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OPTIONS FOR COOPERATIVE SECURITY SOLUTIONS IN NORTH AFRICA

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Introduction

Crises and upheaval in North Africa have altered the regional security terrain. Challenges that were once disparate and manageable are increasingly becoming intertwined and more pronounced. With the growing mobility of conflicts, the need for a more cooperative regional context has never been as pressing. Each country in the region has a stake in improving stability, and collectively they have the capacity to tackle the threats to peace and security—but first, they each must overcome a host of domestic obstacles as well as interstate competition and external meddling.

The findings of this report are based on the debates held at the *Mediterranean Advisory Group* meeting “Options for Cooperative Security Solutions in North Africa”, organized by the Regional Program South Mediterranean of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Accademia Konrad Adenauer, Lake Como, Italy from October 12 to 14, 2017. The conference brought together leading scholars and policy-makers from around the world to address the key security and governance challenges in North Africa. Participants examined the interaction of the expanding horizon of insecurity with conflicts, political vacuums, and Western response policy. They also discussed the role of regional powers and the broader ramifications of the trends for peace and development in the region.

The State of Affairs in North Africa

The great exuberance that the 2011 Arab uprisings provoked in North Africa faded as quickly as it came. The process of political change has been tortuous and punctuated by violence, squandered opportunities and dramatic setbacks. Tunisia is rightly lauded for the democratic progress it has made since the popular uprising that toppled longtime strongman Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011. But economic instability and mounting social and security risks, particularly along the country's fragile borders where smuggling and contraband with Algeria in the west and Libya in the east is often the only means of employment, pose significant challenges to the country's nascent democracy. Angry youths increasingly project their grievances through protests, street violence and sometimes violent extremism. Tunisia also faces the complex challenge of dealing with the return of hundreds of people who traveled to fight in conflicts in Iraq, Libya, and Syria. The fear is that these returnees will destabilize the country by bolstering domestic extremist networks or committing lone-wolf terror attacks.

Libya is still divided into different national-level factions and competing governments that are underpinned by loose coalitions of local armed groups and regional and international actors. Only one government is recognized by the UN, but it cannot even impose its authority over Tripoli, the capital, let alone the rest of the country. The result is that in much of Libya, local groups and criminal networks are fighting over access to resources, including dominance of border trade, military installations and oil fields. These struggles over power and resources expose the deep fissures within Libyan society, divisions that Muammar Gaddafi had excelled in instrumentalizing through a combination of force and the manipulation of economic interests in both the legitimate and illicit economy. The years following his overthrow saw Libya transform into a patchwork of fighting groups over the distribution of power, state resources and illicit flows. External influences, including European ones, have been important in shaping the outlook of key actors.

The impact of illicit flows, as noted by one Libyan expert, has been different in different parts of the country. Groups in the coast that benefit from the illicit economy generated from the control of ports and airports "have been paid by the state, while also relying on external financial support in a proxy war between competing interests centered in the Gulf." In the south, it is control of trafficking and the oil resources that drive conflict. "Unless the illicit economy, and the priorities of those who control it, are addressed holistically as part of the political transition," say Libya experts, "the possibilities for a peaceful settlement remain remote and the viability of the central state questionable."

In the midst of Libya's tumultuous political landscape, neighboring Algeria remains adrift but stable. Yet, underneath this stability lies a volatile mix of demographic stress, political alienation and economic mismanagement. The slow-motion denouement of the Bouteflika era adds to the list of economic and security worries already confronting the country. Algeria would be fortunate enough to avoid a disruptive political transition, as the internal headwinds and regional maelstrom that its leaders have to navigate are growing in peril. The Algerian south in particular was suddenly catapulted to the forefront of public consciousness and national security concerns with the unprecedented terrorist targeting of energy infrastructure in the south-eastern border with Libya and the outbreak of social protests and sectarian violence in several places in the desert region, including in remote Saharan towns. Unfortunately for Algeria, the vast south is not the only border region exposed to internal and external shocks. Some of the threats are for example mirrored along the Algerian-Tunisian border. The Tunisian revolution reinvigorated smuggling along the 600-mile frontier. It also destabilized not only the operational activity of Tunisian security forces protecting the border but also the operations of illicit trading networks, as new traders tried to muscle in on the informal trade that hitherto was mainly restricted to petrol, tobacco, agricultural products, some manufactured goods and electronics.

Unlike Tunisia and Algeria, Morocco seems to be the least exposed to the security dangers plaguing its neighbors in North Africa. The Kingdom has effectively minimized security challenges while continually enhancing its capabilities to prepare for risks that are increasingly volatile and unpredictable. With the

exception of the Marrakesh bomb blast in 2011, Morocco has been safer from the attacks that have roiled Algeria and Tunisia. It is harder for al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other terrorist groups to establish a foothold in the country. That said, security experts, including Moroccan officials, fear that there are still security gaps that the country needs to plug. The robustness of the drug and human smuggling networks active on Morocco's borders is a cause of great concern. There is also a worrying increase in social protests in the country's peripheral regions and rural areas, as exemplified in the last few months in the central Rif region of northern Morocco.

The spate of social contestation that gripped much of the central Rif in the last several months highlights the need for more accountable, inclusive and transparent management of public affairs. It also calls for the Moroccan regime to honor its constitutional commitments to implement its program of "advanced regionalization." Failure to improve governance and address the socio-economic demands of Morocco's peripheral regions and rural areas is a recipe for trouble. In the central Rif, the fear is that the protest movement which has so far been largely peaceful degenerates into violence or becomes manipulated by the criminal and mafia networks that are important players in the local economy.

Successes and Failures of Cooperative Response

The strengthening of the abilities of North African states to exert control over their territories and improve the political and socio-economic marginalization of peripheral and rural communities are important to tackle insecurities in North Africa. But they must be complemented by improvement in regional cooperation and strengthening of collective security outfits. Unfortunately, shared threats have been compounded by enduring inter-state rivalries and closed borders. Since the mid-seventies, Morocco and Algeria have remained trapped in a zero-sum world that has only gotten grimmer and less predictable. Their acrimonious rivalry over regional dominance and bitter feud over the Western Sahara which Morocco largely governs have blocked progress on any of the burning issues that bedevil North Africa and Sahel. Given the enduring rivalry between Morocco and Algeria, the revitalization of the Arab Maghreb Union or the creation of a regional plan for border security cooperation remains a pipe dream.

The failure of the Maghreb Arab Union is one of the main reasons why Morocco has opted for joining the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Comprising fifteen countries, "ECOWAS has been the most sought-after African regional economic body in the field of peace and security in the past 25 years." Its interventions in Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Burkina Faso have highlighted its strengths, but also its limits. Morocco's integration in ECOWAS can create win-win results that boost political and military cooperation in addressing transnational security threats, including terrorism, drug, human and arms trafficking. It can also enhance closer economic cooperation that creates job-generating growth and in the process prop up each country's stabilization efforts.

So far however, high tariffs, economic structures, weakness of infrastructure and financial markets, and the non-application of free trade agreement between Morocco and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) have hampered trade flows with Francophone Africa. The lack of business complementarity has deprived the region of new sources of economic development, experience-sharing, and financing, particularly in the critical areas of cross-border infrastructure in energy and transport. To be sure, there has been in recent years some improvement in regional connectivity. For example, Royal Air Maroc flies 170 weekly flights to more than 30 destinations in the continent. Morocco's Tanger-Med container port also assures weekly connections with nearly 35 ports in West Africa. There have also been efforts to increase export insurance and improve access to trade finance lines of credit for the guarantee of payment of commercial transactions.

ECOWAS needs a politically stable and economically dynamic force to make the organization operate better. Nigeria remains the preeminent force in ECOWAS, but its domestic travails and disorganization of its security

forces have weakened the organization. The addition of Morocco can enhance coordinated responses as well as ECOWAS's interventions, including mediation and military deployments. ECOWAS also needs to (re)build good relations with the African Union (AU). On issues of terrorism, criminal trafficking, money laundering, just to name a few, ECOWAS must enhance areas for cooperation with the AU. There is a need for clarification of "the principles of subsidiarity, comparative advantage and responsibility sharing to quell tensions between the AU and ECOWAS during major crises in West Africa and its neighbors."

On the part of the AU, there is also an urgent need to accelerate the ongoing reform of the organization. The Libyan crisis illustrates the limitations of regional and continental mechanisms to deal with conflicts. The AU remains fragmented "with a multitude of focus areas, overdependence on partner funding, underperformance of some organs and institutions due to unclear mandates or chronic underfunding, limited managerial capacity, lack of accountability for performance, at all levels, unclear division of labor between the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities (RECs), other regional mechanisms (RMs), and member states and inefficient working methods in both the Commission and the Assembly." President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, who led a review of the AU in 2016, laid out four key recommendations to make the AU more effective: (1) enable the AU to finance itself in the long term; (2) focus the organization on key priorities with continental scope; (3) realign AU institutions to deliver against those priorities; and (4) manage the business of the AU effectively in both political and operational terms. The challenge now resides in the effective implementation of the reform recommendations. These necessitate "a heads-of-state-level implementation supervision arrangement" and the creation of a "a legally binding mechanism that ensures that member states honor their commitments to implement reforms."

The EU and its international partners should encourage local and regional ownership by propping up home-grown initiatives, especially those whose implementation relies on external funds and technical support. Already, a number of EU and UN strategies are implemented in concert with the AU and ECOWAS. Another example of synergies that deserve support is the proposal by the African Development Bank (AfDB) to establish and manage 'action funds for the Sahel' that would pool donor contributions together. A coordinated international approach that skilfully uses the comparative advantage of each regional institution would greatly help tackle rising insecurity across North Africa and the Sahel.

Harnessing the Power of Regional Security Providers

The major challenge for regional and international actors is to connect their plethora of initiatives designed to address security and development challenges across North Africa and the Sahel. There is growing recognition of the multidimensional nature of threats, and regional interdependence of political networks and ethnic populations. But the efforts of different actors (local, regional and international) show little coherence and almost no consensus on regional approaches to intervention – which should also be tailored to the different local contexts. Each regional strategy fits its sponsor's political priorities and strategic purposes. The result is that more than half a decade after the collapse of the Libyan state and the severe destabilization of Mali, regional policymakers are still seeking the appropriate principles and patterns of management that can foster a modicum of stability in the broader regional security architecture of North Africa and its surroundings. In such process of constructing management options, the importance of regional powers in affecting regional security becomes salient, as the outcomes of their role and orientations can be determinant in building effective or failed security orders.

It is often assumed that regional power leadership is required for the successful establishment of regional institutions and the provision of regional public goods. However, "a regional power's capacity to lead is not the same as its willingness to do so". It is thus crucial that regional powers not be identified simply based on their material capabilities but also on their behavior in executing a wide range of security issues.

The logic here is that when strong states are confronted with or called upon to tackle regional security problems, the relevance of their power relies on their capacity to lead and assist. To a significant extent, this leadership is reflected in the ability of regional powers to maintain amicable interactions with their neighbors, reduce security dilemma dynamics with other powers in the system, and limit the intrusions of extra-regional powers. Obvious as it may sound, effective leadership is also heavily contingent upon the domestic performance of regional powers. Countries that aspire to be regional leaders but are hobbled by structural problems, incoherent political institutions and disintegrating national projects will have difficulty assuming the mantle of regional responsibility and acting as interlocutors between their region and major powers.

Currently none of the much talked about regional powers in North Africa (Algeria or Egypt) have been able to harness the potential of their capabilities for the advancement of their region's security and peace. Ideally, given their size and economic and military potential, they should bolster their neighbors' security, political stability and economic vitality. But in the case of the North Africa and the Sahel, it is France and Morocco that have distinguished themselves as active actors. France is leading anti-insurgent operations against al Qaeda-linked fighters, while Morocco is using its soft power assets, bolstered by its growing military capability, to spread its influence in the region. Morocco's combination of element of soft power and hard power to advance its regional aims effectively provides an interesting case study that offers a clear counterpoint to Algeria's approach of exercising state power.

Algeria perceives itself as the foremost regional power in North Africa and the Sahel. Hydrocarbon wealth and a sizeable geography fuel this promise to mold these overlapping spheres while acting as their focal point for the international level. Algeria boasts strong military power projection capabilities and recognized counterterrorism expertise. But beyond ostentation, the country struggles to drive regional events instead of being driven by them. Observers usually pin the blame for Algeria's frustrated regional ambitions on its murky politics, wobbly oil-dependent economy, doctrinal rigidity and contentious relations with Morocco and France.

In April 2010, Algeria attempted to assume the mantle of regional leadership in the fight against terrorism by creating the Tamanrasset-based Joint Staff Operations Committee (CEMOC), whose main function was to bolster military and security cooperation, and intelligence and logistical coordination, between its members (Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger) and build support for a 75,000-strong joint force. Algeria also hoped to expand its operations to the "second ring" countries of the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Chad, and Senegal). In the end, neither CEMOC nor the Fusion and Liaison Unit (FLU), created also in 2010 and based in Algiers, lived up to their promise of pooling intelligence and coordinating forces in the fight against violent extremist groups. The promised troops and the communication infrastructure were never built or made available. When push came to shove in Mali in 2012, both the CEMOC and FLU were paralyzed, unable to respond to, let alone avert, the take-over of the north by militant Islamist groups.

The disappointment with both platforms and the reluctance of Algeria to respond to Mali's request for military help in 2012 or come to the defense of Niger when in May 2013 terrorists targeted Agadiz and Arlit in the Algerian-Nigerien border led five of its Sahelian neighbors (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso) to create an alternative regional platform, the so-called G-5 Sahel. The new organization is strongly supported by Morocco and France which have been all too happy to step into the leadership void that Algeria ceded by the inadequacy of its aid and reluctance to militarily come to the rescue of its stranded neighbors.

So far however, Algeria emphasizes its indispensability and bets that the G-5 and other regional initiatives cannot operate effectively without its support. After all, Algeria has intimate knowledge of regional violent extremist networks, and is widely suspected to have discreet and complex relationship with Iyad ag Ghali, longstanding Touareg leader and head of a new jihadist formation in the Sahara –the Group for Supporting Islam and Muslims. Algeria's neighbors realize that without its active cooperation, it would be difficult to deal with intractable conflicts in Mali or Libya. But it remains equally true that Algeria cannot realize its leadership

aspirations by trying to monopolize security agendas and debates or, as some of its neighbors purport, withhold critical intelligence on some of the armed actors roaming its immediate neighborhood.

If Algeria provides a case of a regional power that has struggled to translate its significant natural resources and huge expenditures on defense into effective leadership in North Africa and the Sahel, Morocco offers a case study in how a middle power can turn its soft power assets into effective tools for regional influence. Morocco's skillful mobilization of religion as soft power and the comparative advantage of its firms (including banking, insurance, and telecommunications), industrial companies (mainly phosphates), increasingly sophisticated manufacturing (aerospace, electronics, and cars) and rising capabilities in renewable energy increasingly place the Kingdom at the forefront of several issues affecting its region and beyond.

Morocco's military capability, even if less significant than Algeria, provides other strategic boosts for the country, as demonstrated by the November 2017 launch of its first observation satellite to monitor its borders, coastline and the activities of violent extremist groups in the Sahel. Morocco's intelligence services are already active in some parts of the Sahel, and its telecommunication firm Maroc Telecom which has six African subsidiaries is suspected of gathering intelligence information on extremist groups in the countries it operates in. In the summer 2016, Morocco interceded in the fight against Boko Haram by providing Niger with military equipment.

The recent return of Morocco to the AU is bound to shake up the organization, especially now that the flagship reforms of the AU, elaborated by its incoming president Rwandan Paul Kagame, will enter into force in 2018. Morocco is determined to play a significant role in their implementation by integrating the structures of the AU, three of which are particularly coveted by the Kingdom: the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), and the Pan-African Parliament (PAP). It is these key structures that treat the most important and sensitive political and security issues in Africa, especially the Western Sahara dispute. Morocco's immediate goal is to nudge the AU towards neutrality, and then to gradually garner support for a win-win political solution to the Western Sahara dispute.

With its new style of assertive diplomacy tempered by pragmatism, the Kingdom does not want the dispute to affect its drive for expanding the market for its products and firms in Africa. The growing economic rapprochement between Morocco and Nigeria is an example of Morocco's self-professed sensible, pragmatic policy-making that adapts to specific circumstances. Economic interdependence tends to moderate political conflicts, as seen in Nigeria's recent softening of its support for the Algerian-backed Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia al-Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario) – a Sahrawi independence movement founded in 1973 and based in Algeria.

The recent warming of relations between King Mohammed VI of Morocco and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda confirms this new diplomatic organizing principle of political alliances undergirded by dynamic and pragmatic insights that trump the ideological dogmas of prior eras. Kagame's technocratic rule, unconstrained by democratic forms, fit in perfectly with the technocratic styles of policy making that Mohamed VI favors. Both leaders' priorities are aimed at reinforcing South-South partnership through investment promotion and implementation of big projects.

The Moroccan case is illustrative of a rising power that has made important strides in leveraging its soft power attributes and domestic stability to its advantage. The Kingdom still has a long way to go to fully reach its potential, but the attraction of its soft power and growing military capabilities make it a serious power to contend with.

The Future of Maghreb Security

Europe and the international community should encourage local and regional ownership as shown by Morocco and any other willing regional actor. They should also help stabilize Libya and support pragmatic and realistic solutions to the Western Sahara dispute between Morocco and Algeria. The continuing chaos in Libya threatens to unleash more migration and terrorism on North Africa and Europe while the standoff between Algeria and Morocco torpedoes much needed regional economic integration and security cooperation. The 5+5 Dialogue, which brings together the five countries from the Maghreb Union and those from the northern shore (Spain, France, Italy, Malta and Portugal), offers a good forum to explore the best ideas to face the challenges confronting the Western Mediterranean region. Most importantly, this dialogue has already been expanded to include issues that are critical to Maghreb integration and the development of the Mediterranean, such as education and research, the environment, energy, agriculture, food security and transportation. All these initiatives need to be translated into concrete action plans and technical support structures, as has already happened with the Transport Group of the Western Mediterranean (GTMO 5+5), supported by the CETMO (Centre for Transportation Studies for the Western Mediterranean).

The new European Neighborhood Policy, released in November 2015, also emphasizes the importance of EU engagement in boosting investment, trade and energy cooperation with southern neighboring governments. Whether the new ENP policy delivers on its promises depends on the level of political support the EU and its member states provide. So far, the ENP has never been given the necessary financial resources or conditionality incentives to have any leverage with the countries of the Maghreb. It remains too technocratic, lacking the political support and financial muscle necessary to translate its lofty goals of democracy promotion and shared economic prosperity into reality.

For NATO, the challenge is how to deepen practical cooperation with the states of North Africa over issues of common interests such as counter-terrorism, emergency planning, interoperability and defense reform. Questions about NATO's actions and intentions are other lingering concerns with some countries who fear meddling into the region's affairs. NATO's role in the Libyan civil war is often cited as reckless and ill-conceived. That said, some countries see engagement with NATO as having better chances of achieving its objectives of security and stability than EU led initiatives such the the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP).

As they stand, the current instruments in the toolbox of EU foreign policy are ill-equipped to address instability and insecurity in the Maghreb. To accomplish their missions, they need to be radically revamped on the technical side as well as empowered with political support. Such a process also has to take stock of the new realities affecting security in several countries of the Maghreb, as the region's problems tend to quickly become the continent's woes.

Political stasis and economic distress is by far North Africa's Achilles heel. Morocco is the least complicated case, as the country remains politically stable and an attractive investment destination. But all is not bright in the kingdom. The dividends of economic progress have not been shared equitably, leaving those left out in the cold frustrated. The big question for Morocco's allies in Europe is how to incentivize more reforms that expand political freedoms and economic participation.

Europe's task is much more complicated in Algeria. The country's ruling elite is extremely sensitive to "meddling" in the country's internal affairs. Political and economic engagement therefore requires a great deal of subtlety and delicacy. With dwindling reserves, the country needs foreign investments and technology to help it build a cushion against the mounting economic blows caused by low oil prices. Algeria desperately needs to modernize its economy and address the huge deficits in governance. So far, however, the country's international partners have focused mostly on how to prop up the Algerian gas industry to help the continent reduce its dependence on Russia. The focus on boosting investment in the gas industry is important, but it is ignoring the big elephant in the room: political stasis. What Algeria needs most is political openness and

serious economic reforms that will help improve the business climate and lure foreign investors to areas beyond hydrocarbons.

In Libya, the threat of militancy is the most confounding as it is ensconced in the country's political, tribal and regional fractures. Complicating things even more for Libya and the region as a whole is the return of foreign fighters. To be sure, the defeat of IS is salutary but the factors that gave rise to IS are still present. The crisis of political and institutional legitimacy prolongs the constitutional and legal vacuums that in turn hamper the development of both a Libyan economic agreement that deals with the management and distribution of Libya's wealth and a security agreement that addresses the issue of disarming militias, collection weapons, and the rebuilding of Libyan Armed Forces under civilian oversight and authority, as well as the protection of borders, vital sites, and installations.

Tunisia constitutes Europe's major test for supporting democracy. The country deserves support and is eager for international aid. The EU should significantly increase its economic aid and better target it to benefit the broader public and ease the dire social situation in Tunisia's border regions. Aid that is not smartly programmed will reduce the incentives for the ruling coalition to adopt rule of law reforms and the adequate protection of civil liberties. Already, human rights associations have documented a worrying rise in abuses such as harassment of the families of terrorism suspects, excessive use of force during home raids and searches, and arbitrary restrictions on the movement of individuals inside Tunisia.

The United States also has a role to play. Past approaches have neglected the underlying institutional and socio-economic roots of insecurity. In the case of Tunisia, the US should prod the government into reforming its internal security apparatus and promoting standards of professionalism, while also putting pressure on the government to get serious about fighting corruption, improving governance and promoting equitable developments between regions – after all, the ailing economy is weighed down not only by the rise of terrorism but also by severe economic imbalances, entrenched corruption, and a lethargic civil service. Of critical importance is also designing rehabilitation and reintegration programs for the hundreds of fighters returning from foreign theaters of conflict.

In Libya, the lack of a US strategy besides targeting militant groups has opened the way for Russia to step in. It is clear that Russia is "neither keen nor capable of getting involved militarily in Libya." Hence, political and diplomatic involvement is the best option available for Moscow. Libya is important to Russia for economic reasons as well as geopolitical ones. Crucially, Libya is also important to Russia "because it is very important to Europe and therefore it is another battlefield where Putin could twist Europe's arm."

Key Lessons

Based on the discussions during the workshop, five key lessons bear highlighting:

Resist the temptation of replicating the old combination of repression and cooptation to smother popular mobilization. The response from governments has been parochial with an overemphasis on a mixture of heavy-handed security approaches and palliative economic measures that often end up further polarizing communities and worsening growing youth disillusionment. At a time when governments are playing catch up against a continually shifting terror threat and with the menace of returning North African foreign fighters looming, the prolonged disconnection between the state and its youth is dangerous, threatening to plunge countries into a vicious cycle of violence, state repression and further violence. Such deterioration creates an environment that is conducive to extremist recruitment, organized criminality and other illicit activities. Breaking this vicious cycle requires governments to rethink their approach to their governance and security.

Recognize the historical specificity and geographical particularity of border regions. In all countries of the Maghreb, border regions have suffered from decades of state neglect. Historic narratives have been manipulated to portray some outlying regions as archaic zones, full of dissidents and outlaws. Textbooks misrepresent traumatic events and downplay the significance of the regions' role in their countries' history. To heal past wounds, governments should develop an initiative to validate their contributions in history textbooks, statutes, memorials and exhibitions. If accompanied by development activities that cater to regional needs, and in the case of Tunisia and Algeria, the improvement in the management of natural resources and the investment of a fair portion of the profits from local resources into local projects, such gestures can help mitigate the sentiments of anger and resentment among peripheral communities. They can also help counter extremist recruitment.

Avoid over-regulating the religious sphere and propagating particularistic religious boards and practices as a means to combat extremism. Overhauling the management of religion and reforming religious education in order to be in conformity with the tolerant and inclusive teachings of North African Islam is a worthy goal when it comes to the creeping menace of exclusivist ideologies and the disruptive anarchy generated by a bazaar of online fatwas. The risk however becomes when governments' policy becomes one of patronage of religious beliefs and practices. States' propagandist measures to prop up state sanctioned Sufism (Islamic mysticism) and religious authorities that pledge loyalty to state rulers discourage or suppress the development of competent clerics and credible religious institutions that can tear down violent interpretations of Islam. Worse, it taints the religious establishment by association with the untrusted elite that control politics and the economy. Part of the lure of militant ideologies and violent extremist groups lie in their anti-systemic rhetoric and their ability to tap into anti-establishment anger.

Enhance regional cooperation. Given the enduring rivalry between Morocco and Algeria, the revitalization of the Arab Maghreb Union or the creation of a regional plan for border security cooperation remains a pipe dream. Collaboration processes need to exhibit incrementalism by first focusing on specific security matters, in particular the exchange of intelligence information on drugs, arms and human smugglers as well as North African fighters in Syria and Libya. The Algerian Tunisian border security cooperation best reflects this kind of cautious collaborative approach. To be sure, Tunisia as the junior partner in this burgeoning security relation has had to gradually align its regional security policy goals with that of Algeria in return for military assistance to combat the threat of violent extremism on its borders. Tunisia backs Algeria's approach to the Libyan conflict and adopts a position of positive neutrality on the Western Sahara conflict.

Properly target European economic incentives, security assistance and diplomatic engagement. In March 2011, EU leaders brandished the tantalizing lure of a strategic partnership with countries of the Southern Mediterranean that was to be underpinned by money, market access and mobility. This "three Ms" approach seemed bold and transformative, a much-needed break from the lame policies of the past. Unfortunately, the much heralded EU support to its southern neighbors never really transpired. The new approach mainly repackaged and recycled the same old piecemeal policies and instruments that failed to spur political reforms and address the economic needs of countries buffeted by multiple internal and external shocks. The current instruments in the toolbox of EU foreign policy need to be radically revamped on the technical side as well as empowered with political support and financial muscle necessary to translate its lofty goals of democracy promotion and shared economic prosperity into reality. In Tunisia for example, European engagement needs to be stepped up, as the country desperately needs foreign investments that spur job creation and targeted economic initiatives in marginalized regions.

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