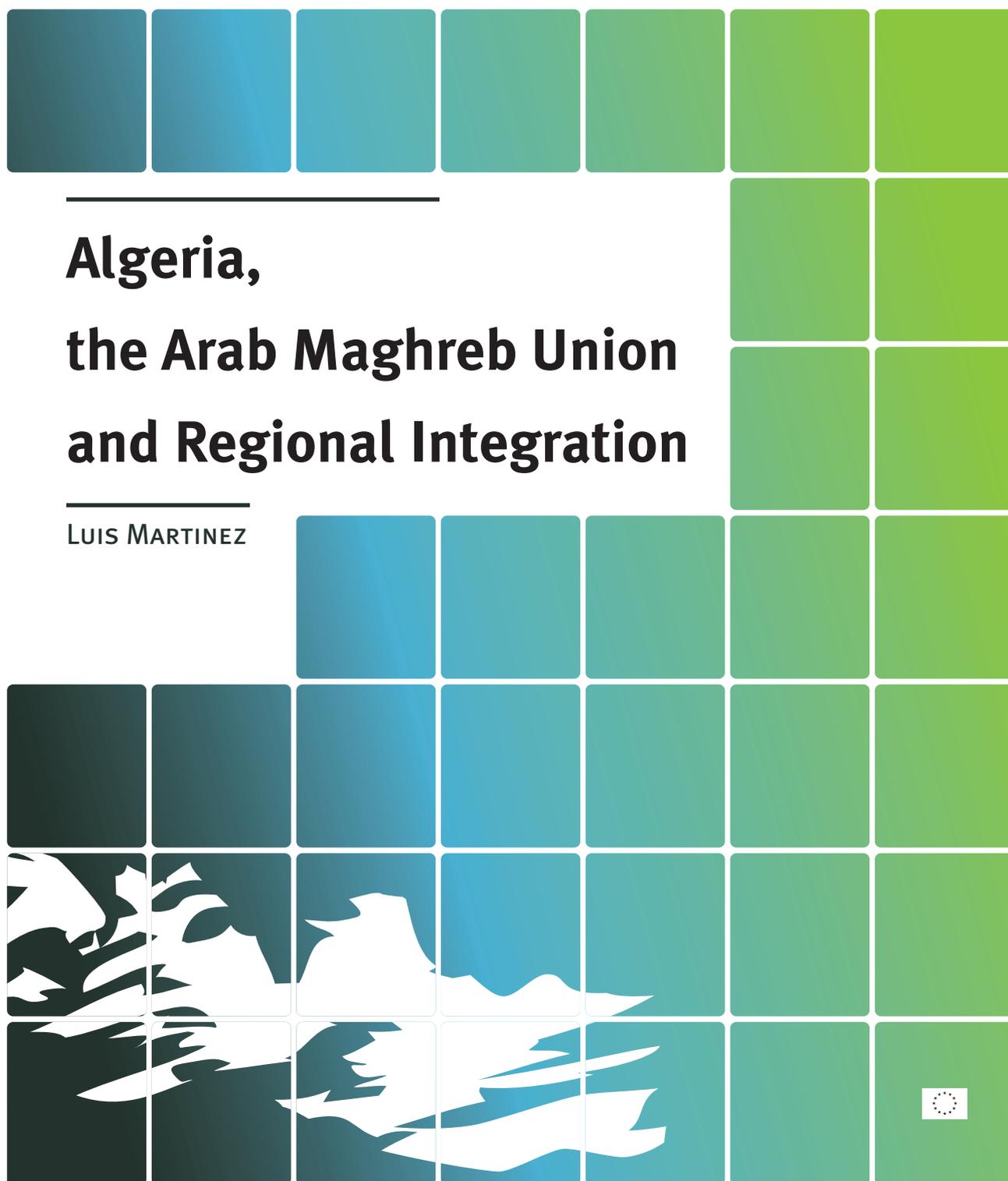

Algeria, the Arab Maghreb Union and Regional Integration

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Summary

To numerous scholars, regional integration in North Africa represents one of the potential responses and thus solutions to the socio-economic difficulties in the region, such as unemployment, poverty, bad governance, and social unrest. North African economies have been ignoring each other (3% of exchanges) and their leaders have been engaged in relations marked by mutual distrust. This survey conducted in Algeria between July and August 2006 seeks to understand how the Algerian population explains the stagnation of the Maghreb.

The results of the survey clearly show that the region's stagnation is mainly due to a democratic deficit; the overwhelming majority of respondents argued in favour of the creation of a North African parliament, where democratically elected Parliamentarians would truly represent their electorates and seek to solve their problems.

In spite of the Arab Maghreb Union's (AMU) lack of results, there is still a strong hope that regional integration will eventually be realised. For the majority of respondents, the AMU represents a reaction to globalisation and an opportunity to open up marginalised and poorly developed economies and societies. The growth potential of an integrated Maghreb has been acknowledged; therefore, in the eyes of many, only political will is needed to put an end to the vicious circle that has been keeping the region deadlocked, especially due to historical pretexts. The survey very clearly shows that governments deliberately maintain the tension between Morocco and Algeria, and that the risk of a war breaking out between the two states is being considered possible.

Only democracy, according to this view, is in a position to fulfil public opinion's expectations, by removing rulers out of a national logic and by putting in place the conditions needed to implement a regional integration project. But in order for this to happen, the EU must upgrade its interest and thus presence in the region as it represents a model of regional development itself. Finally, the survey's main finding is that regional integration can be achieved only through democratisation.

Introduction: Democracy and Regional Integration

The survey conducted in Algeria in July 2006 contains a great deal of information on the trends in Algerian society with regards to inter-Maghreb relations, the AMU's blockage and perspectives on a regionally integrated area. It also suggests solutions for the stagnation affecting the North African region. Indeed, since their independence North African economies have been ignoring each other, as exemplified by the weakness of intra-regional trade (3%).

On the one hand, the survey confirmed what was already obvious: the failure of any regional construction. Only 3% are very satisfied with the AMU's policies, while in contrast 70% are unsatisfied. This feeling of dissatisfaction does not imply a rejection of the AMU, or even its death sentence. In fact, 76% feel personally interested in the AMU or are least concerned by its further development. Expectations are high and the feeling of deception is comparable to the hopes that once were placed on the "fathers of nationalism and the North African liberation movement".¹ Moreover, because only 8% of respondents found out about this regional integration project in the course of their studies, it would seem that this initiative was not part of school syllabuses.

The survey detected a feeling of disappointment, rather than of outright rejection of the AMU, which nevertheless clearly remains a popular project. Its image is not too negative (19%), but is vague (60%). This is understandable given the AMU's difficulties in marketing its achievements. Indeed, 69% of respondents are incapable of naming a single one of them, and 5% were only able to name the project of a motorway construction.

The regional integration project in North Africa is still regarded as useful and important by 48% and as a utopia of sorts by only 15% of the respondents, and strong expectations exist as to its realisation. This feeling stems from the need for a "rapprochement of peoples" of the region (43%) with which Algerians share a common language (18%) and religion (29%). The social and civilisation dimensions supposed to favour a union remain ever present in spite of political and historical facts.² The belief that the peoples of the region share common traits is so strong that not a single respondent stressed that the problems between Algeria and Morocco stem from "differences between the peoples", whereas 58% think that political rulers are responsible for the tensions. Furthermore, 88% welcome the creation of a North African parliament where democratically elected members of parliament would be represented.

One of the survey's main findings is that the democratic deficit of the region's regimes accounts for the weakness of regional integration. According to this view, democracy and regional integration go hand in hand.

1 A. Abdou, "Le Maghreb en jachère", *Le quotidien d'Oran*, 24/08/06.

2 Tangiers Conference, 27-30 April 1958 with Neo-Destour, the Istiqlal and the FLN, stipulated that "the Tangiers Conference (...) conscious of the need to express the unanimous will of the peoples of the Arab Maghreb to unite their fate in the strict solidarity of their interests, convinced that the moment has come to materialise this will to unite in the framework of common institutions, in order to allow them to secure the role it is entrusted with in the concert of nations, decided to work toward realisation of this union, considers that the federal form answers best to the realities of the participating countries."

I. Regional Integration of Northern Africa

In the 1960s, Roger le Tourneau argued that

“The idea of North African unity (...) was initially born as a reaction to the French control over the three countries of the Maghreb: before becoming a constructive idea, it manifested itself mainly as a defence reflex, as the sum of a triple common feeling of French domination (...) The advocates of Maghreb unity will have to be patient and tenacious in order to succeed (...) Otherwise North Africa will risk going through the same old problems, namely, internal fights, economic and technical stagnation.”³

When they became independent, North African states failed to achieve a union of the Maghreb. Since the AMU was created in 1989, North Africa did not accomplish regional integration either and the reasons that explain this failure are manifold.

Yet, according to Habib Boulares, former secretary general of the AMU, except for the Presidency Council, which hasn't held a meeting in ten years, the

“Other organs of the AMU work” and “it mustn't be argued that the AMU is blocked; it would be unfair for all the ones who work actively in all sectors for the achievement of this goal”.⁴

The North African development strategy is based on the Ras Lanouf programme, adopted in Libya, in 1991, which formulates the three stages of regional integration, namely “a free-trade area; a customs union and a common market”.⁵

This strategy was carried out between 1989 and 2006, resulting in the organisation of “six summits of North African heads of state (the last of which took place in 1994), 24 sessions of the Economic and Financial Affairs Committee, 41 sessions of the Follow-up Committee, six plenary sessions of the Consultative Assembly and 16 sessions of the judicial body”. Furthermore, according to Habib Benyahia, the AMU's secretary general, the AMU currently has 114 working groups.

This level of activity has yielded results, and according to officials a number of common projects have been accomplished, such as the national sections of the North African motorway, the optic fibre extension of the telecom networks, the fight against desertification and cooperation in health matters, etc.

In light of this, it is not surprising that Habib Benyahia strongly objected to the title of a symposium organised in Madrid on 24-26 May 2006 entitled “From the cost of Non Maghreb to the North African Tiger”, in the following way:

“Indeed, does it not reflect a dubious, or even nihilist, approach to evoke the ‘Non Maghreb’ by juxtaposing these two terms, when referring to a process well under way with concrete achievements, even if it is short of the aspirations and hopes of over 85 million North Africans?”⁶

Thus the question arises: do the achievements of the AMU fulfil the expectations of Northern African populations?

1. Realising the Weakness of Regional Integration

Regional integration of the Maghreb has not materialised as it has yet to move beyond the project phase. Indeed, statistics show that in 2003 intra-regional trade between the Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) only reached 3%. In contrast, intra-zone trade represented 60.2% of the EU exchanges, 22.3% for the ASEAN, 10.6% for the PECO and 19.9% for the Mercosur countries”.⁷ The feeble trade rate can be explained by a structural reason, namely weak economic complementarity.⁸ According to Mohamed Bousset, one of the solutions to boost intra-regional trade is the dismantling of tariffs. Thus, for Algeria,

“a cut of 50% or 100% in taxes to farming imports from Morocco and Tunisia would lead to a progress of 20.9% and 47.9%, respectively in trade with these two countries (...) with regards to industrial trade it would amount to an increase in trade of 34.4% and 84.9%, respectively”.⁹

Such a weak level of integration leads to “the deprivation of 2% to 3% of the annual GDP of North African countries” and one cannot help wonder why this is the case. Indeed, given their economic situation, North African countries do not seem to be in a position to afford wasting such opportunities.

3 Roger Le Tourneau, *Evolution de l'Afrique du Nord musulman: 1920-1961*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1962, p.475.

4 Interview with Habib Boulares, “Pour une union réaliste”, available at [http://www/maghrebarabe.org/fr/Espace_Information/interview/int].

5 Botha, Pierre and Faten Aggad, “The Arab Maghreb Union as a regional economic and political grouping: a case study”, *Politics*, 2004, n°42, pp. 33-47.

6 Habib Ben Yahia's address at the symposium, available at [http://www.maghrebarabe.org/fr/Espace_Information/communiqués/fenetre/umazoo60524.htm].

7 Boussetta, Mohamed 2, *Femise 21-13*, August 004, p.59.

The growth of North Africa's labour force means that "nearly 16 million jobs [will be] needed between 2000 and 2020 to provide for new entrants. And with unemployment in the Maghreb estimated at 20.4 percent, to absorb the unemployed as well as new entrants, these countries will have to create nearly 22 million jobs in the next two decades".¹⁰

In the Maghreb, unemployment mainly affects young people (who represent 37% of the Moroccan unemployed population; 66% for Algeria and 68% for Tunisia) and there are numerous socio-political consequences to this phenomenon. For instance, it leads young people to mistrust political officials, which they perceive to be indifferent to the economic situation of millions of persons. It is thus easy to understand how migration constitutes an alternative for many.

This particular context paved the way for the renewal of the debate on regional integration in North Africa. Several reports had been pointing out the need for North African states to commit in concrete terms toward implementing effective integration. Such a project would undoubtedly increase the region's economic visibility and geographic interest and, in turn, favour foreign investment. In 2003, the "DFI amounted to 1.4% of Algeria's GDP and 3.2% of Morocco and Tunisia's", mainly thanks to "the conclusion of bilateral commercial and regional agreements" with Europe, the Arab world (the PAFTA and the GAFTA) and the Agadir agreement (between Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt, adopted in 2004). The AMU project became secondary to the agreements adopted in the last years.

During the 1980's, Abdelkader Sid Ahmed stressed

"the region's considerable under-development in areas such as structural and institutional change. The former is reflected in the insufficiency of local supply (...) confining the Maghreb to an outdated international labour-division scheme, which poses an obstacle to a beneficial integration in the world market. (...) At the institutional level, [this under-development is reflected] in inflexibility at many levels, the inability to promote selective industrialisation (...) or to build effective administrations".¹¹

Ten years later, in June 2005, Rodrigo Rato, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, argued that

"throughout the region, economic growth has remained below its potential, unemployment is still much too high, and poverty remains pervasive. This suggests that there are important constraints on the economies that need to be addressed. What are these and what can be done? (...) The Maghreb countries represent relatively small, fragmented markets, whose best chance for development lies in openness and integration. In practice their restrictive trade regimes and cumbersome investment regulations have discouraged domestic private investment and attracted only limited amounts of foreign direct investment, outside the hydrocarbon sector. (...) Greater regional economic integration would yield important benefits. It would create a regional market of more than 75 million consumers, similar in population size to many leading trading nations. It would bring efficiency gains and make the region more attractive for foreign investors. And, most important, the complementary economic structures of the Maghreb countries would create opportunities for mutually beneficial trade within the region."¹²

In general, bearing in mind the structural weaknesses of North African economies, regional integration is a beneficial solution, and yet, it has only been used occasionally.

Several elements account for the blockage of regional integration in North Africa. At the political level, it seems as if economic problems have not been a primary concern for states in the last two decades.

Furthermore, the "supreme body" of the AMU, the Presidency Council, composed of the heads of State, is the only one to "have the right to make decisions" and "[t]he decisions shall be made unanimously" (article 6), which represents a clear constitutional obstacle to efficient decision-making.

North African heads of States were far from being concerned with the creation of regional integration during the 1980's. Instead, their attention was drawn to the murder of President Mohamed Boudiaf and the civil war in Algeria, the embargo on Libya, Zine Al Abidine's "surgical coup" in Tunisia, the war against the Sahrawis and the question of succession

2. Integration as a Response to Economic Problems

8 Bensidoun, Isabelle and Agnès Chevalier, "Europe-Méditerranée : le pari de l'ouverture", *Economica*, 1996.

9 Idem, p. 95.

10 Dyer, Paul, "Disponibilité de main-d'œuvre, chômage et création d'emplois dans le Maghreb", paper presented at the World Bank Maghreb Roundtable on Gender and Development, 24-24 May 2005, Tunis, p. 2. Available at: [http://doc.abhatoo.net.ma/doc/IMG/pdf/Rapport_WB_Maghreb_Emploi.pdf] (in French) and at [<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTUNISIA/Resources/Rapport+WB+Maghreb+EmploiANGLAIS.pdf>] (in English).

11 Ahmed, Abdelkader Sid, "Le Maghreb rencontre avec le troisième millénaire", *AAN*, 1996, p.7.

12 Rodrigo de Rato, "Intégration économique au Maghreb: sur le chemin de la prospérité", *L'Economiste* (Morocco), 15 June 2005.

in Morocco. In light of this context, it is thus unsurprising that the Presidency Council has not held a meeting since 1994 and that between 1994 and 1999 the AMU went through a “period of frost”.

Since the beginning of 2000, the political discourse on regional integration nearly completely excluding the AMU emerged rapidly. In fact, an economic vision surfaced of a type of regional integration that would bring together at least Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. This project, autonomous from the AMU, would at first exclude Libya and Mauritania from the integration process, although the AMU, unable to lead to an understanding on common political projects, would be artificially maintained. In this perspective, the AMU, paradoxically perceived as an obstacle to integration, would be bypassed.

3. The Western Sahara Conflict: A Historical Pretext to the Democratic Deficit?

The Western Sahara conflict constitutes the main impediment to the building of the AMU. It illustrates Algeria and Morocco's inability since the 1963 “Sand War” to put an end to a relationship based on mistrust and sometimes even hostility. The Western Sahara conflict mainly represented a great political opportunity for the two countries to establish their authority. On the one hand, it allowed the Moroccan monarchy to appropriate nationalist sentiments, until then a rhetoric used by Istiqlal, for whom the idea of a Great Morocco was at the core of its power struggle. For the Algerian regime, on the other hand, it represented a means to justify the army's power and to keep alive nationalist feelings.

Clear benefits were drawn from the Sahara conflict: it allowed both states to camouflage different economic development projects and establish, under the cover of nationalist feelings, authoritarian political regimes, thus keeping a tight lock on their political scenes. Furthermore, both countries' democratic deficit explains why in the course of two decades the conflict became a pretext to establish hostile relations. Once facing internal criticism over human rights violations, corruption, wealth concentration and lack of freedom, Algeria and Morocco relied on the Western Sahara conflict as an occasion to dispense prejudgments and clichés about the “Other”. Also, they relied on a compliant press to rally to their cause a population frustrated with the degradation of economic and social conditions.

The emergence of Islamist movements made both states realise their strategic mistakes. Algeria's descent into civil war (1992-1999), which plunged Algerian society into tragedy, moved it away from the Western Sahara problem. In Morocco, the PJD's growing success was cause for great concern because of its representativity in Moroccan society.

In fact, by concentrating on the Western Sahara question states only temporarily froze the main issues affecting their societies, i.e. how to reduce poverty, fighting unemployment, establishing the rule of law, and promoting freedom of expression, among others. All these topics had until then been kept aside from public debate.

The emergence of Islamist movements thus illustrates the birth both of plural political expression and vulnerability of states and the emergence of violence, in the shape of guerrilla or terrorist acts, laid bare the weakness of political communities.

In light of this, the Western Sahara conflict cannot be held as the major explanation for the blockage of the regional integration project in North Africa. In fact, it reveals the inability of the countries in the region to build a common structure in spite of the good sense and the common mutual interests that would ensue.

4. 2006: A More Favourable Context for Regional Integration?

Some observers hailed the meeting between President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and the King of Morocco, Mohamed VI, in March 2005, as the premise for a rapprochement. The press echoed rumours about the reopening of the Algerian-Moroccan border, a first symbolic gesture marking the renewal of ties between the two countries. Following this event, Libya, which then held the chairmanship of the AMU, announced the date of a summit of heads of States to be held in Tripoli, on 25-26 May that same year.

The enthusiasm proved to be short-lived as soon as Mohammed VI revealed he would not take part in the meeting, which was subsequently cancelled. The stance adopted by President Bouteflika earlier on the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people was used as a pretext to put in question the Algerian-Moroccan reconciliation attempts.

In reality, Algeria's official discourse on the Sahara had not changed. In March 2006,

Abdelkader Messahel, deputy minister in charge of Maghreb and African matters, recalled that

“[t]he solution to the conflict lies in the Sahrawi ’s people exercise of its sacred right to self-determination (...) it’s Algeria’s final position (...) it is first of all up for the UN to move and take its responsibilities in order to solve the stalemate”.¹³

Mohamed Bedjates, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, reiterated this view in June 2006 on the *Liberté* (5 June 2006) by insisting on the Baker plan and the support for resolution 1675 (2006), which recalls the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people.

Is the US’s increasing interest in the region capable of unblocking the process of North African integration? With the Middle East Partnership (MEPI) initiative launched by President George W. Bush, the Maghreb suddenly became the focus of particular attention in three sectors, namely security, economy and energy. Donald Rumsfeld carried out a “Maghreb tour” in February 2006 in the framework of the war on terrorism and in the prospect of fostering a rapprochement between the Maghreb countries and NATO.¹⁴

Since the “NATO-Mediterranean” dialogue was launched, in March 2000, common manoeuvres were developed between NATO and Algeria and Morocco. In the economic sector, the free trade agreement signed between Morocco and the US opened new perspectives for economic trade. In the energy sector, investment by American companies in Algeria has been constantly increasing. Moreover, interconnection in the energy sector between the Maghreb countries is highly developed, both in the electricity (ELTAM) and in the hydrocarbon (Algerian gas reaches Europe via Morocco and Tunisia) areas. Moreover, the re-establishment of diplomatic ties with Libya and the plans for a military base in the Sahel in Mauritania, in the framework of the fight against terrorism, further demonstrate the US’ new commitment to the region.

The EU’s lack of action in respect of the Western Sahara conflict, explained by the understandable wish to avoid antagonizing Morocco or Algeria, provides the United States with an opportunity to work in the region. This being said, the US administration’s setbacks in Iraq and the Middle East do not allow to anticipate a successful future for its activities in the Maghreb.

Thus, an international atmosphere characterised by a “terrorist threat and energy insecurity” is boosting regional integration in North Africa, as it is forcing the AMU’s external partners to work more efficiently toward that process. In this perspective, regional integration appears to be first and foremost an external constraint.

13 M. Messahel, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Algérie. Algérie-UMA, 26 mars 2006.
14 “Le Maghreb stratégique”, Nato Defense College, Research Branch, Rome, April 2006.

II. Algeria and Inter-Maghreb Relations: Integration or Rivalries?

1. Regional Integration: An External Constraint?

In March 2006, Abdelkader Messahel announced Algeria's wish to "re-launch the North African machinery", stressing "Algeria's availability to move forward" because "it is clear that in today's international context, tomorrow's world will belong to those attempting to implement economic and political integration at the regional level".

However, since independence, North Africa was built around two "enemy couples"¹⁵, Algeria-Morocco and Libya-Tunisia, who redefined their relations according to the context. In the course of the past three decades, the facts refuted the official discourse on North African identity and solidarity: Algerians supported the Sahrawi people during the Western Sahara conflict since 1976; Libya supported Tunisian political opponents in the Gafsa attack, in 1980; Morocco suspected Algerians were behind the Marrakech attack in the summer of 1994; Algerians accused Morocco of supporting Algerian islamists, etc. To these diplomatic tensions must be added the inflammatory press campaigns occasionally launched by newspapers in the aftermath of specific events.

The AMU's creation in 1989 was perceived as a response to the vulnerability of the region's regimes. In spite of the rhetoric about identity and a common past and fate, North African rulers did not have the will to build a great common region. The fight against Islamism and terrorism continues to be the Union's common denominator. All along the 1980's, the fight against Islamism was waged behind closed doors. European states, afraid of being involved in a conflict between authoritarian regimes and non-democratic opponents, avoided public support to reprisals from the regimes. In turn, North African rulers denounced the European "negligence" and demanded the extradition of the Islamist opponents based in Europe. Isolated in this fight, North African countries developed an efficient and unexpected regional cooperation effort against Islamism, as illustrated by the Algerian-Tunisian cooperation.

The attacks on 9/11 had a double impact on North Africa in so far as they legitimised the fight against terrorism, including human rights violations, and facilitated integration of the Maghreb in the global mechanism of the war against terrorism put in place by the Bush administration. The Madrid attacks (on 11 March 2003) led to the creation of an EU common strategy to fight terrorism, following which Islamist armed groups from the Maghreb began to be seen as one of the main threats for Europe's southern countries. North African regimes thus found a favourable echo to their security policies both among the EU and the US.

For the Bush administration the main threat in North Africa is located in the Sahel. As underlined by the report of the "Maghreb roundtable" held at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in February 2006,

"the activities of terrorist networks that operate in ungoverned areas of North Africa and the Sahel are the primary threat in the Maghreb. Indigenous extremist groups and jihadi fighters fleeing Afghanistan have found safe havens near the Sahara where they are able to operate free from government interference (...) Terror networks in the region pose a transnational threat not only to the Maghreb, but also to Europe as well (...) To combat the spread of terror networks in the region and improve regional security cooperation, the US recently launched the Trans-Sahara Counter Terror Initiative (TSCTI) (...) Despite increased training and cooperation that TSCTI brings to the region, the main impediment to greater regional security and military coordination remains the Western Sahara conflict. The conflict between Morocco and Algeria over sovereignty of the former Spanish colony prevents meaningful regional security coordination, stifles economic growth, and prevents intra-regional trade from developing".¹⁶

In this perspective, regional integration constitutes the best instrument in the fight against terrorism in the Maghreb region and becomes a decisive element to be developed. Both the United States and the EU share this perspective, and the latter also perceives it as a solution for economic and migration problems.

Thus, from the outside, regional integration is regarded as a necessity. And yet, inside the region, this project only finds support in official discourses. In practice, North African countries devised a mechanism of bilateral relations privileging non-regional partners, as exemplified by the free trade agreement signed between Morocco and the United States (2003); the strategic partnership between Algeria and Russia (2001)¹⁷ and the partnerships between Libya and Italy (1998).

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) did not succeed in favouring south-south exchange inside the region, but rather it allowed the consolidation of a trust zone between

¹⁵ "Le Maghreb, le leadership en question", Commissariat Général du Plan, Groupe Méditerranée, 7 mars 1997.

¹⁶ Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Maghreb Roundtable, February 2006.

¹⁷ This agreement resulted in an arms contract worth 3,5 billion dollars (40 Mig 29 SMT jet fighters, 28 Su-30Mk fighters, 16 yak-130, 8 groups of anti-aerial missiles S-300 PMU and 40 chars T-90), El Watan, 11 March 2006.

the countries engaged in the 5+5 initiative, which can be useful in the dialogue needed to handle challenges such as migration and terrorist threats. In the absence of a real Euro-Maghreb partnership with a “reinforced integration”¹⁸ perspective on the region, North African states will not embark on a policy of regional integration of their own free will, mainly for historic and economic reasons. And even though the Western Sahara constitutes an excellent example of a historical dispute between Morocco and Algeria for political regional leadership, it is likely that tomorrow’s disputes will revolve around economic leadership with the energy sector being at the heart of new tensions.

While Qadhafi’s Arab nationalism could be explained by President Nasser’s influence¹⁹, the Libyan oil industry model drew inspiration from the Algerian model.²⁰

According to Destanne de Bernis,

“At the outset, Libya had no experience or industrial background. It would need to train a highly technically and scientifically skilled population.”

Cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector between Algeria and Libya got underway as soon as Qadhafi came into power. In the 1970’s, faced with potential competition from foreign companies, the two countries envisaged building a single front to defend their positions and interests and coordinate efforts to further develop their respective national economies. Cooperation was instituted between Sonatrach and Lipetco (the latter would become Linoco in 1970 and later on, in 1972, Noc) in the areas of information and exchange of technicians and experts, and the creation of mixed companies for the prospecting, production and transport of oil was envisaged.

In fact, drawing inspiration from Sonatrach, Noc’s executives transformed the company into an instrument at the State’s service to regain power over the national natural richness. Noc was also inspired by Sonatrach’s three pillars to free itself from foreign companies: increase investment, develop engineering in order to reduce dependence and demand maximal use of locally-produced goods, and develop services.

In 1971, thanks to the nationalisation of gas fields and pipelines, and the increase in its stakes up to 51%, Sonatrach secured of oil and the totality of gas production. Libya’s goal was to achieve economic development based on the Algerian model of control over resources under Boumedienne (1965-1979).

In the 1980’s, Sonatrach and Noc signed cooperation agreements and Algeria and Libya signed an agreement for the creation of two joint ventures: the Arab Libyan-Algerian Exploration and Production Company (ALEPCO), in charge of oil exploration, and the Libyan-Algerian geophysics Company (LAGC). This cooperation resulted in the discovery of an oil deposit in Oued Meabia, in Hassi Messaoud’s field in North-Western Algeria, in 1994.

In 1999, Sonatrach and Noc envisaged the common exploration of Blocks, an area bordering the two countries, in the framework of a joint venture.²¹ Libya then showed interested in developing its transport network, which led to the signing of cooperation agreements with Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. Joint companies were created (the Arab Maghreb Company for Gas and Transportation, the Libyan Arab Algerian Exploration and Production Company, the Algerian Libyan Geophysics Company, and the Arab Engineering Consulting Company). Nevertheless, these agreements did not result in the emergence of a profitable partnership for both states. As their respective economies failed, Algeria and Libya now paradoxically find themselves competing with each other to supply Europe.

Both these countries have considerable gas reserves and made Europe their main outlet. But Libya is lagging behind in the development of its gas exploitation sector, as it only truly started in 1990, while Algeria began exploiting, producing and commercialising gas since the 1970’s. Libya’s deficit in the gas infrastructure is considerable in comparison to Algeria’s.

This being said, the Italian company Agip is working towards a rapprochement of the gas sector in North Africa through Agip North Africa and Middle East Ltd., with the goal of achieving convergence between Algerian and Libyan energy policies.²² Based on the French experience in Algeria, Italy hopes to become Libya’s new “godfather”, a goal for which it has considerable advantages. Through state-owned oil company Agip, Italy has been leading a privileged partnership with Libya for the past decades. Bearing in mind Europe’s

2. Algeria/Libya: A Non-complementary Future?

18 “Frontières de l’Europe”, Les carnets du CAP, Spring 2006, p. 83

19 Balta, Paul, Le Grand Maghreb : des indépendances à l’an 2000. Paris, La découverte, 1990.

20 Destane de Bernis, G., “La Libye et l’Algérie : stratégies de développement comparées”, Annuaire de l’Afrique du Nord, Paris, CNRS, 1971.

21 See “Algeria” in the Arab Oil and gas Directory, 2000.

22 In the gas sector, Agip, in cooperation with NOC, is the best-integrated company in the West Libya Gas Project. In 1999, an agreement was signed between NOC and AGIP (Agip North Africa) for the implementation of a 5.5 billion dollar investment, which consists of exporting Libyan gas to Italy via Sicily. See Mathaba.net news.

energetic needs, Italy is working in North Africa toward convergence between Algerian and Libyan gas suppliers.

Libya holds a clear interest in connecting a part of the gas fields to Algerian pipelines, but does Algeria hold any interest in the development of such synergy? If in the short term Algeria may be wary about the emergence of a second gas supplier in North Africa, in the long term it can exploit its dominant position and become a vital centre of gas export for Europe through the Euro-Mediterranean gas pipeline.

The construction of 1385 km of pipelines between Hassi R'Mel and Cordoba, in Spain, via Morocco, shows that the convergence of interests can prevail in spite of the conflicting relations between Algeria and Morocco. Furthermore, Libya and Algeria can both benefit from such a convergence in the international gas market. In light of past experiences in the oil sector, Sonatrach and Noc combined efforts to enhance their positions. In light of past experiences, one can anticipate that these companies will be as successful in the gas as in the oil sector.

The building of a Euro-Mediterranean space progressively constrains the countries of the south to put in place converging policies. The construction of the Euro-Mediterranean pipeline can be held as an example of the consequences that building a regional space can have on bilateral relations (in this case, between Morocco and Algeria).

Libya is a gas-supplying country integrated in the Euro-Mediterranean space, though not in the EMP. The ministerial statement following the Euro-Med energy forum in May 2003 stressed the need to complete the "Euro-Mediterranean gas ring" during the 2003-2006 period while reinforcing its support to the following projects²³:

- A gas pipeline supplying Spain and France from Algeria
- A gas pipeline supplying Italy and France from Algeria
- A gas pipeline supplying Italy from Libya (via Malta)
- A gas interconnection between Egypt, Libya and Tunisia

The elements working de facto for regional integration revolve around security and energy. Progressive integration of armed forces in a regional defence structure (NATO-Mediterranean dialogue) is in a position to ward off the spectre of a direct conflict in the region but not to bring about a real integration project. Similarly, the Euro-Mediterranean gas ring constrains countries to a minimum of entente so as to favour the transit of hydrocarbon toward Europe in the best conditions, but have no effect on a regional integration structure.

²³ Euromed Report, 23 May 2003. Available at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/publication.htm].

Seventeen years have passed since the AMU regional integration project was launched, but 60% of respondents still have a very vague impression of what it constitutes, while 19% have a negative view on it. None had a clear image of the AMU (0%). Furthermore, respondents seem to be aware of the fact that originally the project was meant to be an economic and human partnership, and yet 69% are unable of naming any of the AMU's achievements.

Nevertheless, the survey shows that people share certain beliefs about the region. Islam seems to transcend national and regional specific characteristics, as 30% consider it the Maghreb's most important symbol. For 20% language represents the second element uniting the region. Also, 41% hope that the AMU will work towards the "rapprochement of the peoples" of the region. 64% find the Maghreb forms a distinctive region symbolised by Islam, Arab language and a common culture. The feeling of belonging to a common region is strong as 64% accept defining themselves as North Africans, but are also proud of being "Algerian Muslims".

There appears to be a widespread opinion on the need for Algeria to integrate in a regional ensemble. During the colonial period, it stemmed from the fight against colonial dominance, while at the end of the 1980's it arose from the need for regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism. On the eve of the 21st century, globalisation is the scapegoat. According to this view, the impact of globalisation on North African States forces them to work toward regional integration. That being said, new bases for a regional integration project must urgently be found, inasmuch as 39% believe that war between North African states is possible.

The North African regional integration project is seen as a regional constraint for 30% of respondents, a feeling which can be explained by the perceived need to unite in the face of a changing international system. The idea was particularly stressed during the nondirective interviews with base militants of Algerian political parties conducted to complement the survey.

For instance, an FFS militant argues that

"[t]he world tends to coalesce at the economic, political and geostrategic level (...) and in this perspective, we will not succeed if we go at it alone".

An MSP (Hammas) militant shares the same reasoning when he states that

"[w]ith globalisation we are forced to coalesce, the whole world coalesces (...) the AMU countries negotiate individually, I'm mentioning the examples of the association agreements and the WTO. Yet in order to be powerful, Algeria needs a strong AMU (...)"

The use of the term "coalesce" clearly makes reference to the armed coalitions fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan under the US banner.

An En Nahda militant also shares the view that a nation-state, in particular Algeria, cannot thrive outside a regional context:

"I believe in one thing, that bearing in mind the world's future and the present context, continent-States and political groups are necessary. Our advantage is that, unlike Europeans, we share a common culture and language".

These views are also found among respondents. When asked which specific project they would vote for, 41% chose a free trade agreement between the Maghreb countries, 40% voted for Algeria's integration in the EU, 18% for a free trade agreement with Arab states²⁴, and 1% with the United States. In fact, 36% hope that, 25 years from now, North Africa will resemble the EU, in spite of the fact that the latter is seen to show little engagement toward the Maghreb; 48% even think that the EU invests little and 39% think that it doesn't invest at all in the region.

The EMP has so far failed to promote its engagement in the region but the EU is nevertheless seen as a role model. Thus, according to a MSP militant,

"The MSP believes that the AMU is important, it's the oumma's union (...) The AMU is a step toward the oumma, and we in Hammas believe that we must overcome our differences and move toward a EU-type of union".

III. Data Analysis

1. Regional Integration and Globalisation

²⁴ The Greater Arab Free Trade Exchange Area (GAFTA), February 1997.

A consensus seems to have been reached over the need to work toward regional integration. The view that “in light of [Algeria’s] means and richness it can go at it alone” is not shared by many, in spite of the preconceived notion about the benefits of oil-revenues on the autonomy of the state’s resources and its ability to work for the country’s development. Nevertheless, the respondents hold a view of their country as a state primarily concerned with internal matters. It is argued that “political and economic reform must be carried out” (36%) and that work must be done toward reconciliation, in the aftermath of the violence of the 1980’s (30%).

Only 21% think that the government is “working toward building” regional integration. This being said, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Algeria’s President, is perceived as the Algerian political leader most favourable to the AMU (53%); furthermore, 58% perceive the FLN as the political party most committed to building the AMU. Other parties feel that the AMU is a handicap for regional integration because it amputates North Africa of the plurality of its identity (“Amazighity”) and because instead of a democratic, it follows a bureaucratic process.

2. The Blockage of the AMU: The Western Sahara

For a minority of respondents, the reason for the AMU’s failure lies in its very foundations, which rest on the notion of Arabicity (“the AMU as a step toward the *oumma*”). For a militant of the FFS

“I oppose to the AMU’s acronym, please do not mention that any longer, I beg you (...)”.

As for a militant of the Worker’s Party,

“There are peoples in North Africa; we reject the regional and political ensemble represented by the AMU (...) the designation of an AMU must be let go, otherwise there will be no success (...). We are much more for the ENA (North African Star)”.

A strong majority feel that the blockage of the region is due to the Western Sahara conflict (74%), which paralyses relations between North Africa’s two main states, i.e. Algeria and Morocco. Respondents feel that “rulers” are to blame for the tension between Algeria and Morocco (58%) and that there is understanding between peoples of the two. In fact, 54% of respondents answered that Morocco is the North African country they feel closer to. Also, 36% stress that a war between the two countries is possible²⁵, and 38% think that the region needs “honest and competent rulers” to end the blockage.

In light of the increase of poverty in the region, and one of its natural consequences, namely migration, this problem seems unbearable. The region’s blockage penalized Algeria and Morocco much more than the other members of the AMU because of their demography and the failure to pursue economic development. Several surveys demonstrate that the oil manna has not been accompanied by better social conditions in Algeria, and that the growing power of the marijuana production is vital for hundreds of thousands of families in the Rif. The feeling that North African rulers will not give in on their diplomatic stances leads some to agree with a militant of the FLN, who argues that regional integration should be imposed:

“The EU should impose integration on this region, external pressure on the ruling regimes is necessary, but not on the population, faced with unemployment, misery and lack of housing. The social issue is there. People are asking for visas to leave (...) the *harragua* who endanger their lives and face barbed wire to escape from misery”.

An alternative to imposition is the hope to see democratization of the region, and, thus, a state of affairs where rulers take their population into account.

3. Democracy as the Way Out: The Creation of a North African Parliament

For 54% democracy is the element lacking the most in the Maghreb, followed by trust (31%). The demand for democracy is present throughout the findings of the survey, as is the idea that it is precisely the lack of democracy that explains the failure of regional integration, economic development and the perpetuation of border-related conflicts.

The lack of trust, dialogue and common projects based on common values help to explain the region’s current situation. Because of the discredit of the internal political scenery, 88% of respondents favour the creation of a democratically elected North African parliament. How can this wish be interpreted? Respondents feel that democratically elected members of parliament would be able to find solutions for the region’s problems through dialogue with their Moroccan counterparts. This parliament would put an end to the manipulation political rulers engage in.

²⁵ A study carried out by the Haut Commissariat au Plan of the Kingdom of Morocco on the “Perception of young Moroccans on Morocco in 2030” stresses that over 11 sections dealing with Morocco/Algeria relations, 8 evoke reconciliation and 3 mention “the break out of war between the two countries”. July 2006.

Thus, 35% would grant this parliament the right to implement projects (only rarely carried out by their government); 21% would allow it to have control over the governments' political decisions and 14% would entrust it with the protection of civil society.

The militants of Algerian political parties stress during the interviews that democracy is one of the imperatives to be fulfilled:

“Democratisation of the regimes in place, to install a real democracy” (MSP militant);

“Listen, Ait Ahmed belongs to a generation of men with Bourguiba and A. El Fassi, the quintessence of their thoughts was the union at all levels to decolonise. Until today, the FFS made it its vision for the liberation of authoritarian regimes. Yesterday's goal was to decolonise (...) today it is to bypass authoritarian regimes and install democracy.” (FFS militant)

“In the [party] bases the AMU is no longer talked about, and some militants have not even heard the acronym, let alone those that never went to school! Since 1989 nothing has been done, it's the starting point, nothing to start from. Until real democracy is in place (...) it's impossible for me, it can't be achieved. Until decision-makers are democrat, nothing can be achieved!” (FLN militant)

“With democracy we can have everything in the Maghreb.” (RCD militant)

Until there are democratic institutions (...) The people should be in power, this process will not take place from one day to another (...) we should consider a western type of democratisation, but specific to our context.” (El Islah militant)

Respondents feel that without democracy no basic change is possible. 58% believe that problems between Morocco and Algeria arise from the decision-makers' inability to get along and 35% point to history (especially colonisation) as a further element. The majority also feel that rulers must be replaced and that democracy should be put in place.

Even though the AMU is composed of five North African countries, Algerians feel more proximity with Morocco (54%) and Tunisia (36%), while Libya and Mauritania are the countries they feel furthest away from. When asked whether they would advise a relative to study or work in one of the AMU countries, 54% answered affirmatively: 35% would recommend studying in Tunisia and 19% would recommend working in Morocco. This tendency to migrate can be explained by the difficult economic situation in Algeria.

The image of Tunisia as a European country, being authoritarian and modern at the same time, is beginning to take shape. When making an assessment of the AMU, an FLN militant argued that

“from 1989 to 2006, [the assessment] is rather negative, (...). Borders are closed, Tunisia adopts a European-style regime; Khadafi constantly changes views and positions. The Sahara problem is ever present. Algeria adopts the same positions it did back in 1975, and the same goes for Morocco”.

Thus at the official level, there seems to have been no change, even though 78% of respondents favour reopening the border between Algeria and Morocco and 85% are in favour of a single currency (for 65% it should be the North African Dinar).

50% agree with the idea that Algeria's economic future is linked to the development of a regional integration zone. The paradox lies in the fact that 58% feel that the FLN is the party most favourable to the AMU and that Bouteflika (53%) is the Algerian ruler most favourable to the construction of a regional zone, whereas only 10% chose Chadli Bendjedid. These findings are obviously explained by the control held over the main media outlets that give the current President a disproportionate importance.

Also, a strong perception emerges from the survey of Algeria being “central” in the region. For 51%, a hypothetical North African parliament should be headquartered in Algeria because 71% feel that the country is very important to the AMU. Thus, one could think that the Algerian government would benefit in terms of diplomatic power from this scenario. Instead, only 14% think that Algeria joined the AMU on account of diplomatic interest.

4. Algeria and its Regional Environment

Main Findings

- Regional integration is perceived as being necessary for the region's political and economic development, particularly for Algeria;
- The region's blockage is not due to the Western Sahara conflict but to the North African rulers' inability to have smooth relations. The Sahara conflict is seen as a pretext for the two countries to ignore one another;
- Only regime democratisation is in a position to make way for regional integration;
- North African rulers, and thus Algerian rulers, are deemed incapable of developing relations based on trust, that in turn favour a constructive and consensual attitude to the common interests of the region;
- There is risk of a conflict between Algeria and Morocco;
- The EU must work harder toward achieving North African regional integration;
- The AMU is perceived as an organisation unable to respond to the new aspirations posed by democracy and identity claims. Mired (?) by past problems (border disputes, nationalism, regional leadership), the AMU is seen as an organisation disconnected from current global political trends;
- Unlike the EU experience with regional construction, in the Maghreb regional integration is awaited by the "people" but ignored by rulers who are not accountable to voters.

IV. Findings

I. Breakdown of Respondents Based on Age, Gender, Occupation and Level of Education

TOTAL	Number of people	%
TOTAL	80	100%
AGE	Number of people	%
Between 18 and 49 years	52	65,8%
Above 50 years	27	34,2%
No answer	1	1,3%
TOTAL	80	100%
Average age	40,7	
GENDER	Number of people	%
Male	56	70%
Female	24	30%
TOTAL	80	100%
SOCIAL CATEGORY	Number of people	%
Unemployed	12	15%
Manual worker	1	1%
Executive	35	44%
Farmer	9	11%
Shopkeeper	11	14%
Employee	12	15%
TOTAL	80	100%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION	Number of people	%
No studies	Number of people	1%
Elementary	Number of people	5%
Secondary	Number of people	31%
University	Number of people	60%
No answer	Number of people	3%
TOTAL	Number of people	100%
LANGUAGE	Number of people	%
Arab-speaking	69	86%
French-speaking	69	86%
Berber-speaking	28	35%
English-speaking	4	5%
What is your main information source?	Number of people	%
Press	52	65%
Television	63	79%
Radio	22	28%
Internet	23	29%
No answer	3	4%

Table 1

1. Do you know the AMU?	Number of people	%
YES	77	96%
NO	3	4%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 2

2. If so, how did you find out about it? How did you hear about it?	Number of people	%
Media	21	26%
Television	23	29%
Newspapers/Press	17	21%
AMU Summit in Zéralda	10	13%
Studies	6	8%
Other	4	5%
No answer/Don't know	8	10%

Table 3

3. Do you feel personally interested in the AMU or that the AMU concerns you?	Number of people	%
YES	61	76%
NO	18	23%
No answer	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%

Breakdown

3. Do you feel personally interested in the AMU or that the AMU concerns you?	Number of people	%
YES	61	76%
GENDER		
Male	43	54%
Female	18	23%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	40	50,6%
Above 50 years	21	26,6%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	6	8%
Manual worker	1	1%
Executive	28	35%
Farmer	6	8%
Shopkeeper	9	11%
Employee	11	14%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	1	1%
Elementary	4	5%
Secondary	18	23%
University	37	46%
No answer	1	1%

3. Do you feel personally interested in the AMU or that the AMU concerns you?	Number of people	%
NO	18	23%
GENDER		
Male	12	15%
Female	6	8%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	12	15,2%
Above 50 years	5	6,3%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	6	8%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	6	8%
Farmer	3	4%
Shopkeepers	2	3%
Employee	1	1%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	0	0%
Secondary	7	9%
University	10	13%
No answer	1	1%
4. Which countries are members of the AMU?		
	Number of people	%
Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania	50	63%
Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, SADR	6	8%
Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya	6	8%
Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, SADR	2	3%
Other answers	12	15%
Don't know	4	5%
TOTAL	80	100%
5. Do you know whether Algeria ever held the chairmanship of the AMU?		
	Number of people	%
YES	60	75%
NO	19	24%
No answer	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%
5. Do you know whether Algeria ever held the chairmanship of the AMU?		
	Number of people	%
YES	60	75%
GENDER		
Male	45	56%
Female	15	19%

Table 4

Table 5

Breakdown

AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	38	48,1%
Above 50 years	21	26,6%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	10	13%
Manual worker	1	1%
Executive	27	34%
Farmer	6	8%
Shopkeeper	9	11%
Employee	7	9%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	4	5%
Secondary	19	24%
University	37	46%
No answer	0	0%
5. Do you know whether Algeria ever held the chairmanship of the AMU?		
	Number of people	%
NO	19	24%
GENDER		
Male	11	14%
Female	8	10%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	13	16,5%
Above 50 years	6	7,6%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	2	3%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	7	9%
Farmer	3	4%
Shopkeeper	2	3%
Employee	5	6%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	1	1%
Elementary	0	0%
Secondary	5	6%
University	11	14%
No answer	2	3%
6. Do you know which country currently holds the chairmanship of the AMU?		
	Number of people	%
YES	33	41%
NO	43	54%
No answer	4	5%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 6

Breakdown

6. Do you know which country currently holds the chairmanship of the AMU?	Number of people	%
YES	33	41%
GENDER		
Male	28	35%
Female	5	6%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	23	29,1%
Above 50 years	10	12,7%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	4	5%
Manual worker	1	1%
Executives	16	20%
Farmer	3	4%
Shopkeeper	5	6%
Employee	4	5%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	3	4%
Secondary	9	11%
University	21	26%
No answer	0	0%
6. Do you know which country currently holds the chairmanship of the AMU?	Number of people	%
NO	43	54%
GENDER		
Male	25	31%
Female	18	23%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	27	34,2%
Above 50 years	15	19%
No answer	1	1,3%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	7	9%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executives	18	23%
Farmer	4	5%
Shopkeeper	6	8%
Employee	8	10%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	1	1%
Elementary	0	0%
Secondary	15	19%
University	26	33%
No answer	1	1%

Table 7

Breakdown

7. In your opinion, what is the AMU's image in Algeria?		
	Number of people	%
Positive	16	20%
Negative	15	19%
Unclear	48	60%
Clear	0	0%
No answer	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%
7. In your opinion, what is the AMU's image in Algeria?		
	Number of people	%
POSITIVE	16	20%
GENDER		
Male	10	13%
Female	6	8%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	7	8,9%
Above 50 years	8	10,1%
No answer	1	1,3%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	3	4%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	5	6%
Farmer	3	4%
Shopkeeper	4	5%
Employee	1	1%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	1	1%
Secondary	7	9%
University	8	10%
No answer	0	0%
7. In your opinion, what is the AMU's image in Algeria?		
	Number of people	%
NEGATIVE	15	19%
GENDER		
Male	14	18%
Female	1	1%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	8	10,1%
Above 50 years	7	8,9%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	3	4%
Manual worker	1	1%
Executive	4	5%

Farmer	3	4%
Shopkeeper	3	4%
Employee	1	1%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	1	1%
Elementary	1	1%
Secondary	7	9%
University	6	8%
No answer	0	0%
7. In your opinion, what is the AMU's image in Algeria?		
	Number of people	%
UNCLEAR	48	60%
GENDER		
Male	31	39%
Female	17	21%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	37	46,8%
Above 50 years	11	13,9%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	6	8%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	26	33%
Farmer	2	3%
Shopkeeper	4	5%
Employee	10	13%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	2	3%
Secondary	11	14%
University	34	43%
No answer	1	1%
8. In your opinion, what is the goal of the AMU?		
	Number of people	%
A partnership in the fields of politics and security	12	15%
An economic and financial partnership	42	53%
A cultural, social and human partnership	23	29%
No answer	3	4%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 8

Breakdown

8. In your opinion, what is the goal of the AMU?	Number of people	%
A partnership in the fields of politics and security	12	15%
GENDER		
Male	8	10%
Female	4	5%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	6	7,6%
Above 50 years	6	7,6%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	1	1%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	6	8%
Farmer	2	3%
Shopkeeper	3	4%
Employee	0	0%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	1	1%
Secondary	5	6%
University	6	8%
No answer	0	0%
8. In your opinion, what is the goal of the AMU?		
An economic and financial partnership	42	53%
GENDER		
Male	30	38%
Female	12	15%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	29	36,7%
Above 50 years	12	15,2%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	7	9%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	18	23%
Farmer	3	4%
Shopkeeper	6	8%
Employee	8	10%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	1	1%
Secondary	12	15%
University	29	36%
No answer	0	0%

8. In your opinion, what is the goal of the AMU?	Number of people	%
A cultural, social and human partnership	23	29%
GENDER		
Male	15	19%
Female	8	10%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	17	21,5%
Above 50 years	6	7,6%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	4	5%
Manual worker	1	1%
Executive	11	14%
Farmer	1	1%
Shopkeeper	2	3%
Employee	4	5%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	1	1%
Secondary	8	10%
University	13	16%
No answer	1	1%
9. Are you satisfied with the policies of the AMU?		
+Very satisfied	2	3%
Satisfied	4	5%
Somewhat/Not that satisfied	15	19%
Not satisfied	16	20%
-Not at all satisfied	37	46%
No answer	6	8%
TOTAL	80	100%
10. What is Algeria's position inside the AMU?		
+Very important	57	71%
Important enough	12	15%
-Not important	10	13%
Don't know	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%
11. In your opinion, why did Algeria join the AMU?		
Economic interest	25	31%
Diplomatic interest	11	14%
Historic reason	19	24%
Regional constraint	24	30%
Don't know	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 9

Table 10

Table 11

Table 12

12. What do you expect from the AMU?	Number of people	%
Nothing/not much	14	18%
The creation of a regional market	27	34%
Free trade	6	8%
A rapprochement between peoples	33	41%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 13

13. Can you name at least three achievements of the AMU?	Number of people	%
Creation of a bank	5	6%
Trade in farming products	4	5%
A parliament for the Maghreb	4	5%
A motorway	4	5%
Multiple answers	6	8%
None/Don't know	55	69%
No answer	6	8%

Table 14

14. Is Algeria's future tied to the success of the AMU?	Number of people	%
YES	40	50%
NO	37	46%
No answer	3	4%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 15

15. In your opinion, what are Algeria's priorities nowadays?	Number of people	%
To work toward building the AMU	17	21%
To try to join the EU	9	11%
To implement political and economic reform	29	36%
To reconcile in the aftermath of the violence	24	30%
No answer	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 16

16. In your opinion, which Algerian political party is most favourable to the AMU?	Number of people	%
FLN	46	58%
FFS	10	13%
PT	0	0%
RCD	1	1%
RND	3	4%
El Islah/MRN/MI	2	3%
Hamas/HMS/MSP	1	1%
FNA	0	0%
PRA	0	0%
MEN	0	0%
MDA	0	0%
No answer	17	21%
TOTAL	80	100%

Breakdown

16. In your opinion, which Algerian political party is most favourable to the AMU?	Number of people	%
FLN	46	58%
GENDER		
Male	37	46%
Female	9	11%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	30	38%
Above 50 years	15	19%
No answer	1	1,3%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
Unemployed	6	8%
Manual worker	1	1%
Executive	20	25%
Farmer	5	6%
Shopkeeper	6	8%
Employee	8	10%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	2	3%
Secondary	18	23%
University	25	31%
No answer	1	1%
17. Which Algerian leader is most favourable to the AMU?		
	Number of people	%
Bouteflika	42	53%
Ibrahimi	3	4%
Houari Boumediene	3	4%
Chadli Bendjedid	8	10%
Belkhadem	3	4%
Boudhiaf	2	3%
Others	6	8%
None/Don't know	10	13%
No answer	3	4%
TOTAL	80	100%
18. In your opinion, which North African ruler, past or present, is the best symbol of a united Maghreb?		
	Number of people	%
Bouteflika	27	34%
Houari Boumediene	7	9%
M Kadhafi	6	8%
Zine el Abidine Ben Ali	2	3%
Hassan II	2	3%
Chadhli Bendjedid	2	3%
Others	8	10%

Table 17

Table 18

II. Explanation

Table 1

Breakdown

None/ Don't know	19	24%
No answer	7	9%
TOTAL	80	100%
1. In your opinion, what constitutes the main obstacle to the AMU's development?		
The Sahara problem	26	33%
The rulers	25	31%
Relationships, lack of trust	9	11%
Multiple answers	15	19%
No answer	5	6%
TOTAL	80	100%
1. In your opinion, what constitutes the main obstacle to the AMU's development?		
The Sahara problem	26	33%
GENDER		
Male	19	24%
Female	7	9%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	19	24,1%
Above 50 years	6	7,6%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	3	4%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	15	19%
Farmer	3	4%
Shopkeeper	1	1%
Employee	4	5%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	1	1%
Secondary	6	8%
University	19	24%
No answer	0	0%
1. In your opinion, what is the main obstacle to the AMU's development?		
The rulers	25	31%
GENDER		
Male	19	24%
Female	6	8%

AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	16	20,3%
Above 50 years	9	11,4%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	6	8%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	8	10%
Farmer	5	6%
Shopkeeper	4	5%
Employee	3	4%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	1	1%
Elementary	3	4%
Secondary	6	8%
University	14	18%
No answer	1	1%
1. In your opinion, what is the main obstacle to the AMU's development?		
	Number of people	%
Relationships, lack of trust	9	11%
GENDER		
Male	5	6%
Female	4	5%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	4	5,1%
Above 50 years	5	6,3%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	1	1%
Manual worker	1	1%
Executive	3	4%
Farmer	2	3%
Shopkeeper	2	3%
Employee	0	0%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	0	0%
Secondary	4	5%
University	4	5%
No answer	1	1%

Table 2

2. Among the following factors, which one is the greatest obstacle to the building of the AMU?	Number of people	%
The Western Sahara problem	59	74%
Qadhafi's Libya	1	1%
Morocco	5	6%
The Algerian army	1	1%
A problem tied to the functioning of the institution	9	11%
No answer	3	4%
Other	2	3%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 3

3. What do the Maghreb countries lack the most?	Number of people	%
Democracy	43	54%
A project for the future	10	13%
More trust	25	31%
No answer	1	1%
Other	1	1%
Total	80	100%

Breakdown

3. What do the Maghreb countries lack the most?	Number of people	%
Democracy	43	54%
GENDER		
Male	34	43%
Female	9	11%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	22	27,8%
Above 50 years	21	26,6%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	5	6%
Manual worker	1	1%
Executive	20	25%
Farmer	5	6%
Shopkeeper	9	11%
Employee	3	4%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	3	4%
Secondary	14	18%
University	25	31%
No answer	1	1%

3. What do the Maghreb countries lack the most?	Number of people	%
A project for the future	10	13%
GENDER		
Male	6	8%
Female	4	5%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	10	12,7%
Above 50 years	0	0%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	2	3%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	5	6%
Farmer	0	0%
Shopkeeper	0	0%
Employee	3	4%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	0	0%
Secondary	3	4%
University	7	9%
No answer	0	0%
3. What do the Maghreb countries lack the most?		
More trust	25	31%
GENDER		
Male	15	19%
Female	10	13%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	19	24,1%
Above 50 years	5	6,3%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	5	6%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	9	11%
Farmer	4	5%
Shopkeeper	1	1%
Employee	6	8%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	1	1%
Elementary	1	1%
Secondary	7	9%
University	15	19%
No answer	1	1%

Table 4

4. If you had to vote for a project, which one would you choose?	Number of people	%
Algeria's integration in the EU	32	40%
A free-trade agreement with the United States	1	1%
A free-trade agreement with the Arab States	14	18%
A free-trade agreement with the Maghreb countries	33	41%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 5

5. How would you characterize the AMU project?	Number of people	%
Bureaucratic	15	19%
Useful/profitable/encouraging	38	48%
Utopia	12	15%
Useless	8	10%
No answer	2	3%
Other	5	6%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 6

6. Would you advise a relative to study or work in one of the AMU countries?	Number of people	%
YES	43	54%
NO	36	45%
No answer	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%

If so, which one?	Study		Work	
	Number of people	%	Number of people	%
Morocco	15	19%	7	9%
Tunisia	28	35%	22	28%
Libya	3	4%	14	18%
Mauritania	5	6%	0	0%

	Number of people	%
No answer	32	40%

Table 7

7. Do you think you are sufficiently informed by the media on the decisions taken by the AMU?	Number of people	%
YES	15	19%
NO	62	78%
No answer	3	4%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 8

8. Have you ever been to one of the AMU countries?	Number of people	%
YES	40	50%
NO	39	49%
No answer	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%

If so, to which one(s)?	Number of people	%
Morocco	23	29%
Tunisia	33	41%
Libya	7	9%
Mauritania	0	0%

Table 9

9. Which country of the AMU do you feel closer to?	Number of people	%
Morocco	43	54%
Tunisia	29	36%
Libya	2	3%
Mauritania	3	4%
None	1	1%
No answer	2	3%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 10

10. Among the countries of the AMU, which do you feel further away from/ have fewer affinities with?	Number of people	%
Morocco	9	11%
Tunisia	7	9%
Libya	19	24%
Mauritania	42	53%
None	1	1%
No answer	2	3%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 11

11. Is a war between AMU member states possible?	Number of people	%
YES	31	39%
NO	48	60%
No answer	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%

If so, between which ones?	Number of people	%
Algeria/Morocco	29	36%
Algeria/Tunisia	0	0%
Algeria/Libya	2	3%
Algeria/ Mauritania	0	0%
Don't know	1	1%

III. Solution

Table 1

1. Would you define yourself as "Maghrebian"?	Number of people	%
YES	54	68%
NO	19	24%
Berber/Kabyl/Amazigh	4	5%
No answer	3	4%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 2

2. In your opinion, what symbolises the most the Maghreb?	Number of people	%
Language	14	18%
Religion	23	29%
History	9	11%
Culture	14	18%
Its geographic position	8	10%
Its "Amazighity"/Berberity	7	9%
Other answers	1	1%
No answer	4	5%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 3

3. How would you characterize the Maghreb region?	Number of people	%
Rich	70	88%
Poor	1	1%
Neither rich or poor	8	10%
No answer	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%

Breakdown

3. How would you characterize the Maghreb region?	Number of people	%
Riche	70	88%
GENDER		
Male	52	65%
Female	18	23%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	47	59,5%
Above 50 years	23	29,1%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	10	13%
Manual worker	1	1%
Executive	31	39%
Farmer	8	10%
Shopkeeper	9	11%
Employee	11	14%

LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	1	1%
Elementary	4	5%
Secondary	22	28%
University	41	51%
No answer	2	3%
3. How would you characterize	Number of people	%
Neither rich or poor	8	10%
GENDER		
Male	4	5%
Female	4	5%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	4	5,1%
Above 50 years	3	3,8%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	1	1%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	3	4%
Farmer	1	1%
Shopkeeper	2	3%
Employee	1	1%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	0	0%
Secondary	2	3%
University	6	8%
No answer	0	0%
4. What would you like the Maghreb to resemble in 25 years?	Number of people	%
The EU	25	31%
The United States	8	10%
The countries in South-East Asia	2	3%
A unified country	8	10%
Better than the others	8	10%
Other answers	23	29%
No answer	6	8%
TOTAL	80	100%
5. Are you in favour of the reopening of the Algerian-Moroccan border?	Number of people	%
YES	62	78%
NO	17	21%
No answer	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 4

Table 5

Breakdown

5. Are you in favour of the reopening of the Algerian-Moroccan border?		
	Number of people	%
YES	62	78%
GENDER		
Male	42	53%
Female	20	25%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	39	49,4%
Above 50 years	22	27,8%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	8	10%
Manual worker	1	1%
Executive	30	38%
Farmer	8	10%
Shopkeeper	6	8%
Employee	9	11%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	1	1%
Elementary	4	5%
Secondary	18	23%
University	37	46%
No answer	2	3%
5. Are you in favour of the reopening of the Algerian-Moroccan border?		
	Number of people	%
NO	17	21%
GENDER		
Male	14	18%
Female	3	4%
AGE		
Between 18 and 49 years	12	15,2%
Above 50 years	5	6,3%
SOCIAL CATEGORY		
Unemployed	4	5%
Manual worker	0	0%
Executive	4	5%
Farmer	1	1%
Shopkeeper	5	6%
Employee	3	4%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
No studies	0	0%
Elementary	0	0%
Secondary	7	9%
University	10	13%
No answer	0	0%

6. Are you in favour of the creation of a democratically elected Parliament for the Maghreb?	Number of people	%
YES	70	88%
NO	8	10%
Don't know	2	3%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 6

7. What would its prerogatives be (its powers)?	Number of people	%
Execute projects	28	35%
Defend civil society	11	14%
Control political decisions	17	21%
A negotiation instrument at the international level	1	1%
No answer / Don't know	23	29%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 7

8. In which city would you like it to be headquartered?	Number of people	%
Algeria	41	51%
Tunisia	6	8%
Morocco	5	6%
Any/Doesn't matter which	15	19%
Rotating chairmanship	4	5%
Others	2	3%
No answer	7	9%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 8

9. Would you like a single currency to exist in North Africa?	Number of people	%
YES	68	85%
NO	11	14%
No answer	1	1%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 9

If so, which one?	Number of people	%
A single currency	52	65%
National currency	7	9%
Berber currency	1	1%
Any of them/Doesn't matter which	5	6%
No answer	13	16%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 10

10. How do you explain the problems between Algeria and Morocco?	Number of people	%
History	28	35%
Rulers	46	58%
Difference between the peoples	0	0%
Other	2	3%
No answer	4	5%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 11

11. In your opinion, what does oil represent for Algeria?	Number of people	%
Good luck	22	28%
Bad luck	2	3%
A badly used resource	54	68%
No answer	2	3%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 12

12. What does the AMU need in order to progress?	Number of people	%
Honest and competent rulers	30	38%
Greater confidence	4	5%
Greater transparency	1	1%
Economic development	11	14%
To solve the Western Sahara problem	3	4%
Democracy	11	14%
Better coordination	12	15%
No answer	8	10%
TOTAL	80	100%

Table 13

13. In your opinion, does the EU invest sufficiently in the AMU?	Number of people	%
A lot	7	9%
A little	38	48%
Not at all	31	39%
No answer	4	5%
TOTAL	80	100%

- The rather negative results of this study in what concerns regional integration in the Maghreb overshadow the relevant achievements that were made, particularly in the field of energy, where concrete projects have been brought on the way –projects that contribute, in fact, to greater energy security in Europe.
- The study mentions the figure of 3% and thus argues that economic exchanges within the Maghreb were insignificant. At the same time, however, it does not address the increasing intra-Maghrebi investments, in particular Libyan and Tunisian investments in Algeria.
- The study omits any reference to the democratic progress that was made in Algeria in principle and that permitted the return to stability.
- The study considers the Western Sahara conflict as the main obstacle to integration. Yet, it does neither address the fact that the conflict already existed when the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) was created, nor does it mention that the conflict was already taken care of by the UN.

With this in view, one cannot pretend objectively that Algeria has instrumentalised the Sahara conflict to serve its own political interests; instead, it goes without saying that the Algerian people, for obvious historical reasons, are attached to the principle of self-determination, in accordance with international laws.

- The term “civil war”, used to describe the situation that prevailed in Algeria during the last decade, is inappropriate to say the least, as Algeria, like other countries nowadays, had witnessed a wave of terrorist attacks, whose international ramifications have been proven.
- The process of building a unified Maghreb should not be only measured by actions states have taken. Instead, at the level of civil society, a real exchange and cooperation dynamics exists and is, from my point of view, carrying high hopes for the future.

Comment on Region Integration in the Maghreb

BY LOTFI BOUMGHAR

Methodological Appendix

About the Survey

The goal of the study was to dwell on individual perceptions about the AMU in Algeria. On the basis of answers to a questionnaire conducted with a sample of 90 individuals, the survey proposed to analyse the ways in which individuals acquired knowledge about the AMU and what their views on the organisation are.

This survey rests on empirical data collected and analysed according to different methods. The methodology adopted at the outset implied, on the one hand, a high level of generalisation, but also that specific attention would be paid to images and perceptions about the AMU at all levels of the individuals' experience, including their personal interest in this topic. This required a work of observation mixing the two levels of analysis.

The Context of the Research

The fact that the period during which the survey was conducted was marked by Hezbollah's raid on Israel and the Israeli attack on Lebanon must be pointed out. The constant flow of information in the cafes or at home permanently reminded the respondents of this topic, eliciting a militarist vision of the world where rhetoric on strategy and force prevails.

Respondents very often directly evoked the conflict, especially with regards to the question "Is a war between North African states possible?" Many respondents did not hesitate to answer affirmatively, explaining that nowadays "everything seems possible" and that the situation in Lebanon, once again, amply demonstrates that argument.

Because this survey questioned the respondents on their personal views about the current situation (the situation in the Maghreb nowadays) but also inquired about outlooks on the future, it is not surprising that reactions on the situation in the Lebanon tended to homogenise perspectives on the AMU. The ideas shed by respondents on the Lebanese situation indicated the implicit link between the Maghreb and the Middle East. The conflict brought about a wave of solidarity, and feelings of vexation, helplessness and disenchantment that considerably influenced the image of the Maghreb when the survey was conducted.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were circulated between the beginning of July and the end of August 2006 by three researchers and an IT technician: Kamel Cheklat, an Algerian PhD candidate in the political science department of the Paris 8 University, conducting research for a comparative study of democratisation trajectories in Algeria and Morocco between 1989 and 2006; Abdelkader Toumi, a philosophy lecturer at the ENS in Algiers and also a PhD candidate in sociology working on a comparative study of the logics of globalisation in Europe and in the Maghreb countries; Alexandra Poli, who holds a PhD in sociology and is an associate at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, was in charge of the methodological coordination and the circulation of the questionnaire among approximately ten women. Maria Rendon, an IT technician, was in charge of the treatment of the collected data.

Circulation instructions were drafted to guarantee the coherence of the sample. For instance, each pollster was asked to report all relevant information on each questionnaire, such as the way respondents were contacted and approached and (ex.: telephone; face-to-face), how each person reacted to the proposition (immediate acquiescence, hesitation, refusal, refusal or doubts due to lack of interest or lack of knowledge, or if they expressed the feeling that they were not competent to discuss the topic).

Each questionnaire was conducted through face-to-face interviews. The fact that the three researchers involved in the interviews have a different knowledge of the Algerian society must be singled out, because it allowed the data collection to be diversified. The two Algerian researchers were able to circulate the questionnaire among several people, whereas as a foreigner with little knowledge of the Algerian reality, the French researcher was able to gain her interlocutors' trust and make them feel comfortable when discussing the AMU.

In order to remain faithful to the national demographic structure, the two Algerian researchers were instructed to interview an equal number of men and women, and of individuals under and above 35 years of age. Furthermore, the goal of the study was to interview individuals from a wide array of professions and professional categories.

During the first phase of the study, the two Algerian researchers submitted the questionnaires to seventy individuals in Algiers, Boumerdès and Tizi Ouzon (a large majority of which were from Algiers). The interview location could vary according to the availability and preference of the respondent: a classroom for a teacher at a training centre, a mosque for an unemployed person after prayer time, an office for employees and executives, or even the respondent's home. The respondents were generally approached through mutual acquaintances. It must be noted though that conducting a survey in Algeria, perhaps more so than elsewhere in the Maghreb, requires a relationship based on trust. Nevertheless, the choice of the respondents was random in as much as it depended on the opportunities presented to the research team.

During a second phase, the two researchers conducted ten individual semi-directive interviews with political militants or sympathizers affiliated with the main Algerian political groups. The goal of this was to set out to deepen the linkages between the political participation variable and the AMU's image.

Finally, the study's coordinator circulated the questionnaire among approximately ten women in order to determine whether the gender variable influences views about the AMU.

Through its three main sections (opinion, explanation and solution), the questionnaire articulated different approaches allowing both to evaluate how much individuals know of the AMU and to detect different forms of interest as regards the organization, to touch upon the main elements responsible for stalling the integration of North Africa and to envisage solutions for the Maghreb's future. How do individuals experience and what do they think about the AMU? Does this supranational (it is strictly intergovernmental to date!) entity affect their experience? The questionnaire also included a section, the goal of which was to identify the respondent in terms of social category (according to age, gender, level of education, information sources used). In total, respondents were asked to provide answers to 44 questions.

Note was taken of the fact that because of the lack of a 'survey culture' in Algeria respondents received questions on the topic and the goal of this study. Nevertheless, once these aspects were clarified respondents gladly engaged in the question-answer game.

With the exception of a certain number of refusals (from farmers, both because of the initiative in itself and the topic of the survey, seen as vague, and from women, less inclined to answer to a male researcher outside working hours), the great majority of the persons approached agreed to answer the questionnaire. The hesitation and resistance to participate in the survey appears to have stemmed more from the topic in question than from the method employed by the study. A few respondents feared not knowing how to provide "good answers" because of their lack of knowledge about the AMU, which led a "no opinion" option to be included in the range of possible answers.

Initial reactions to this study generally reflected a detachment toward the AMU that can be explained by a certain resignation or lassitude on the limited knowledge most had about the functioning of the institution, but also a general distancing from politics (this last cause may be found namely in younger people, in the 20-25 age group).

As for the semi-directive interviews with political party militants, two refusals were reported, one from an RCD militant invoking the hierarchical structure of the party and aligning himself with the opinion conveyed by the party spokesperson, and a second one from an elected militant of the Workers Party, in a similar situation.

Even though the questionnaire method consists of choosing among closed answers, researchers noted that most respondents were willing to express more freely and to initiate and deepen a discussion. Each interview could thus last between 25 minutes and one hour. The respondents did not hesitate to comment and justify their answers, thus giving the meeting the form of a semi-directive interview.

Respondents willingly answered general questions on the AMU but were more hesitant or declared not to have an opinion as soon as the questions touched upon the policies of the AMU, its accomplishments and functioning. For instance, questions 6 and 7 in section 3 on the hypothetical creation of a North African parliament and its powers raised certain doubts and hesitations from respondents before they were able to answer.

Reactions to the Survey

Data Analysis

The often ambivalent character of answers also reflects the dual image of the AMU. Indeed, rather than judging on the positive or negative nature of the AMU using the present tense, respondents often used the conditional, through which they expressed a mix of strong hope and disappointment. For instance, researchers had difficulties in eliciting a straightforward “yes” or “no” on question 3 of the opinion section (“do you personally feel interested in or concerned by the AMU?”). A 29 year-old woman working in the tourism sector stated, “yes, the AMU interests me as long as it becomes more solid and proper laws are in place”.

By making extensive comments to answers and by going beyond the framework of the questionnaire, many respondents demonstrated the difficulties they had in discussing the AMU, which was seen as an important but relatively virtual topic. All respondents acknowledged the existence of the AMU but many added from the outset their limited knowledge on it (“I’ve heard about it”, “a little”, “only superficially”).

More generally, the tendency among many respondents to direct the questionnaire toward a less directive interview was also a way of placing the AMU back in the context of their concerns and personal lives. In this respect, conducting a study on such a topic may yield the impression of attributing too much importance to something that is not part of the individuals’ daily lives. Respondents under the age of 30, for instance, proved to be particularly concerned about their professional future. Because of this, this study about the AMU must not be dissociated from life tales or personal histories evoked during the questionnaire.

Representativity Biases

In spite of the instructions given upon circulation, the sample gathered at the end of the survey contains several representativity biases. This is due, first of all, to the relatively small number of respondents, which amount to 90 persons. Among the set of factors under analysis, this research project meant to draw particular attention on individual approaches to the AMU. In this sense, this work is less a response to a demand for representativity than to the wish to evaluate the degree of reflexivness of individuals once the AMU topic is mentioned.

Mobile Socio-Professional Categories

In order to obtain a diverse sample six socio-professional groups were differentiated, (farmers, shopkeepers, manual workers, employees, executives and unemployed). The “employee” and “executive” statuses cover multiple areas. Indeed, employees in the service, trade and catering sectors were contacted, as well as in the construction business and in hospitals.

Executives, both men and women, are over-represented in this study, as they account for 37% of the sample. However, based on the activity sector category, the sample structure is relatively representative because the majority concerns the trade, services and administration sectors, which accounted for 55% of the labour force in Algeria in the last trimester of 2005. Furthermore, the percentage of unemployed in the sample amounts to 13.7%, close to the national unemployment rate (14.8%) among the urban labour force in the last trimester of 2005.

Women (21% of the sample) are under-represented, but are slightly over-represented if one takes into account the percentage of women in urban labour force, which reached 17.7% in 2005.

Lastly, the sample is essentially composed of people holding degrees, among them executives, as well as traders, employees and unemployed. In order to understand this representativity bias one must bear in mind the element of professional mobility. Among the shopkeeper category we also found a former university lecturer, a former civil servant and a former army official.

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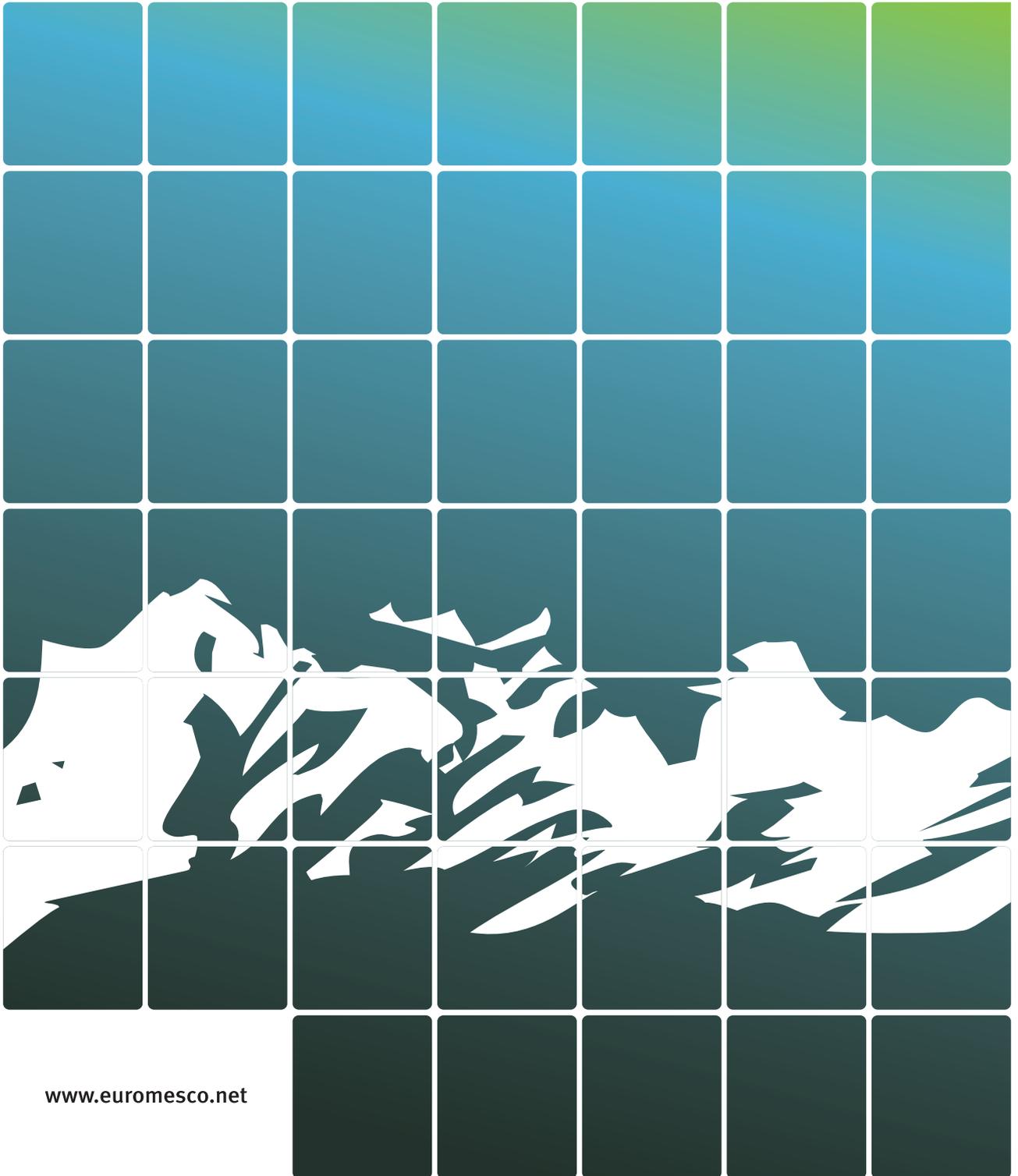
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