

## **Containing Radicalism through the Political Process in North Africa**

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Over the past 30 years, the states of North Africa have all witnessed the emergence of forms of political radicalism, most notably of an Islamist colouring, within their borders. The destabilizing effect this radicalism has often had, not only on the states themselves but also on the surrounding region, including Europe, has led to an increasing focus on how political processes within the states can be ordered to minimize and contain this radicalism.

The idea that radicalism can be contained through formal political processes is not a new one and can be found in theories of liberal democracy. It is argued that by including previously excluded political, social and even economic forces in political processes and the running of the state, these forces will feel that they have a say and a voice and that their interests and views are not neglected. They will therefore not seek to resort to radical or violent means to have their opinions heard or their interests considered. Such an approach was adopted in several southern European

countries such as France and Italy (and later by Spain) with regard to their respective communist parties following the Second World War and, more latterly, arguably also to parties of the far right such as the National Front in France.

The liberal democratic framework is not, though, the only political framework that employs such ideas. Non-democratic political systems and philosophies also employ similar approaches often as a means of getting dissent to reveal itself in order to observe and control or repress and extinguish it. In China, Chairman Mao Zedong's famous exhortation in 1957 to 'Let a hundred flowers bloom' has been interpreted as a mean of encouraging critics of communist party rule into the open in order to subsequently identify and detain them (Roberts, 2003: 433). Similarly, President Anwar Sadat's decision to legalize the creation of new political parties in Egypt in the 1970s has been seen as having been at least partly motivated by a desire to monitor and manage criticism of his regime (Brown and Piro, 1994: 99).

Between these two extremes there is the more common framework where excluded groups are invited into formal political processes to give an *appearance* or, perhaps more properly, an *illusion* of meaningful involvement. Such an illusion works to sap radical impulses without having to concede influence to the newly included group; power remaining in the same hands as before. A prominent example of this approach can be seen in Egypt, both under Sadat and subsequently Hosni Mubarak, where political parties are legalized and allowed to contest elections but also where steps are taken, through legal instruments or straightforward electoral interference and fraud, to ensure that the national parliament and the all-powerful presidency are continually and exclusively controlled by the president and his ruling party.

The three frameworks are not necessarily mutually exclusive – particularly the first and the third. In Great Britain, for example, beginning in the nineteenth century, the formal political system was successively opened up to new groups: the industrial middle class, the industrial working class, rural workers and finally women. This was done in an effort to avoid unrest of an eventual scale that could lead to the overthrow of the whole political class and regime as had occurred across the Channel with the French Revolution. The British ruling political class was confident in its assumption that they could successfully admit these new social groups without loosening their own long-established grip on political power. However, in the longer run, these new social classes came to dominate the system through the election of governments dominated by firstly the middle classes, then the industrial working class and then, finally, in 1979 with Margaret Thatcher, a woman.

In North Africa, the three main states of the western Maghreb – Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco – have all witnessed attempts being made by their respective governments to use formal political processes to contain and control various forms of radicalism that have emerged in their countries since the achievement of independence in the 1950s and 1960s.

### Tunisia<sup>1</sup>

The first and most visible occasion that the post-independence regime in Tunisia sought to use formal political processes to deal with radicalism occurred in the early

1980s. It followed a general strike and other forms of unrest that occurred in 1978 and which had represented the first main challenge to the regime established by Habib Bourguiba and the Neo-Destour (later *Parti Socialiste Destourien* – PSD) party after the achievement of independence in 1956. Until that point the highly personalized nature of the regime run by Bourguiba through a single party functioning on virtually textbook Marxist lines had believed that the popularity of the president and the extensive structures of the ruling party effectively precluded any large-scale dissidence or opposition. The scale of the disturbances of 1978 and the political dimensions they displayed persuaded Bourguiba that some political as well as security response was needed and in the early 1980s three nominally opposition parties were legalized: the Party of Popular Unity (PUP), the *Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes* (MDS) and the *Parti Communiste Tunisien* (PCT). However, the fact that all of these parties were related to the regime and none of them was subsequently allowed to win representation at even the local level indicated the thoroughly cosmetic nature of the changes. More importantly, the regime refused to recognize and legalize any of the genuine or well-supported opposition groups and parties that existed at that time. Most notable of these was the country's largest Islamist movement, known after 1981 as the Islamic Tendency Movement or MTI (*Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique*).<sup>2</sup> The MTI issued a political platform and formally applied for recognition as a legal political party, a request that was not only rejected by the authorities but resulted in most of the leadership being arrested and imprisoned for the formation of an illegal organization.<sup>3</sup>

The wholly cosmetic nature of the political changes introduced in the early 1980s failed to prevent further outbreaks of social unrest across the country through the rest of the decade which included a series of small-scale bombings by a small extremist Islamist group made up of former MTI members and calling themselves Islamic Jihad in hotels in the coastal towns of Sousse and Monastir in August 1987 (Burgat and Dowell, 1993: 205–6).<sup>4</sup> Repression of the MTI similarly failed to staunch its growth and in many eyes the two developments – the growth of the MTI and growing violence – were linked, if not in terms of formal responsibility then in terms of the MTI becoming the outlet for widespread frustration and anger at the regime. The impasse was eventually broken in November 1987 by the peaceful deposition of President Bourguiba by his prime minister, Zine al-Abdine Ben Ali, who soon moved to further defuse the mounting crisis by opening talks with all the opposition forces, including the MTI. Within two years, however, the liberal and inclusive approach of the new regime began to change with the regime failing to allow the MTI to form a political party and contest elections. This was despite the fact that the movement agreed to official requests to drop references to religion in its name and rename itself An-Nahda. Soon after this, Ben Ali moved to outlaw and crush An-Nahda, effectively rooting out any organized manifestation of the party by 1992 (Shahin, 1997: 67–106).

The official reason that was given for the crushing and exclusion of An-Nahda was that it had turned to radicalism and specifically violence to achieve its ends. The evidence presented for this charge was mixed but it became apparent that the

problem with An-Nahda was not so much its radicalism but its strength and challenge to the Tunisian regime. In national elections in 1989 candidates of An-Nahda, who had been forced to stand as independents following the regime's failure to grant legal recognition to the party, had officially far outpolled all the other opposition parties and in some areas had come close to Ben Ali's ruling party, the RCD (*Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique*).<sup>5</sup> The truth of this was borne out by the fact that after An-Nahda was crushed the regime sought to crush any group or indeed individual that expressed not so much radicalism but, more importantly, criticism or opposition to the Ben Ali regime. In this way, critical judges, lawyers, human rights activists, secular political parties and even student web surfers all felt the wrath of the regime.

At the same time, formal political processes were instituted that effectively reproduced those of the Bourguiba era with the ruling party winning overwhelming majorities in elections and Ben Ali himself winning successive presidential elections with more than 99 per cent of the vote. Concessions to the legal 'opposition' were highly symbolic with other parties being allowed a minority quota of seats in the national parliament from 1994, other candidates being allowed to contest presidential elections from 1999 and the president restricting himself to a historic low of 95 per cent of the vote in 2004.

Liberal democratic concerns aside, on one level Ben Ali's regime in Tunisia has been remarkably successful in containing radicalism: not through including radical forces in political processes but by *excluding* them. For some, the lesson of the Tunisian experience is that exclusion and repression is a useful and effective means of dealing with radicalism and indeed the regime, and not a few outside observers, have articulated such a view, often pointing to the relative economic growth and stability Tunisia has experienced when compared to its more turbulent and more politically pluralistic neighbours. One American writer and journalist has argued that the Tunisian government was faced with a 'choice... between clamping down on Islamists or facing death by terror' (Borowiec, 1998: 50). More substantially, President Jacques Chirac of France, on a visit to Tunisia in December 2003, responded to criticisms of the country's poor human rights record by arguing that 'The most important human rights are to eat, to be medically cared for and to have an education and somewhere to live'.<sup>6</sup>

There are, however, some weighty caveats to be made to such a conclusion. Firstly there is the question as to whether the policy of exclusion was ever really necessary. Evidence of links between An-Nahda/MTI and serious violence is mostly unproven (Shahin, 1997: 101–2). Moreover, even if An-Nahda were to be formally allowed to contest elections and these elections were to be free and fair, it is unlikely that the party would either win a majority in the national legislature or secure the election of its candidate to the presidency. This is primarily because Tunisia's small, mainly urban and relatively educated and comparatively prosperous population are unlikely to back heavily more radical movements and alternatives. A second caveat concerns the question of whether the strategy of repression and exclusion might actually contribute to the build-up of opposition to and resentment against the regime. Much store has been placed on the continued economic prosperity and

stability of the country – something that cannot automatically be taken for granted in the longer run. The phasing-out of the international multi-fibre agreement on textiles, for example, is likely to have a serious impact on Tunisia's important textile industry as it faces intense competition from Asia. According to one estimate as many as 50,000 Tunisians working in the textile sector could lose their jobs (OECD and ADB, 2005: 453). Tunisia's repressive police and security apparatus cannot isolate forever the country from broader trends that are seeping into the region of both a liberal and pluralistic as well as a more violent and extremist nature. Official policy did not, for example, succeed in preventing the bomb attack that was carried out against a synagogue in Djerba in April 2002.

### Algeria<sup>7</sup>

Algeria also provides an interesting case study of the relationship between political processes and radicalism. For some observers, it provides the clearest example of how a state attempted to use formal political processes to contain radicalism. In February 1989 the country introduced a new pluralistic constitution that provided for a multiparty system and electoral process following 25 years of rule by a largely military elite in the name of a single party, the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*). The fact that the new constitution was introduced only four months after massive country-wide popular unrest had shaken the country's major cities in October 1988 was taken as a clear indication that the new political arrangements were an attempt to control and contain the popular anger of the previous October.<sup>8</sup> However, although there is a clear line of causation linking the constitution of February 1989 with the riots of October 1988, the link is not quite as it might seem. The new constitution was, in reality, primarily introduced as a means of regulating conflict *within* the regime itself. The then president, Chadli Benjedid, wanted to use his new political *démarche* to wrong foot and distract his rivals and enemies within the regime itself. Previously excluded groups, including Islamists and radical secularists, were allowed to form political parties as a means of providing competition for, and putting pressure on, the President's foes inside the ruling FLN. The fact that several of these new parties espoused often very radical agendas was not seen as so important as the internal power struggles inside the regime (Willis, 1997: 107–14).

That the retention of political power was at the centre of the concerns of Algeria's military and political elite was underlined by the decision to terminate the multiparty political experiment, three years after it was launched, in early 1992. The dominance of the new multiparty system and process by an Islamist party, the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS), through victories in local elections in 1990 and in the first round of legislative elections in December 1991 prompted the move to shut down the process. As in Tunisia, it was the challenge of the FIS, rather more than its radicalism, that led to its repression and exclusion from the political process – the party being formally dissolved and banned in March 1992. Although radical and extreme voices had always been present within the FIS, most of these had either been imprisoned or indeed purged by the party itself before the elections of December 1991, leaving a markedly more moderate and accommodationist leadership to take the party into the

elections. Four months before the elections, in August 1991, the party had held a congress to elect a new leadership following the arrest of most of the original senior leaders of the party by the authorities following street protests by the FIS against a new electoral law that clearly aimed to restrict the party's chances in the upcoming elections. The congress not only ejected from the party two senior figures who called for the creation of an armed wing for the party, but also appointed new, younger, more educated and more moderate figures to the leadership (Willis, 1997: 219–21; 228–9).<sup>9</sup> The results of the regime's attempt to exclude and repress the FIS after 1992 are now well known and widely acknowledged as being disastrous, provoking a near decade long civil conflict that claimed well over 100,000 lives.

The course of developments in Algeria prompts questions as to why the attempt to repress the FIS failed, especially when a similar move on the part of neighbouring Tunisia (and on which the Algerian policy was at least partly based<sup>10</sup>) appeared to succeed. The answer to these questions lies in the much more thorough opening up of the political system in the Algerian case that elicited much more elevated hopes for real change on the part of the population. In one sense, Algeria's experience *could* be read as political processes having served to exacerbate, rather than contain, radicalism and this was certainly the lesson drawn by the country's rulers. However, the more obvious lesson is that it was not the *establishment* of political processes that engendered radicalism but their precipitous *curtailment* and confiscation that was the real cause for the growth of radicalism and the explosion of violence that occurred after 1992.

In the wake of the effective *coup d'état* of 1992 the Algerian regime sought to turn back the political clock to the period before 1989, but the growth in violence increasingly pushed it into constructing some form of political process that would help it contain the violence. Formal elections were organized at the presidential level in 1995 and at the national legislative and local levels in 1997, but none of these sets of elections succeeded in bringing the civil conflict and violence to an end. Although it is certainly true that the conflict had developed a dynamic of its own in places by the mid-1990s, it was also true that it was the regime's consistent refusal to rehabilitate the FIS that obstructed efforts at peace. The party's ejection and exclusion from the political process had been the root cause of much of the violence and, more generally, of popular cynicism amongst ordinary Algerians, huge numbers of whom had voted for the FIS in 1990 and 1991 and who viewed the party's rehabilitation as the acid test of the regime's intentions to pay attention to the population's concerns. Indeed, whilst the FIS had been the vehicle for the impulses and visions of radical Islamists, for infinitely more Algerians who had supported it, the party had become the means for pushing aside the corrupt existing regime and instituting a more just and responsive political and economic order.<sup>11</sup>

The reduction in violence and conflict that has occurred over recent years is probably due to a number of factors including the ceasefire and disbanding of groups formally allied to the FIS and perhaps, more importantly, sheer exhaustion on the part of the population. The part played by political processes is difficult to judge. The election of Abdelaziz Bouteflika as president in 1999 and his re-election in 2004 has contributed to the reduction in violence through the *concord civil* that Bouteflika

adopted and which led to the laying down of the weapons of many of the members of the armed Islamist opposition. Attempts to bring former FIS supporters into these processes by offering them the opportunity of voting for other Islamist parties at elections has been of mixed success largely because of the either controlled or fully collaborationist nature of these parties. The Movement for a Society for Peace (*Harakat Mujtama al-Slim*) or MSP; and the Movement for National Reform (*Harakat al-Islah al-Watani*) or Islah; have their origins in Islamist parties during the FIS's legal lifetime but only began to attract significant electoral support in elections after the banning of the FIS. The MSP has been a largely faithful supporter of the regime and has had ministers in the government since 1994 and has been criticized as being the regime's 'tame' Islamists whose main purpose is to attract former FIS voters. For its part, Islah has held to a more critical line but has consequently come under greater pressure from the regime notably through what are widely seen as official sponsored splits and revolts in the party which have weakened and divided it.<sup>12</sup> Both parties are therefore subject to regime control of one kind or another and, indeed, both were forced by the authorities in 1997 to change their official party names to drop references to Islam within them. Neither party can thus be seen as a true successor to the FIS and neither has succeeded in attracting the levels of support that the FIS did. The regime has, moreover, explicitly ruled out the possibility of a successor party to the FIS, refusing to legalize one political party, Wafa, because it features too many former members of the FIS and thus seeks to recreate a banned party (Willis, 2002).

An interesting and more recent development in Algeria has been the emergence of another form of radicalism just as that related to Islamism appears to be subsiding. Unrest in the predominantly Berber-speaking region of Kabylia since 2001 has presented a new challenge to the regime. In seeking to meet this challenge, the Algerian authorities have, as with the Islamists, prioritized regime security over the containment of radicalism. Concessions have been made to the more radical elements and demands associated with the 2001 unrest, notably those related to Berber and Kabyle linguistic and cultural identity rather than to more mainstream grievances linked to social and economic problems in the region. In responding to the more radical demands, the Algerian regime aims to help portray the unrest in Kabylia as being an essentially Kabyle and Berber affair unconnected to the rest of the country. It thus hopes to prevent the more substantial socio-economic grievances articulated by the Kabyles spreading to the rest of the Algerian population – a development that could potentially threaten the stability of the regime. In this way, the regime is content to encourage more radical elements in what has become known as the 'Berberist' movement if it is perceived to serve the broader end of regime security (International Crisis Group, 2003; Layachi, 2005).

The future containment of all forms of radicalism in Algeria is dependent, as it is in the case of Tunisia, on several factors: most notably the government's delivery on vital social and economic programmes. The current high international oil price eases Algeria's task in some respects but is of limited help in establishing meaningful, long term employment for the overwhelmingly youthful mass of the country's unemployed. If the government fails to deliver for this angry and marginalized

section of the population, the possibility of popular unrest on the scale of October 1988 is not to be excluded.

At both the regional and international level, the Algerian regime has sought to present itself as a bulwark against Islamism: a brave secular government holding back the tide of radical fundamentalism. Such a presentation initially received a mixed response from western governments. Most were glad that Islamists had not come to power by the ballot box in 1992 or by the gun thereafter. At the same time, however, they were uneasy about both the cancellation of elections and the Algerian regime's increasingly murky role in the conflict that subsequently unfolded during the 1990s. The attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001, though, served to significantly reduce such ambivalence and western relations with Algeria warmed considerably as the country successfully portrayed itself as a key ally in the 'War on Terror'. On a visit to the United States in November 2001, in the wake of the 11 September attacks, the Algerian president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, declared that Algeria was 'well-placed to share in the current pain and suffering of the American people'. Explicitly linking the violence in Algeria with the 11 September attacks, he said that 'Terrorism is one and indivisible. If we are going to combat terrorism, we must do it together' (AllAfrica.com, 2001). In response, the United States has significantly upgraded relations with Algeria and in December 2003 on a visit to the country, Secretary of State Colin Powell declared that 'We especially appreciate Algeria's exceptional cooperation in the war against terrorism, and we look forward to strengthening that cooperation even more in the months and years ahead' (U.S. Department of State, 2003).

### Morocco<sup>13</sup>

Morocco has a much longer history than either Tunisia or Algeria of seeking to control radicalism through formal political processes. Moreover, such attempts have not been made in response to specific crises as was the case in both the other countries.

Morocco's first post-independence constitution enshrined the principle of multiparty politics, although this had less to do with any commitment to liberal democratic values than to a desire on the part of the dominant monarchy to splinter and create party political competition for the nationalist Istiqlal party with whom it struggled for power. Again, the concern was with control rather than with radicalism. Indeed, the monarchy's tactics arguably encouraged radicalism by promoting splits in the Istiqlal party which produced the more radical and leftist National Union of Popular Forces – or UNFP (*Union Nationale des Forces Populaires*) – which became a breeding ground for most radical opposition to the regime during the 1960s and 1970s. The fact that regime survival rather than radicalism was the main concern was further demonstrated by the Royal palace's legalization in the 1970s of the Kingdom's outlawed former communist party – the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS). The decision to allow the PPS to operate openly and contest elections owed less to the party's softening of its ideological line than to its endorsement of the monarchy's position on the issue of the Western

Sahara, a cause which the monarchy perceived as vital to its legitimacy and thus survival following several failed military coups and revolts in the early 1970s. The smaller and thus less threatening size of the PPS meant that it was also freer to articulate criticism of government policies than was the larger and more threatening main leftist party – the USFP (*Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires* – a successor to the UNFP) despite the USFP's ideologically more moderate origins and agenda (Waltz, 1995: 122–3).

With the challenge from the radical left met by the end of the 1970s, the monarchy in Morocco was confronted with a growing challenge from Islamist organizations from the late 1980s. Observing the travails of his Maghrebi neighbours in Tunisia and Algeria, King Hassan sought to follow a more proactive approach in dealing with the emerging challenge of the Islamists even though they were neither as numerous nor as organized as An-Nahda in Tunisia or the FIS in Algeria. It was decided that if one or more of the Kingdom's illegal but tolerated Islamist organisations could be co-opted and brought into formal politics then this would serve to avoid the problems experienced by Tunisia and particularly Algeria. Thus, in the early 1990s, significant attempts were made to co-opt the country's largest Islamist organization, the Justice and Spirituality (*Al-Adl wal Ihsan*) movement.<sup>14</sup> These attempts ended in failure but, significantly, this failure was due not to Justice and Spirituality's refusal to drop radical or extreme aspects of its programme – indeed the party was a staunch advocate of the principle of non-violence and accepted constitutional political methods – but rather foundered on the organization's unwillingness to accept the religious authority of the Moroccan monarchy.

Following its failure to co-opt Justice and Spirituality, the Palace then turned its attentions to the Kingdom's second largest Islamist organization – the Reform and Renewal Movement (*Al-Islah wa At-Tajdid*). Reform and Renewal proved much more amenable and accepted to enter formal politics on the monarchy's terms joining an existing political party in 1996 and then transforming it into its own Party of Justice and Development (PJD) in 1998. Significantly, both the PJD's origins and agenda were far more radical and extreme than that of Justice and Spirituality. Although formally forswearing violence, many of the leading figures in the party had been members of the Islamic Youth (*Shabiba Islamiyyah*) organization from the 1970s – a radical grouping that had not shied away from using violence against its enemies. Similarly, the PJD's agenda was arguably far more radical – notably in terms of issues such as women's rights and social freedoms – than was that of Justice and Spirituality. The key issue that swung the regime's acceptance of the party was its willingness to accept the particular role of the monarchy – once again emphasizing the importance of regime survival over concerns about radicalism (Tozy, 1999, 227–58; Willis, 1999).

The bringing in of the PJD into the political process – allowing it to contest elections and win seats in the national parliament and local councils – has increasingly served the Moroccan regime's desire to undercut support for Justice and Spirituality rather than for more extremist groups. Indeed, Justice and Spirituality has accused the regime of encouraging more extreme and even violent Islamist groups as

a means of eroding the larger movement's popular base.<sup>15</sup> Such an accusation was made in the aftermath of the suicide bombings that occurred in Casablanca on the night of 16 May 2003 and which sent shock waves through the Kingdom calling into question the official strategy towards Islamists. Following the attacks both Justice and Spirituality and the PJD were at pains to stress the lack of any organizational link they had to the group found to be responsible for the attacks. Both also stressed, not disingenuously, that had it not been for their restraining and moderating presence, these attacks may have occurred even earlier than they eventually did. However, voices were raised in both the upper echelons of the country's security services as well as in the secularist and leftist parties and press calling for a ban on both organizations as punishment for having created through their anti-western and anti-Israeli rhetoric an atmosphere that had helped breed the sort of extremism that led to the attacks of 16 May. The deputy leader of the USFP, the dominant party in the governing coalition, Mohamed El Yazigh, called publicly in the aftermath of the attacks for the PJD to 'apologise to the Moroccan people' (Riffi, 2003).<sup>16</sup> Although both organizations did suffer a degree of official harassment in the months that followed, both escaped a ban. It seems that elements in the regime were conscious of the experience of neighbouring Algeria where attempts to repress and exclude an Islamist movement had resulted in huge bloodshed. The Moroccan authorities have thus opted to allow the two organizations to maintain their places whilst using a widespread security campaign to root out those groups and elements believed to be responsible for the Casablanca bombings (Willis, 2004).

In adopting the twin approach of politics and security, the Moroccan authorities risk, however, exposing themselves to the same sort of danger that both the regimes in Tunisia and Algeria do – namely that of failing to tackle the country's growing social and economic crisis that arguably was much more of a root cause than forms of political exclusion. All of the 16 May bombers in Casablanca came from the poorest and most marginalized neighbourhoods of the city underlining the overwhelmingly local origins of the attacks (Kalpakian, 2005). These neighbourhoods are regularly swollen by the arrival of migrants from the Moroccan countryside escaping the privations of the rural areas brought on by regular droughts and locust swarms. Some fear that Morocco's signature in 2004 of a free trade agreement with the United States may put further pressure on the rural areas as Moroccan agricultural producers struggle to compete with cheap agricultural imports from the United States. Such pressures are also likely to feed through to increase and radicalize Morocco's large expatriate population, members of whom were implicated in the bomb attacks in Madrid of 11 March 2004 and which drew on a far more transnational organization than those a year earlier in Morocco itself.

### Conclusions

What conclusions can then be drawn from all of this? To begin with, the attempts used by the regimes in the three countries to control radicalism have primarily been about regime survival rather than about radicalism. As referred to earlier in the case of Great Britain in the nineteenth century, even if regime survival is the main

motivation for political accommodation and reform, the net effect can be beneficial in providing not only greater stability but also, in the long term, genuine inclusion and democratization. However, potential problems emerge if the regime's desire to hold onto power conflicts with efforts to contain radicalism. In the 1970s, all three states tacitly encouraged the growth of Islamist organizations, particularly in their universities, to undermine and combat the greater perceived threat coming from the political left. More recently, in Morocco, there was the accusation that the regime had been encouraging extremist Islamist groups as a means of undercutting support for the Justice and Spirituality Movement. In Algeria, there is the accusation that the regime there is not averse to the maintenance of a certain low level of violence in order to justify both military spending and the suspension of certain civil rights to both its domestic population and the wider international community.

The perceptions of the international community have become increasingly involved and important in the whole debate and process. Governments in both Europe and North America are committed to both helping end radicalism in the Maghreb and to extending liberalizing reforms in the countries. In theory these two objectives are not incompatible with each other: liberalizing and democratizing reforms should lead to greater political and social inclusion which will lead to a reduction in support for radical agendas. However, there is a conundrum if liberalizing reforms actually lead to radical movements assuming more power or actually taking power themselves. The Palestinian territories and Iraq provide good examples of this. For the Maghreb, it is an observation all the regimes have been quick to pick up on and they have used the fear of Islamic radicals coming to power as a scarecrow against western countries in order to forestall pressure for greater democratic and liberalizing reforms. The attacks of 11 September in the United States have hugely strengthened the power of this defence for the regimes in the region and, as has been shown in the case of Algeria, in this sense were a welcome political windfall. As a result, many outside powers have been persuaded that the protection and survival of regimes in the Maghreb should be more of a priority than concerns about democracy and human rights.

It is therefore possible that the preferred model for political development in the Maghreb becomes that of Tunisia where a former interior minister runs a pro-western and Islamist-free state but at the cost of serious political repression and abuse of human rights (Amnesty International, 2004). As was made clear, the 'Tunisian model' has serious drawbacks over and above fundamental concerns about human rights. Much of its success has hinged on being able to manage economic difficulties, but its continued ability to do so is likely to come under increasing pressure with the vagaries of the international economic climate. This is equally true for Algeria and Morocco. Fully liberal democratic regimes are no strangers to similar pressures but the political impact is mitigated by populations' ability to put pressure on and change their leaderships through democratic processes and elections in response to economic crises. This ability effectively removes pressures for more radical and violent responses to economic hardship. In the states of North Africa no such mechanisms exist to remove the decision makers and power-holders in the country. The presidency in Tunisia, the army in Algeria and the

monarchy in Morocco have held virtually exclusive power since independence and cannot be removed through normal political processes. This opens up the scenario that further economic decline in the region will lead to popular unhappiness that will demand political change which the holders of power will refuse to concede.

All three regimes are guilty of having instituted changes to their political systems that give the appearance or illusion of inclusion and change and which were referred to at the beginning. Significantly, this is a fact that an increasingly large and influential part of the population in each of the countries is aware of. The disillusionment, tensions and pressures that this will generate can only lead to greater support for radical groups and agendas. In such a situation it seems clear that it is in the interests of everyone to encourage all the regimes in the region to introduce genuinely liberalizing and democratic reforms to forestall such a scenario. Returning to the analogy with nineteenth-century Great Britain, it can only be history teachers and ideologues who would favour the path of revolutionary upheaval that France took in response to pressures for change over Great Britain's more pragmatic, if rather boring, track of accommodation and gradual reform.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For background on the case of Tunisia see White *et al.* (2002); Murphy (1999).
- <sup>2</sup> For further readings on the MTI see Shahin (1997); Hermassi (1995).
- <sup>3</sup> The platform issued by the MTI was dominated by demands for greater emphasis to be put on Tunisia's Islamic and Arab identity but also included a denunciation of the use of violence and calls for the establishment of a genuinely inclusive multiparty system and greater protection for the poor and oppressed. See Shahin (1997: 87).
- <sup>4</sup> According to François Burgat, the Islamic Jihad group had been formed in the town of Sfax by individuals who had left the MTI unhappy at the decision taken by the movement in 1984 to pursue a peaceful and legal strategy. See Burgat and Dowell (1993: 205–6).
- <sup>5</sup> The RCD was officially credited with 80 per cent of the vote and all of the seats in the national legislature with the independent candidates of An-Nahda securing 14 per cent nationally (and 30 per cent in the capital, Tunis) compared to just 4 per cent for the third placed MDS. An-Nahda claimed subsequently that their real score was probably closer to 50 or 60 per cent (author's interview with R. Ghannouchi, 18 April 1995).
- <sup>6</sup> 'Controverse sur les propos de M. Chirac sur les droits humains en Tunisie' [Controversy regarding Mr Chirac's statement on human rights in Tunisia], *Le Monde*, 4 December 2003. Available at [www.lemonde.fr](http://www.lemonde.fr) (accessed 4 December 2003). Chirac's visit to Tunisia came as part of a more general strengthening of Franco-Tunisian relations following the attack on the synagogue in Djerba in April 2002. See 'Jacques Chirac vante en Tunisie la modernité contre l'extrémisme' [Jacques Chirac extols modernity against extremism in Tunisia], *Le Monde*, 3 December 2003. Available at [www.lemonde.fr](http://www.lemonde.fr) (accessed 4 December 2003).
- <sup>7</sup> For background on the case of Algeria see: Willis (1997); Layachi and Entelis (2002).
- <sup>8</sup> A number of observers have pointed out that demands for political reform were not prominent in the unrest of October 1988 which was overwhelmingly prompted by sharply declining socio-economic conditions in the country caused by a collapse in the international price of oil.
- <sup>9</sup> For further details on the FIS and the Algerian Islamist movement more generally see Willis (1997) and Shahin (1997).
- <sup>10</sup> The Tunisians had been critical of Algeria's tolerance of the FIS, praised what they saw as the 'corrective action' taken by the Algerian regime after the effective *coup d'état* of January 1992 and increased the already growing amount of cooperation between the two services' security services. See Mezran (1998); S. Chaabane (1997). Ironically, as Mezran shows, it had been the Algerians who had

counselled against Ben Ali legalizing the MTI. However, that was before the unrest in Algeria in October 1988 (Mezran, 1998: 14–15).

- <sup>11</sup> A study carried out by the Algerian national research centre on the results of the voting in 1991 found that only half of those Algerians voting for the FIS actually supported the party's main objective of 'Islamic' rule. It is likely that the other half were voting for the party in order to defeat the FLN and the regime. See F. Ghilès (1992) Leaders under arrest but Algeria's opposition battles on, *Financial Times*, 30 January.
- <sup>12</sup> Islah is itself the product of a split in An-Nahda, an Islamist party established in 1990 that suffered a regime inspired internal *coup d'état* in 1998 forcing the original leadership of the party to leave and set up the Islah as a new party.
- <sup>13</sup> For background on the case of Morocco see G. White *et al.* (2002); Pennell (2000).
- <sup>14</sup> For background on the Justice and Spirituality Movement see Munson (1993); M. Willis (2006, forthcoming).
- <sup>15</sup> Interview with Fathallah Arslane, Spokesman for Al-Adl wal Ihsane, Rabat, 22 July 2003.
- <sup>16</sup> *La Gazette du Maroc* (2003) Mohamed Elyazgh "Fi al wahija": Le PID doit presenter des excuses au peuple, 9 June.

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## Libya: The Conversion of a 'Terrorist State'

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On 1 September 1969, in the early hours of the morning, Colonel Qadhafi overthrew King Idris of Libya, then on vacation in Ankara. On the 13 September, Mouamar Kadhafi, then only 27 years old, was appointed President of the Revolutionary Command Council. Years later, on 2 March 1977, Qadhafi proclaimed that the Libyan Arab Republic was to be replaced by the *Jamahiriyya* (the People's State). The newly named Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya enabled in principle the people to govern directly via the mediation of the General People's Congress, where Qadhafi was appointed General Secretary. Then in 1979, he gave up his official prerogatives to write the Green Book, where he proposed a 'third universal theory between capitalism and socialism'. Finally, in 1989, he proclaimed himself the Guide (Qa'id) of the Revolution, and endorsed the function of Head of State, without any formal official prerogatives. Following the imposition of the international embargo against Libya and because of domestic problems, however, Mouamar Qadhafi subsequently became less visible on the international media scene.