006, http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,394869,00.html.

[8] Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, 'Contested Identities: Berbers, 'Berberism,' and the State in North Africa,' *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 23-47; Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, 'Ethno-Politics and Globalization in North Africa: The Berber Culture Movement,' *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (March 2006), pp. 71-83; Mickael Bensadoun, 'The (Re)-Fashioning of Moroccan National Identity,' in Maddy-Weitzman and Zisenwine (eds.), *The Maghreb in the New Century: Identity, Religion and Politics*.

[9] To be sure, the reasons why a woman would don the veil in public vary from piety, to familial and peer pressure, to the security it provides in crowded public spheres from aggressive males, to the projection of a more dignified image. 'Voile, Que cache ce bout de tissue multi-usage?,' *Le Reporter,* February 9, 2006.

[10] For an analysis of the PJD and also of the Islamist 'Justice and Spirituality' movement, see Michael Willis, 'Justice and Development or Justice and Spirituality? The Challenge of Morocco's Non-Violent Islamist Movements,' in Maddy-Weitzman and Zisenwine (eds.), *The Maghreb in the New Century*.

[11] Nadia Yassine, the daughter of JCM's spiritual guide Shaykh Abdelslam Yassine, drew considerable attention to herself and the wrath of the authorities by questioning Morocco's need for a king. It was, however, an isolated episode.

[12] Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, 'Women, Islam and the Moroccan State: The Struggle over the Personal Status Law,' *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Summer 2005), pp. 393-410.

[13] For the regime's actions against Mrabet and other journalists as well, see 'Morocco: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2005,' Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, March 8, 2006, http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61695.htm. For the regime's most recent attempt to crush *Le Journal Hebdomadaire*, see Rashid Khilnaini, 'How Morocco's Free Media is Silenced,' April 19, 2006, http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-protest/morocco_3460.jsp.

[14] This section draws, in part, on Gideon Gera, 'Reflections on the Aftermath of Civil Strife in Algeria, 2005,' and on Louisa A�?¯�?¿�?½t-Hamadouche and Yahia H. Zoubir, 'The Fate of Political Islam in Algeria, in Maddy-Weitzman and Zisenwine (eds.), *The Maghrib in the New Century:�?¯�?¿�?½ Identity, Religion and Politics*.

[15] Fanny Colonna, 'The Nation's 'Unknowing Other': Three Intellectuals and the Culture(s) of Being Algerian, or the Impossibility of Subaltern Studies in Algeria,' *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring 2003), p. 155-70.

[17] International Crisis Group (ICG), 'Algeria: Unrest and Impasse in Kabylia,' *Middle East / North Africa Report No. 15*, June 10, 2003, http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1415&l=1..

[18] This section has benefited considerably from Michele Penner Angrist, 'Whither the Ben Ali Regime in Tunisia,' in Maddy-Weitzman and Zisenwine (eds.), *The Maghreb in the New Century.*

[19] Laurie A. Brand, *Women, the State and Political Liberalization* (NY: Columbia UP, 1998); Mounira M. Charrad, *States and Women's Rights*: *The Making of Post-Colonial Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[20] Stephen J. King in *Liberalization against Democracy: The Local Politics of Economic Reform in Tunisia* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003).

[21] Neila Charchour Hachicha: 'Tunisia's Election Was Undemocratic at All Levels,' *Middle East Quarterly* (Summer 2005), http://www.meforum.org/article/732.

[23] Barry Rubin, *The Long War for Freedom* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), pp. 112-14.