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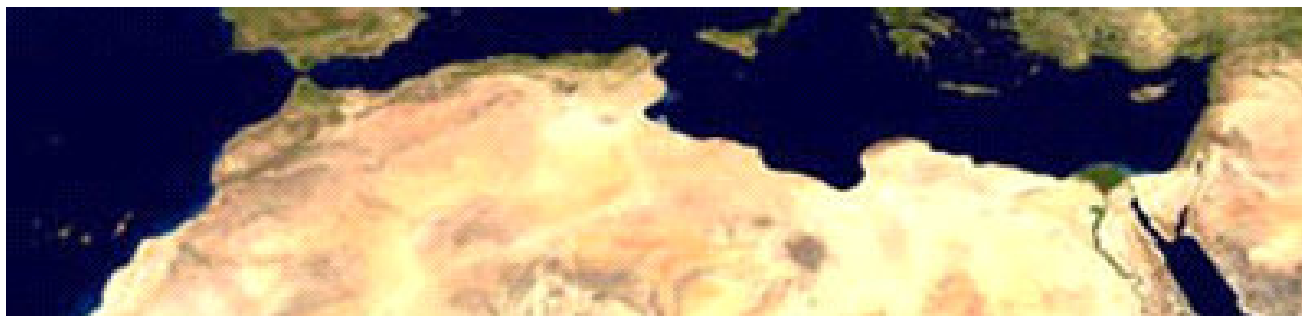
***“Seeking Opportunities for Political Cooperation
in the Mediterranean Region”***

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At

*The Conference on Harmonization of Security Policies in
the Mediterranean Region
Opportunities and Limitations of Regional Cooperation*

Twenty coastal nations surround the “Mare Nostrum”, including such insular states as Cyprus and Malta. Six of these nations represent a southern shore which has recently been looked at more as a risk bearing source of threat than as a real potential partner of progress. Deeper beyond the front line coastal states lay gigantic human communities both in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, extremely attentive to the multiple flow opportunities of goods, wealth, ideas, science, technology and mostly human legal and illegal migratory movements. On both sides of the “Lake” are progressively growing trends of fear and mistrust. Yet, huge opportunities of mutual growth lay beneath the fear-generating, tumultuous North African (and to a certain extent Middle Eastern) Arabo-Islamic apparent imbroglio.

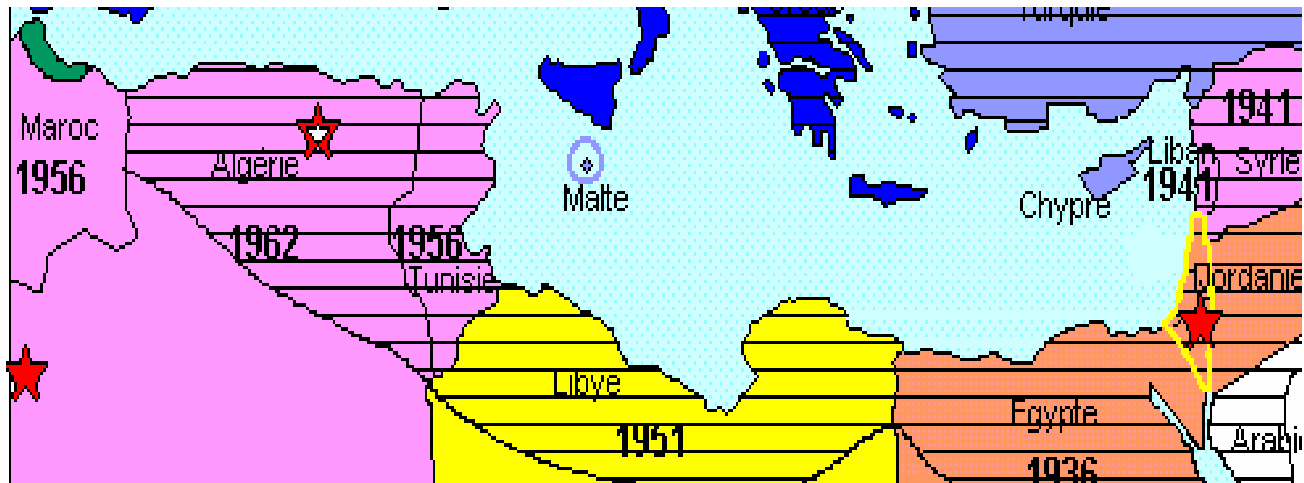


Immediately facing Southern Europe lay a block of North African countries extending on more than 7 million square kilometers on which is scattered a population of about 157 million inhabitants. Its economic underdevelopment, its visibly high birth rate, its low employment opportunities, its passive and low performance educational systems represent a source of real concern.

COUNTRY	TERRITORY	POPULATION	Alphabetization	Unemployment	GDP/Hab.	ANNUAL GROWTH (2001)
ALGERIA 	2,381,741 km ²	31,277,942	57.40 %	34 %	5,308 \$	3.5%
EGYPT 	1,001,449 km ²	74,718,797	48.40 %	18 %	3,635 \$	3.3%
LIBYA 	1,759,540 km ²	5,631,585	81.35 %	30 %	8,583 \$	0.6%
MAURITANIA 	1,030,700 km ²	2,912,584	34 %	22 %	1,677 \$	3.2%
MOROCCO 	710,000 km ²	32,510,000	50.85 %	23 %	3,546 \$	6.3%
TUNISIA 	163,610 km ²	9,924,742	75.30 %	15.6 %	6,363 \$	5%
TOTAL	7,047,040 km ²	156,975,650	57.9 %	23.77 %	6,751 \$ / 2,953 \$	3.6%

Looking at the growing terrorist fear which has apparently been linked to Islamic environments, and to the increasing flows of illegal immigrants that constantly invade the southern shores of the new European “El Dorado”, most accusatory trends are aiming at the south. Multiple initiatives are deployed to contain this alarming southern risk of invasion. Yet, wouldn’t be also worth considering how all this may be perceived by the other side? Hasn’t the risk actually been coming from the north? Haven’t these “indigenous” populations already been victims of the effects of the 1885 Berlin Conference which split Africa into zones of Influence (and occupation) by western nations? Isn’t all this partly resulting from more than a six decade European exploitation of North African wealth by Great Britain, France, Spain and Italy, exactly these very countries which are now bearing the burden of illegal migratory flows? To quote just the case of Morocco, it has

been split after the Algeiras Conference of 1906 (January 14 to April 7) implying 13 western nations, and the Fes Treaty of March 12, 1912 into four zones of occupation: The Rif Moutains and the deserts of Western Sahara were occupied by Spain (under the stipulations of the Madrid Treaty of November 1912 giving Spain the colonial right to occupy Sidi Ifni, Tarfaya and the Rio de Oro), while mainland Morocco was put under a French Protectorate and the city of Tangiers was submitted, in accordance with the Paris Treaty of 1923, to a multination occupation progressively implying Great Britain, France, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Holland, Portugal, Sweden, USA and the USSR!!!! [1].



Yet, beyond the long history of a deceiving past and a no less disappointing present, a promising future may positively stem from a real will to launch a sound and long lasting partnership between the northern and the southern neighbors of the Mediterranean Sea, built on a necessary massive European support to the development and strengthening of democratic culture and practices in North Africa and the Middle East.

I. The Disappointing Past:

It has mostly been marked by resurgent military confrontations (A), extremely limited economic trust and trade exchange (B) along with reciprocal cultural and civilization rejection (C) that multiple political factors constantly generated and encouraged.

A. An Arena for Resurgent Conflicts:

Multiple confrontations have constantly marked the long history of the Mediterranean Sea. Greek history is rich of examples as have also been the bellicose trends of the Roman, Persian and Ottoman Empires as well as the no less power motivated Islamic “Foutouhates” and Christian Crusades.

More recently, the twentieth century has witnessed multiple causes of tension and concern in the region. European colonial wars in the area have launched the path. As a direct result, resistance struggles to colonial implantation in North Africa were led respectively against France, Italy and Spain by such local historic figures as the Emir Abdelkader in Algeria, Omar El Mokhtar in Libya and Abdelkrim El Khattabi in the Moroccan Rif. Much later, decolonization struggles were also led in Tunisia by Habib Bourguiba and Ferhat Hachad, in Morocco by Allal El Fassi and Sidi Mohamed Ben Youssef and in Algeria by Ferhat Abbas and Ahmed Ben Bella.

World War II Mediterranean extensions to North Africa, opposing such protagonists as Germany and Italy on one side to France, Great Britain and the Allied forces on the other, have also brought multiethnic belligerents of the area together both through the war's deployment in Libya and the rest of the Maghreb and through the massive mobilization of North African "tabors" for the liberation of Europe from fascism, Nazism and oppression. Some of these "tabors" had also previously contributed massively to the power take over by General Franco in Spain in the context of the Spanish Civil war in 1936.

The Middle East emerging confrontations in the aftermaths of the British Lord Balfour declaration (1917) and the creation of the State of Israel (1948) have since then generated multiple massive regional conflicts episodically implying France, Great Britain, Israel, and to a certain indirect extent the USA on one side, to Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and indirectly to the rest of the Arab and Islamic world on the other side. Among those conflicts, the most notable were the "Suez Canal War" of 1956, the "Six day War" of 1967, the "Youm Kippur War" of 1973, as well as the two Palestinian "Intifadas" whose engineers are resolutely decided to carry on their struggle until a just and equitable solution is found to the historic injustice to which the Palestinian people has been subjected.

Other local conflicts have also been episodically marking the Mediterranean scene. Some of them still represent a major threat to regional security in the area. These are the Lebanese civil war, based mostly on still existing militias, with the implication of the Israelo-Syrian confrontation in the mid seventies and beyond and the conflict of the former Spanish colony of Western Sahara which has been opposing since the mid-seventies Morocco to Algeria and is still threatening to sparkle into a major conflict at any time if a political solution is not rapidly found to the conflicting claims of both parties; as of territorial claims, Libya is claiming about 32,000 square kilometers in a dormant dispute still reflected on its maps in southeastern Algeria; the momentarily calmed fire of the Cypriot crisis (an other former British colony for which Greece has been claiming the "Enôsis") has been directly implicating the Greek and Turkish communities of Cyprus and through them the continuing sources of respective support, which also have far more concerns of confrontation related to the definition of the Aegean Sea maritime space and to the reciprocal territorial claims over oriental "Thrace"; more recently, the Balkan conflict of the mid nineties which spread deeply into Europe thus covering the territories of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Albania, and in which NATO had to play a direct role of muscled solution finding and further peace keeping, is still implying European and Maghrebi peace keeping forces. Gibraltar is also a still permanently hanging source of potentially real tension between Great Britain and Spain as are the coastal enclaves of Ceuta, Melilla, Penon de Velez de la Gomera, the islands of Leyla, Penon de Alhucemas and Islas Chafarinas, and surrounding waters between Morocco and Spain.

No less alarming for the security concerns of the region are also the continuous autonomy (independence?) claims within France expressed by the Corsican independence movements and the persistent multiplication of blasts within Spanish territory carried out by the independence claiming Basque ETA movement. Further south, the tension and violence which followed the aborted electoral success in Algeria by the Islamic Front (F.I.S.) of Abbassi Madani and Ali Belhaj is still gaining in intensity within the scope of an open confrontation between the "maquisards" and the regime [2]. Morocco and Egypt have also experienced more recently various aspects of terrorist threat through the May 16 (2003) Casablanca blasts and the 2004 Sharm Sheikh bloody aggression on Israeli tourists. And so has Spain, with the Madrid rail station explosions. Turkey, Iran, Syria and

Iraq are also confronted, in the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, with a no less threatening menace of potential uncertainties if the Kurdish issue does not find a way to a just and satisfactory solution. Here and there, “AlQaida” signals are recurrently perceived!

For an apparently peaceful “Mare Nostrum”, 25 conflicts and/or potential sources of conflict within a few decades are just too much to handle, not mentioning those which had a lesser impact.

In terms of military capability (2004), the southern shore countries are evidently far behind the mighty military apparatus of their northern neighbors (considered both individually, collectively or under the NATO umbrella); but in terms of locally degenerating conflicts, the outcomes are pretty scaring and unpredictable.

COUNTRY	Military Manpower Capability	Military Manpower Fit For Service	Military Expenditures (in Million Dollars)	Military Expenditures in % of GDP
ALGERIA	9,311,747	5,675,739	2,196.6	3.5 %
EGYPT	20,340,716	13,148,944	2,443.2	3.6 %
LIBYA	1,588,533	938,196	1.3 Billion \$	3.9 %
MAURITANIA	686,629	332,633	40.8	3.7 %
MOROCCO	8,788,971	5,529,267	2,297.2	4.8 %
TUNISIA	2,918,524	1,655,910	356	1.5 %
T O T A L	43,635,120	27,280,689	-----	-----

Time has probably ripened for a closer and more substantial approach to cooperation towards the objective of harmonization of security policies in the Mediterranean region. This will certainly need to go beyond some of the still ongoing perceptions of security as a strict matter of internal security and cover a large political will of conflict solving that occults chauvinistic nationalist appeals.

B. Limited Economic and Trade Cooperation:

Needless to ascertain here that hard security of the Mediterranean basin is intimately linked to the positive evolution of socio-economic conditions of the partners. Towards this end, multiple initiatives have been launched during the last two decades.

Starting with the launching, in 1973, of the ever hibernating Euro-Arab dialogue, various other moves have been registered within the perspective of a better Euro-Mediterranean cooperation; since the beginning of the Helsinki process, and probably fearing a vulnerability resulting from its close proximity with the southern shore, Italy has persistently advocated the need to consider a stronger economic cooperation with the North African Mediterranean neighbors of Europe. In the December 1989 Paris Ministerial Conference on the Euro-Arab dialogue, the Italian minister of foreign affairs, M. de Michelis, insisted on the fact that *“time has come to extend the Helsinki spirit to the Mediterranean and the Middle East and to thus promote democracy and economic development”*.

Ever since, various cooperation initiatives have been emerging thus giving birth to a few regional and international forums sponsored either by the neighboring countries or by various international organizations; some of these are:

- b. **“The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership”**, known also as **“The Euro-Mediterranean Forum”**, entertaining a political, cultural and economic dialogue and involving such States as *Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, The Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Malta*.
- c. **“The Mediterranean Forum”**, known also as **“The Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation in the Mediterranean”**, covering social, economic, cultural and security questions and involving such States as *Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and Malta*.
- d. **“The 5+5 Dialogue”** also known as **“The Western Mediterranean Project”**, similarly covering , economic, cultural and security questions to be periodically explored by *Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, Malta, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania*.
- e. **“The MENA Summit”**, aiming at a regional economic integration and involving, under the umbrella of major world powers (including the U.S. and Russia), all countries of the Middle East and North Africa.
- f. N.A.T.O.’s **“Partnership for Peace”** [PfP] and **“Mediterranean Dialogue”** [3];
- g. More recently, **“The Middle East Partnership Initiative”** [M.E.P.I.], announced in 2002 by Secretary of State Collin Powell and launched by a George W. Bush resolutely determined to introduce and reinforce democratic practices in the MENA region.

Furthermore, Europe had set the deadline of the year 2010 to its southern partners for the establishment of a free trade zone. For that purpose, new style bilateral cooperation agreements have been set forth. But these only increased European privileges through the elimination of tariff barriers by their southern partners if they were to be part to these agreements. It was also set forth that southern partners would eliminate tariff barriers with each other such as has been the case between Morocco and Tunisia in 1996, Morocco and Egypt in 1998 and Tunisia and Egypt in 1998 as well. Similar trends are also actively encouraged by U.S. policy makers for this region. Within its scope, both Jordan and Morocco have ventured into bilateral F.T.A. with their U.S. partner, putting themselves in a real David vs. Goliath situation.

But, despite all this arsenal of arrangements, institutions and cooperation forums, low and extremely limited progress has been registered. The initial glows of enthusiasm that frequently characterized the launching of each initiative progressively dwindled into formal gatherings that generated very little outcomes. To take just the example of the conceded European effort to encourage the economic restructuring of its southern neighbors, less than one billion euros has been accorded to them while an amount of 40.4 billion euros has been planned to be generously accorded to Europe’s eastern neighbors over the 2004-2006 period. In terms of per inhabitant aid, these figures can be brought back to half a euro per inhabitant for the south, compared with 185 euros per inhabitant for the east [4]. Meanwhile, the rates of inhabitants of North Africa living below the poverty line have been alarmingly growing: 50 % (!!??) for Mauritania, 23 % for Algeria, 19.6 % for Morocco, 16.7 % for Egypt, 7.6 % for Tunisia (the figures of Libya is not quite certain) [5]. It seems for many observers that a Mediterranean ditch is taking over the late east European iron curtain. Not that the Northern partners are responsible for this disarray; and not that all past European assistance initiatives have been failures, but their impact is still far below all legitimate expectations, while local leaderships are still getting little success out of more than four decades of independent ruling.

Nevertheless, the Mediterranean Sea remains a major means of trade exchange. South European and North African exchange of goods and commodities represents a major share in the economies of the southern shore.

Major Trade Partners of North Africa {in %} [6]

COUNTRIES	ALGERIA		EGYPT		LIBYA		MAURITANIA		MOROCCO		TUNISIA	
	X	I	X	I	X	I	X	I	X	I	X	I
Belgium (*)	5.1		--	--	--	--	7.8	5	--	--	--	--
France	13.6	30.9	4.7	6.6	6.1	6	12.1	16.8	26.5	20.6	32.6	26.1
Germany	--	5.5	4.7	7.4	13.4	10.5	7.4	4.9	5.2	5.2	10.7	8.9
Italy	19.5	9.6	12.3	7	38.8	27.8	10.4	--	5	7.1	21.9	19.8
Spain	1.2	6.1	--	--	13.4		11.4	7.7	16.7	12.4	--	--
Turkey	--	4.1	--	--	7.1	4.6	--	--	--	--	--	--
U.K.	--	--	--	--	--	7.1	--	4.1	7.2	--	--	--
Other Europe	--	--	--	--	--	--	9	--	--	4.9	--	--
Total Europe	39.4	56.2	21.7	21	78.8	56	58.1	38.5	60.6	50.2	65.2	54.8
U.S.A.	18.5	--	13.3	13.6	--	--	--	--	--	4.1	--	--
Other	42.1	43.8	65	65.4	21.2	44	41.9	61	39.4	45.7	34.4	45.2
Total (non Europe)	60.6	43.8	78.3	79	21.2	44	41.9	61	39.4	49.8	34.8	45.2
Grand Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(*) – When a figure is not mentioned, it is considered in the total of “other”.

As of European private sector investments in the other shore of the sea, these seem also to have been very cautiously limited given the too extended bureaucratic hustles, the statuses of state administered economies and the insecure guarantees offered by most of the existing laws and regulations of the target partners. The uncertainties accompanying the observed reality of poverty stricken social environments has also been a major discouraging factor. Furthermore, the much sought Euro-Mediterranean economic identity will necessarily soon melt within the liberalization imperatives of globalization that will ineluctably rule world trade exchange regulations.

This will necessarily impose a genuinely defined vision that will effectively help reduce the inequalities and make the southern shore more attractive to its own residents before it dares draw and motivate foreign investors. That will be quite a substantial agenda on the plate of the Mediterranean economists.

C. The Differentiated Cultural Values:

The Western European civilization has been progressively built on the bases of such cultural values as pluralism, democracy and free initiative. Its Founding Fathers have combated autocracy, eliminated dictatorships and encouraged various forms of civil liberties. They articulated their social and political choices around liberty, equality and legality under the exercise of “due process of law”. The established political systems thus present a wide variety, ranging from semi presidential republics such as the one established by the 1958 French Constitution, to Parliamentary Monarchies democratically functioning in Great Britain, Belgium, The Netherlands,

Spain and Sweden, to rationalized forms of parlementarism set fourth both by the German “Fundamental Law” of 1949 and the Italian Constitution of December 1947.

Facing this reality, have grown other forms of government on the other shore of the sea. In all cases, and despite apparent democratic make up, authentic egalitarian patterns have been adamantly lacking both at the initial level of choosing the governing leaderships and in the daily practices of government. As a result, many regimes in the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean have been facing significant challenges to their legitimacy. Risks might go on growing so long as the governing elites keep on proving their inability to tackle the issues of poverty and unemployment and to promote a more equitable distribution of wealth and opportunity. The lack of democratic traditions is mostly due to temporary conjectural and easily reversible trends, closely linked with the colonial heritage, the persistent unwillingness of the leaderships to bring about change and also to the relative passivity of the populations. Yet, a close scrutiny of the socio-political patterns set forth by the Coranic teachings for these Islamic societies allows for soundly civilized patterns of existence and behavior within the Islamic City.

Such notions as “Khilafat” الخِلافة, “Shura” الشورى, “Istikama” الإستقامة, “Al Amana” الأمانة and “Al Adl” العدل represent just minor aspects of what is expected of the Muslim citizen. Furthermore, the notion of “Al Amr Bilmarouf Wa Annahye Ala ALmounkar” الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر command the general behavioral pattern of the good citizen [7]. There is a lot in southern cultural values to find about and try to understand as there has been in European and western standards to seek inspiration from.

Yet, the common trend on both shores of the sea has been residing in a reciprocal fear, ignorance and rejection of the values of the other, instead of a mutual cultural acceptance. When time comes for the logics of cooperation to take over the present role of the logics of confrontation, much more benefit from the cultural originalities will positively impact on the Mediterranean society.

II. A Promising Future?

Political Islam is not to be feared per se. It is popular dissatisfaction within various Islamic communities, through the media coverage of the multiple injustices to which fellow Muslims are subjected in Palestine, Iraq, Chechnya and elsewhere, that causes massive discontent and drives most of the persistent violence. Just and equitable solutions to these alarming situations for Arab and Islamic nationalists will certainly pave the way for more reciprocal trust and confidence, thus facilitating the launching of newly renewed approaches to regional cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

Real potentials of mutual growth and equilibrated exchanges may thus positively result from the creation of these optimal conditions for a real partnership between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. These may mostly result from:

- The decisive solving of latent conflicts, namely the Middle East conflict, by putting an end to the occupation status of the Palestinian territory and the recognition of the Palestinian State as a sovereign entity, the Iraq war that has appeared by all international standards more as an act of aggression than as a liberation initiative as openly declared by what is considered in Arab public opinion as the U.S. invaders [8], the much risk bearing Western Sahara confrontation between Algeria and Morocco,

by a rapid and guaranteed return of all displaced populations to their home territory, thus allowing a true expression of self determination under international control and guarantees; the solution of other northern hemisphere conflicts may also positively impact on global regional security; geo-strategic analysts and competent military spheres have enough competence and latitude to help bring about the desired Mediterranean cooperative security changes within the necessary framework of the strategic calculus of all interested powers by this geographic area;

- The no less necessary creation of real regional economic partnership groups capable of generating viable markets; here again, the economic analysts along with the departments of economy and finance of the concerned nations will have to capitalize on the 'détente' potentially generated by the dwindling of political conflict sources in order to start building integrated unions.
- Foreign aid may also play an important role in terms of supplying outside support to the region if it were to be lifted up to acceptable development standards; Isn't it time for a new Marshall Plan type initiative aiming at the elimination of poor conditions of living and existence that favor the development of most of the threatening risks for the north?

Yet, beyond all these initiatives, security of the region should also be appreciated in terms of institutional stability; the creation of real conditions of respect of the human individual represents therefore the necessary reform that the MENA region is much in need for. A real regional cooperation may gain a lot from the timid momentum that democratization initiatives have been generating in the area. Late President Mitterrand launched, with more or less success, a first initiative in this sense during the 1992 "La Baule" Conference. It also seems that presently, the G. W. Bush administration is resolutely engaged in this direction [9]. These will cover respectively the democratization of the governing institutions, the respect of internationally recognized human rights, and the encouragement of civil society contribution to all aspects of national development. Meanwhile, the executive (A) and legislative (B) institutions are functioning within constitutionally defined frameworks and with the diversified contribution of such political actors as the political parties (C), trade unions and various other pressure groups.

A. The Main Role of the Executive Governing Bodies :

A quick glance at the prevailing institutions in the six target countries will easily determine that the massive fringes of the population initially had little or no say in the choice of their governing leaderships. Beside the case of the only remaining multi centuries old monarchy in the area (Morocco), where the "Beya" (allegiance) process has been serving as a fundamental legitimating act for the whole system [10], all other regional regimes have stemmed out of coups that ousted other formerly prevailing political systems: Jamal Abdennasser's Coup in Egypt in 1952 against King Farouk, Houari Boumediene's Coup in Algeria in 1965 against Ahmed Benbella, Muammar Kaddafi's Coup in Libya in 1969 which ousted King Driss Essenoussi, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's Coup in 1979 which medically deposed the historical president of Tunisia Habib Bourguiba and Mouaouia Ould Taya's coup in 1984 that overthrew other colonels who had themselves overthrown the first president of independent Mauritania, Mokhtar Ould Daddah.

It is relevant to underline though, that all these dynasty founding leaders or their successors (in the mere cases of Egypt and Algeria) have been tempting to gain acceptance through various forms of legitimating electoral processes; the most recent ones, having been: the April 8, 2004

Algerian presidential election that reelected President Abdelaziz Bouteflika for a second term with 85% of the suffrages, leaving very little to his opponents Ali Benflis (6.4%) and Abdallah Djaballah (5%); the October 24, 2004 Tunisian presidential election that reelected President Zine El Abidine Benali for a fourth term with 94.5% of the suffrages, again leaving too little casted votes for his opponents Mohamed Bouchiha (3.8%) and Mohamed Ali Halouani (1%); the November 7, 2003 Mauritanian presidential election which reelected President Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed TAYA for a third term with 60.8% of the suffrages. As of the Egyptian presidential election, it takes the form of a popular referendum (strange resemblances with Napoleon style “popular cesarism”) of confirmation of the choice made by the People's Assembly (Majlis al-Sha'b) for a six-year term; concerning Libya's genuine system of a “Jamahyria” (the state of the masses), it is based on Qadhafi's own political vision, the “*Third Universal Theory*” implementing a form of military dictatorship dissimulated behind a seemingly popular regime governed by the populace through local councils; within this system, Qadhafi has continuously played the role of its “revolutionary leader” since September 1, 1969.

It thus appears that a lot remains to be done; the respective efforts in almost all these countries have been very limited so far; but they are still worth noticing and encouraging. A real concern for legitimacy is prevailing. By itself it represents an excellent opportunity for a much needed change.

B. The Constitutional Reforms and the Emerging Role of the Legislative Branch:

In all six countries, and to various degrees, constitutional reforms have taken place, be it only for the purpose of clearly defining competencies of the various institutions, towards a possible and still hopeful protection against the arbitrary. Within these reforms, the clear choice of Charles de Montesquieu styles of regimes of “Separation of Powers” where the executive, legislative and judicial branches are independent of each other and counteract within the constitutional process has been retained in all six cases. To what extent it has been operational remains to be appreciated. But, at least, it has the merit of being there to be capitalized upon.

In Morocco, for example, the constitutional process launched in October 11, 1908, with the first modern draft Constitution aimed at creating a bicameral legislative institution, the “*Consultative Council*”, comprising two separate Chambers: the “*Council of the Nation*” and the “*Council of Notables*”. After its independence from French and Spanish occupation, Morocco has elaborated and applied 5 Constitutions: December 7, 1962, March 20, 1970, March 15, 1972, September 4, 1992 and September 13, 1996. The most recent one stipulates in its article 36 that “*The Parliament shall be made up of two Houses, the **House of Representatives** [Majlis Annua: composed of 325 members, 295 of them elected by multi-seat constituencies and 30 from national lists of women; all members are elected by popular vote for five-year terms] and the **House of Counselors** [Majlis Al-Mustasharine: composed of 270 members elected indirectly by local councils, professional organizations, and labor unions for nine-year terms]. *Members of the Houses shall hold their mandate from the Nation*”, while its article 45 stipulates that “*Legislation shall be voted on by Parliament*”.*

In Algeria, a similar trend, involving four Constitutions has been observed: these have been the Constitutions of 1963, 1976, 1989 and 1996. Their context is completely different, as they advocate a popular republic; yet, here again, the legislative power is independent from the executive and judicial powers: thus article 98 of the Constitution stipulates that “*The legislative power is exercised by a Parliament composed of two Chambers: The **National Popular Assembly** [Al-Majlis Ech-Chaabi Al-Watani: composed of 389 members who are elected by popular vote to serve for five-*

year terms] and the Council of the Nation [Majlis Al Umma: composed of 144 members, one-third of whom are appointed by the president and two-thirds elected by indirect vote; all are due to serve for six-year terms]; the Parliament elaborates and votes the law sovereignly".

In Tunisia, article 18 of the Constitution adopted on June 1, 1959 and substantially amended on July 12, 1988, stipulates that "The people exercise the legislative power through a representative organ called National Parliament" [Majlis Annouab, a unicameral legislative body composed of 189 members elected by popular vote to serve for five-year terms], which "exercises the legislative power" (Article 28).

In Mauritania, the most recent Constitution has been adopted on July 12, 1991. The wordings of its articles 45 to 47 attribute the exercise of the legislative power to a Parliament "composed of two representative assemblies: the National Assembly [The Majlis al-Watani: composed of 81 members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms] and the Senate [Majlis al-Shuyukh: (composed of 56 members elected by municipal leaders to serve six-year terms)].

As of Libya, it has adopted its only known Constitutional Proclamation on December 11, 1969 and produced such interesting visions as these described in Qadafi's "Green Book". A Constitutional amendment has intervened in March 2, 1977. Articles 18 and 20 of the 1969 Proclamation are very clear however about the exercise of legislative powers: "The Revolutionary Command Council constitutes the supreme authority in the Libyan Arab Republic. It will exercise the powers attached to national sovereignty, promulgate laws and decrees, decide in the name of the people the general policy of the State, and make all decisions it deems necessary for the protection of the Revolution and the regime" (Article 18); "The Council of Ministers shall study and prepare all projects of law within the framework of the general policy outlined by the Revolutionary Command Council. It will then forward the proposed texts to the Revolutionary Command Council for consideration and promulgation" (Article 20). Within this reality, function such institutions as the General People's Congress [Muatamar Ashab Al Am: a unicameral legislative chamber], which is "elected" nationally through a hierarchy of people's committees!!!

As of Egypt's Constitution, it has been approved by a referendum held on September, 11th 1971; it has been modified since by various amendments. Within its stipulations, Article 86 attributes the exercise of the legislative powers to the "The People's Assembly" [Majlis Asshaab: composed of 454 members, 444 of whom are elected by popular vote, and 10 appointed by the president; all members serve five-year terms], while "The Advisory Council" or Majlis al-Shura functions only in a consultative role and is composed of 264 seats members: 176 of them elected by popular vote and 88 appointed by the president; all members serve six-year terms).

Various degrees of parliamentary control over the executive are formally deployed in most of the cases: motions of censorship and votes of non confidence; but reality practices are still far below the expectations. This is by all means an excellent field for regional cooperation in which not only opportunities are numerous, but which also appears to be ripe for successful actions.

C. The Emergence of Political Party Activism:

Except for Libya, in which the principle of unity excludes a vision of party system, all the five other countries are swiftly moving towards pluralism and multiparty systems:

- a. **51 political parties in Morocco**, since the creation of the first party in 1934, 29 of them have still been operating at all electoral deadlines; among them, the Istiqlal Party (founded in 1936), the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) created in 1974 out of a scission with the UNFP, the Party of Justice and Development (PJD) which emerged as an Islamist party within the legally existing shell of the MPDC, the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS) which was first created in 1936 by a Jewish Moroccan named Leon Sultan as a local branch of the French Communist party, the National Gathering of Independents (RNI) created in 1977 as well as the Constitutional Union (UC) and many others;
- b. **14 political parties in Algeria**: among the most prominent are the National Liberation Front (FLN), the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) which has been outlawed in April 1992, the National Reform Movement (Islah), the Renaissance Movement (EnNahda) and the Democratic National Rally;
- c. **13 political parties in Mauritania**: which are the Action for Change, the Alliance for Justice and Democracy, the Democratic and Social Republican Party (ruling party), the Mauritanian Party for Renewal and Concorde, the National Union for Democracy and Development, the Party for Liberty, Equality and Justice, the Popular Front, the Popular Progress Alliance, the Popular Social and Democratic Union, the Progress Force Union, the Rally of Democratic Forces, the Rally for Democracy and Unity, and the Union for Democracy and Progress.
- d. **6 political parties in Egypt**: these are the Liberal Party, the Nasserist Arab Democratic Party, the National Democratic Party [the governing party of President Mohammed Hosni MUBARAK], the National Progressive Unionist Grouping (Tagammu), the New Wafd Party and Socialist Liberal Party (Al-Ahrar).
- e. **6 political parties in Tunisia** : Next to the official ruling Constitutional Democratic Rally Party of President Zine El Abidine BEN ALI are more or less surviving such other entities as the Al-Tajdid Movement, the Liberal Social Party, the Movement of Democratic Socialists, the Popular Unity Party and the Unionist Democratic Union.

Quite a diversified list of contacts for any potential democracy strengthening cooperation with the southern partners of Euro-Mediterranean security!

By: Dr. Hassan Rahmouni
Casablanca, December 10, 2004.

(1) – Jean-Louis MIEGE, “*Tanger: Porte entre deux mondes*”, ACR Edition, Paris, 1992, p.37.

(2) – “*The ongoing turmoil in Algeria provides the most dramatic example of internal insecurity and violent opposition to the political order. Whether the Algerian regime succeeds or fails in containing the Islamist and Berber challenges, the Algerian experience is likely to have a profound effect on the security of North Africa as a whole, as well as on the overall perception of risk from the south in Mediterranean Europe. It has also spurred attention to the Mediterranean within both the E.U. and NATO*”, in “The Renaissance of Mediterranean Security?”, by Ian O. LESSER, in The Foreign Service Journal, American Foreign Service Association.

(3) – Cf. my paper “*Legitimizing NATO’s Presence in the MENA Region*”, presented at International Conference on “*NATO’s Transformation and Gulf Security*”, held in Doha (Qatar), April 19-20, 2004 by the Rand Corporation.

(4) – Jean-Pierre SERENI, “*Les Frontières se referment : le Sud de la méditerranée Oublié*”, in Le Monde Diplomatique, MARS 2003, p. 6, <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2003/03/SERENI/> 9969.

- (5) – These statistics have drawn from the data available at the country by country “World Fact Book”, 2004, cf. in internet, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ts.html>
- (6) – This chart has been drawn using the “World Fact Book” data, op. cit.
- (7) – For a more detailed analysis of the patterns of organization of the State in Islam, cf. my paper “Aspects of State and Community Organization in Islam” presented at the UCLA Conference Series on “Regional Security in the Middle East Region”, Athens, January 4 – 7, 2003 [<http://www.hassanrahmouni.com>].
- (8) – Cf. my paper “National Sovereignty in the Growing World Turmoil: The Aftermaths of the Iraq War”, presented at the UCLA Conference Series on “Regional Security in the Middle East Region”, Athens, May 9 - 12, 2003, [<http://www.hassanrahmouni.com>].
- (9) – Cf. my papers “Impregnating the Muslim M.E.N.A. with Universal Democratic Values” and “Aspects of Democratic Building in Contemporary Morocco” presented at the UCLA Conference Series on “Regional Security in the Middle East Region”, Athens, December 12 – 15, 2003, [<http://www.hassanrahmouni.com>].
- (10) – Cf. my paper “The Place of Islam in a Contemporary Arab Legal System”, presented at the Harvard University J.F. Kennedy School of Government, May 7, 2004 [Seminar at the Radcliff Institute of Advanced Studies] , [<http://www.hassanrahmouni.com>].