The 'Subaltern' Foreign Policies of North African Countries: Old and New Responses to Economic Dependence, Regional Insecurity and Domestic Political Change[i]

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Abstract

This article introduces the special issue by explaining why researching change and continuity in the foreign policies of North African states is relevant in spite of these countries' peripheral and 'subaltern' position within the global system. It situates the special issue's content in the context of the extant academic literature on the foreign policies of dependent/Third World/Global South countries, the foreign policies of MENA states and the consequences of the 2011 Arab uprisings in terms of international relations. It then moves on to discuss the case study selection by outlining key commonalities and differences between Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt in terms of historical, political and economic foreign policy determinants. The country case studies each focus on a particular level of analysis, from the global – Tunisia's financial predicaments and foreign debt negotiations – through the (sub)regional – Egypt's relationship of necessity with Saudi Arabia, Algeria's half-hearted policies towards the conflicts in Libya and Mali – to the domestic sphere – Morocco's power balance between the monarchy and the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) heading the government, Libya's extreme state weakness and internal power competition among proliferating private actors –, reaching also the deeper non-state societal level –

1

Mauritania's new forms of social activism questioning the official religious identity and the socio-political makeup of the state. The last part of the introduction critically relates the empirical findings of the special issue to theoretical debates on subalternity in International Relations and Mohammed Ayoob's subaltern realism in particular.

Keywords: foreign policy, North Africa, subalternity, dependence, subaltern realism, Arab uprisings

Introduction

So what if King Mohammed VI of Morocco goes to Moscow? Why does it matter? What does it change? Mainstream scholarship tends to care little about the international action of states that are subordinate, peripheral and relatively disempowered, lying certainly outside the Euro-American core of a still Western-centric global order. It only recalls their existence in three types of often interrelated instances: when these states are the targets of the action of the any of *big guys* of international politics, when they become involved in major crises and armed conflicts with regional and global spillover, and when they provide appropriate case studies to test hypotheses or illustrate theories. While the latter academic-driven interest is legitimate, it remains problematic insofar as it treats the selected country 'cases' as means to an end rather than ends in themselves. For example, some scholars working on/in the Middle East have questioned this political geography of knowledge production pointing out that the discipline of International Relations (IR) tends to discuss the politics of this part of the world and the states that make it up chiefly in the form of 'carefully selected examples (…) employed to test hypotheses and substantiate theoretical premises (…) as the ramifications of developments happening *elsewhere*, thus minimising the role of actors and processes operating within the region' (Tansel and Hoffmann 2016).

This special issue on the 'subaltern' foreign policies of North African countries starts from the belief that each and all of these cases matter by themselves, irrespective of how hidden or visible they might appear at each point in time in the context of the big global picture. North African foreign policies matter to the ruling authorities of each state, to the rest of its domestic political, economic and social actors, and to its population as a whole, as well as to neighbouring countries, to regional systems of variable geometry – on different overlapping scales – and sometimes even to other parts of the world that are far afield. In more academic terms, looking at the *invisible cases* that multiply all over the world can be claimed to be almost a moral imperative for international studies, which have long betrayed their inherently global aims and scope by '[privileging] the experiences, interests, and contemporary dilemmas of a certain portion of the society of states at the expense of the experiences, interests, and contemporary dilemmas of the large majority of states' (Ayoob 2002: 29). The need to redress this paradoxical anomaly has been the subject of several debates, from Mohammed Ayoob's call to bring the then-called 'Third World' into mainstream IR in the 1980s to recently growing interest in so-called 'non-Western IR' (Acharya and Buzan 2007, 2010; Bilgin 2008), 'post-Western IR' (Shani 2008; Vasilaki 2012) and 'global IR' (Acharya 2014a, 2014b; see also Chimni and Mallavarapu 2012; Messari, Tickner and Ling 2018).

The problem with much of this literature aiming to make room for the Global South in international studies is that it continues to explicitly or implicitly rely on binary distinctions or dichotomies (North vs. South, West vs. non-West, or West vs. the rest) which fall short of making justice to a reality characterised by hybridity and full of grey areas. In fact, North Africa is one of those parts of the world that tend to fall in the cracks of conventional geopolitical categories, which might have contributed to its particular invisibility. Admittedly, as a general premise, in international politics 'there are no

"natural" or "real" regions out there to be discovered' (Ferabolli, 2015: 22) and all geopolitical groupings or labels are similarly invented/constructed, *political* and ultimately problematic (Bilgin 2004). Still, it can be argued that North Africa belongs, like Central and Eastern Europe, Turkey and others, to the particularly challenging group of 'liminal' spaces that are 'betwixt and between' in both physical and identity terms (Mälksoo 2012). From its positional in-betweenness, it struggles not to be seen as the little brother of the Middle East within the horizontal construction of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as a region that has prevailed for decades, if not centuries. At the same time, North Africa's intimate proximity to Europe, by choice or by necessity, is inherently contentious as part of the legacy of colonialism and the product of post-colonial dependence. In sum, this liminal space looks like *not* quite the proper Middle East, *not* fully African and certainly at but *outside* the exclusive borders of Europe – 'on the outside of Europe looking in' (White 2001).

In empirical terms, this special issue on North African foreign policies directly builds on previous work by the two guest editors, Miguel Hernando de Larramendi and Irene Fernández-Molina (2016) on 'The Evolving Foreign Policies of North African States (2011-2014)'. That paper explored the impact of the 2011 Arab uprisings on the foreign policies of the states ranging from Egypt to Morocco, starting from the assumption that the various domestic and regional political changes that had affected all of the countries under study within this exceptional period – whatever their nature, scope and eventual outcomes – could be expected to have given rise to some novelties in the foreign policy domain. Surprisingly or not, even though the focus was initially placed on agency at the domestic level of analysis, the main findings of this empirical stocktaking exercise pointed in a quite different direction, suggesting the continuity and ultimate predominance of more structural regional and global constraints: '(…) These countries'

pressing financial constraints and security imperatives in their borderlands ultimately prevented any change of direction or transgression of the existing patterns in their foreign policies, in spite of the accession of some new actors into the decision-making structures. In short, structure prevailed over agency' (Hernando de Larramendi and Fernández-Molina 2016: 245).

The purpose of the present volume is to delve deeper into the analysis of the post-2011 interplay between the global, regional, sub-regional and domestic determinants of the foreign policies of North African countries, along with the latter's consequences for foreign policymaking processes and the resulting foreign policy behaviour. This is done in the form of a collection of individual country case studies which are largely empirical in nature, yet driven by a common analytical framework drawn from foreign policy analysis (FPA) and aiming to engage with wider debates in area and international studies, that is, to contribute to theory-building in a bottom-up, inductive fashion.[1] The two overarching research questions that guided this collective enquiry concern the classical problems of change/continuity and agency/structure across various levels of analysis. First, to what extent and how has the foreign policy behaviour of North African states changed in the aftermath of the 2011 wave of political transformations in the region? Second, which and where (on which level of analysis) are the structural and agential factors/determinants that best explain the changes observed – or the lack thereof – in foreign policymaking and behaviour?

In answering these questions, the articles in this special issue all critically discuss the main foreign policy determinants or constraints on the global, regional, sub-regional and domestic levels of analysis which have shaped each country's foreign policy since 2011 (*why*), as well as decision-making processes (*how*) and the resulting foreign policy output or behaviour (*what*) (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2014: 1-34; Korany and Dessouki 2009: 29-41; Nonneman 2005: 19-29). Following this multifactorial FPA analysis, they each focus on and examine specific case studies related to a particular level of analysis, from the global – Tunisia's financial predicaments and foreign debt negotiations – through the (sub)regional – Egypt's relationship of necessity with Saudi Arabia, Algeria's half-hearted policies towards the conflicts in Libya and Mali – to the domestic sphere – Morocco's power balance between the monarchy and the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) heading the government, Libya's extreme state weakness and internal power competition among proliferating private actors –, reaching also the deeper non-state societal level – Mauritania's new forms of social activism questioning the official religious identity and the socio-political makeup of the state.

From the Foreign Policies of the Global South to the International Dimensions of the 2011 Arab Uprisings

The articles in the special issue intend to contribute to three rather underdeveloped strands of scholarship, i.e. those dealing with the foreign policies of the dependent and peripheral states of the Global South (formerly known as the Third World), comparative FPA on the MENA countries and the regional and international consequences of the 2011 Arab uprisings. Firstly, as argued above, the more theoretical efforts to bring the 'Third World' into IR are very much identified with the work of Mohammed Ayoob and his theory of 'subaltern realism', which he named after Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'subaltern

classes' – those subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes –, later popularised by postcolonial studies (subaltern studies). Subaltern realism situates the determinants of state behaviour – and sources of conflict – in the Third World at the crossroads of structural economic dependence and state/regime, mainly domestic security. On the one hand, '[d]ependence, not interdependence, define[s] the pattern of [these states'] economic relationship with the established, affluent, and powerful members of the international system, thus rendering absurd the concept of absolute gains – the leading neoliberal assumption with regard to cooperation under anarchy' (Ayoob 2002: 35). On the other hand, these states face a quite particular 'Third World security predicament' (Ayoob 1995) whereby 'the security of the state and the regime become closely intertwined' (Ayoob 2002: 46) and the classical realist notion of security dilemma is 'redefined […] by making it primarily a domestic rather than an interstate phenomenon' (Ayoob 2002: 35; see also David 1991).

Some of these arguments have been the subject of empirical research on the foreign policies of 'dependent' (Richardson 1978; Richardson and Kegley 1980; Moon 1983, 1985, 1987; Hey 1993, 1995), 'weak' (Hey 1995) or 'peripheral' (Moon 1995) states of the 'Third World' or the 'Global South' (Braveboy-Wagner 2003, 2016; for a discussion of the genealogy and the implications of each of these labels see Braveboy-Wagner 2016: 3-6). All of these works share the aim of providing new empirical insights on the foreign policy effects of dependence on the basis of an operational definition of the latter as an asymmetrical economic relationship between two countries in which mutual reliance is heavily imbalanced, as well as indicators such as trade, aid and direct foreign investments. They essentially differ in terms of methodology (Hey 1995: 204-211). On the one hand, there is a longstanding quantitative tradition of large-N studies that have tried to determine whether there is a correlation between economic dependence

and foreign policy compliance – with compliance being ubiquitously operationalised as pro-hegemon (most often pro-US) voting behaviour in the United Nations General Assembly (Richardson and Kegley 1980). This focus on 'compliance' has been criticised by Bruce E. Moon, who borrowing from dependency theories statistically demonstrated that, rather than some form of short-term conditionality (use of rewards and punishment) coercing their foreign policy behaviour (bargaining model), the dependent states' alignment with the preferences of more powerful nations results from a long-term confluence of interests and 'consensus' among elites in the core and the periphery (dependency or dependent consensus model) (Moon 1983, 1985). On the other hand, a more qualitative empirical tradition, which this special issue is naturally in line with, has relied on case studies for theory-building purposes, examining them individually or from a regional or cross-regional comparative approach. The latter is the case, for instance, of the volumes on the foreign policies of the Global South edited by Jacqueline Anne Braveboy-Wagner (2003, 2016).

Secondly, the comparative FPA literature focusing on the Arab and/or MENA states is eminently represented by the three seminal collective books edited by Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (2009), Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (2014) and Gerd Nonneman (2005). The three of them fall within the qualitative and within-region comparative tradition, as they offer collections of country case studies based on theoretically informed analytical frameworks – from which this special issue draws too – but they similarly tend to disregard North African/Maghreb countries compared to their Middle Eastern counterparts. Thirdly and finally, the articles in this volume intend to speak to the emerging literature on the drivers and consequences of the 2011 Arab uprisings on the regional (Fürtig 2014; Ryan 2014) and global levels of analysis (Mason 2014; Mullin 2015; Mullin and Pallister-Wilkins 2015), in the interplay

between these two levels (Fawcett 2015), as well as in terms of individual foreign policies (Hernando de Larramendi and Fernández-Molina 2016).

Historical, Political and Economic Foreign Policy Determinants: Commonalities and Variations

With the exception of Egypt, the study of the foreign policies of North African states is underrepresented in most works that analyse international relations in the MENA providing comparative insights (Telhami and Barnett 2002; Brown 2004; Nonneman 2005; Korany and Dessouki 2009; Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2014; Ismail and Perry 2014; Fürtig 2014; Fawcet 2016). Although some of these collective volumes include chapters on the foreign policies of Egypt (Doran 2004; Aboul Kheir 2013; Monier and Ranko 2014), Morocco (Rosenblum and Zartman 2008) and Tunisia (Murphy 2014), very few works address North African foreign policies from a properly comparative perspective. Instead, the recent literature is dominated by single case studies like those by Zoubir (2004), Driss Ait Hamadouche (2015) and Thieux (2017) on Algeria; Shama (2014) on Egypt; and Zartman (2004), Willis and Messari (2005), Rosenblum and Zartman (2008) and Fernández-Molina (2016) on Morocco.

This special issue examines the foreign policies of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia in the aftermath of the 2011 anti-authoritarian uprisings in the region. As the revolts began in Tunisia and impacted these six North African countries to a different extent in terms of both intensity and scope, the region offers a diverse sample of cases with which to gauge the effect of the different processes of political transformation on the international behaviour of the states. The countries were chosen according to geographic criteria that transcend the traditional geopolitical division between the Maghreb and the Mashreq/Middle East to include both the five states that

formed the Arab Maghreb Union in 1989 (Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya) and Egypt, a country that has historically played a leading role in inter-Arab relations because of its demographic clout, its geographic location between North Africa and the Middle East and its desire to spearhead developments in the region.

Beyond geography, this selection of countries provides an opportunity to examine and compare the influence of a wide range of foreign policy determinants. These include important similarities and differences related to the colonial experience and state-building processes after independence, regional and international foreign policy orientations, political economy and material resources, post-colonial political systems, political liberalisation and opening processes in the post-Cold War era and the impact of the 2011 uprisings. In the cases addressed in this special issue, the colonial experience shaped the various state-building processes after independence, although not always in the same way. French colonialism marked the destiny of four of the countries – Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco (with the partial involvement of Spain) and Mauritania – and allowed Paris to maintain its economic, political and cultural influence after independence in a region that it considered its *chasse gardée*. Meanwhile, Great Britain colonised Egypt and guided Libya's access to independence when Italy was stripped of its colonial possessions after World War II.

In Algeria, the War of Independence (1954-1962) that ended 132 years of French colonisation produced a single-party political regime formally led by the National Liberation Front (FLN) where the top officials of the National Liberation Army controlled the reins of power since their victory. The traumatic decolonisation experience, which left more than a million dead, moulded a political culture that was highly influenced by the War of Independence. In Morocco, French colonisation helped to reinforce a weak monarchical institution that would impose itself upon the nationalist movement as a

hegemonic political actor after the country's independence in 1956. Although later than in the other countries studied, the triple colonisation to which Morocco was subject between 1912 and 1956 – with a French protectorate over the centre and the south of the country, a Spanish one in the north and the city of Tangier governed by an international administration – fuelled territorial irredentism, which became a key component of the country's political culture and a recurring source of friction with its neighbours. In Tunisia, the national 'Destourian' movement led by President Habib Bourguiba – who would be ousted by Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 1987 – established itself as the dominant political player. In Mauritania, the state-building process was shaped by the low level of national integration between the majority Arab-Berber population, traditional nomadic herders and traders who monopolised the decision-making bodies after independence, and a black Mauritanian minority comprising several traditionally sedentary ethnic groups – Toucouleur, Peulh, Wolof, Soninke – who live on the banks of the Senegal River. The differences and tensions between these majority and minority groups have been a recurring theme in areas like education and Arabisation policies, the state's foreign policy orientation towards the Arab and sub-Saharan worlds, and the distribution of economic resources.

The Egyptian and Libyan post-colonial political systems were marked by coups d'état led by groups of free officers influenced by the pan-Arabist ideology. In both countries, the monarchies backed by Great Britain were overthrown in 1952 (Egypt) and 1969 (Libya). In Egypt, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser established a single-party regime under the Arab Socialist Union, which spearheaded attempts to move forward with the construction of an 'Arab nation' under the leadership of the army. Inspired by the Nasserite example, the Libyan regime helmed by Colonel Muammar Qaddafi moved on from the postulates of Arab nationalism to create its own idiosyncratic model, a

Jamahiriya or 'state of the masses' which was presented by the Libyan leader as an alternative to liberal representative democracy (Vandewalle 1995).

In the realm of foreign policy, the decolonisation experience influenced the adoption of distinct orientations in international and regional relations. Egypt during the Nasserite period, Algeria under Houari Boumediene and Qaddafi's Libya all held revisionist positions with regard to the international system. By contrast, the ruling elites of Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania opted to respect the international status quo, accepting a subordinate position that did not completely limit their capacity for leverage. Morocco, for example, made use of mediation and good offices to reinforce its image as a stabilising force in the Mediterranean region and especially in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It also aligned itself with Western interests in sub-Saharan Africa during the Cold War to win the backing of Washington and Paris in the Western Sahara conflict.

French colonial attempts to dilute the Arab identity in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Mauritania galvanised a feeling of shared Maghrebi unity that conflicted with the aim to separate the region from the Arab world. This experience gave a boost to a pan-Maghrebi norm that coexisted and converged with the pan-Arab norm before and after decolonisation. However, although the goal of regional integration did give rise to the creation of the Arab Maghreb Union in 1989, the Maghreb remains one of the least economically integrated areas in the world. Regional integration projects have been compromised by the conflict in Western Sahara resulting from Moroccan irredentism, the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco for regional hegemony, and the closing of borders, which was initially associated with territorial claims challenging colonial border divisions and was later increasingly justified by security concerns (Hernando de Larramendi 2008).

The six countries examined in this special issue have very different material capabilities and power resources in terms of wealth, population, surface area and social

cohesion. Economically, the orientations adopted by the different regimes have been shaped by the presence, or lack thereof, of natural resources. The existence of important hydrocarbon reserves and the nationalisation of these resources facilitated the establishment of socialist-inspired rentier economies in Algeria and Libya, which both regimes used to sustain their social contracts, although they were subject to tensions resulting from fluctuations in hydrocarbon prices. In Libya, which has a smaller population (6.2 million inhabitants in 2016), this system worked until international sanctions in the 1990s limited the regime's redistributive capacity. In Algeria, where the population was much larger (40.6 million inhabitants in 2016), the sudden fall in the price of hydrocarbons in 1986 fuelled discontent and led to the October 1988 revolts that brought down the one-party system, albeit without ultimately altering the domestic power structure.

In Egypt, the Nasser regime implemented a socialist economic model, despite not possessing the important natural resources cushion enjoyed by Algeria, and having a population that had multiplied threefold between 1960 and 2016, when the country registered 95.6 million inhabitants. In 1974, President Anwar Sadat replaced the socialist model with *infitah*, a policy of economic liberalisation. In Mauritania, the economy has been based on the exploitation and export of natural resources like iron and copper, fishing and, since 2006, oil. The absence of energy resources in Morocco and the small volume and late discovery of such reserves in Tunisia pushed both countries to implement more liberal economies based on exporting agricultural and manufactured products to the European Economic Community (EEC), increasing their commercial dependence on EEC markets with which they conduct the bulk of their trade. As a result, remittances from immigrant workers and income from the tourism sector have become essential to rectify the balance of payments in these two countries.

In spite of the heterogeneous nature of the political systems and their economic options, the different regimes were also subject to similar tensions during the 1980s, including the crisis of the postcolonial redistributive state model, the increase of social unrest and the emergence of liberal and Islamist opposition forces. The responses to these challenges were first economic and then political. The economic response consisted of taking steps to liberalise economies and accepting the partial severing of economic activity from some hypertrophic states in response to pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The adjustments made sparked revolts in Egypt (1977), Tunisia (1984) and Morocco (1981, 1984 and 1990).

The transition to liberal economic options was followed by the implementation of different forms of political liberalisation and opening. Beyond their ideologies, the various regimes were trying to accommodate themselves to the new post-Cold War international climate. At that time, Morocco attempted to spotlight its support for the multi-party system enshrined in the Constitution of 1962, signalling its early commitment to democratic principles, as opposed to the other countries that had established one-party or dominant regimes after independence. Gradually, other countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Mauritania and Algeria used their controlled multi-party systems – which were not always open to Islamist movements – to promote their processes of *aggiornamento*. However, despite their appropriation of the rhetoric of democracy and human rights, these efforts did not translate into significant advances in democratisation, reinforcing the hybrid nature of the regimes. Libya was the only case where the political space was not expanded. The new international context, however, accelerated an ephemeral *perestroika* in the country that produced the Great Green Charter on Human Rights in 1988 and the Al-Qaddafi International Prize for Human Rights.

In all of the countries, the scope of these political liberalisation processes was limited. After the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001, the fight against Islamist movements was used as an alibi to justify the slow pace of the political reforms, which were delivered in homeopathic doses without any real challenge to the authoritarian bases of the different regimes. The risk of Islamist movements reaching positions of power was used as an argument to gain foreign support for regimes that now presented themselves as guarantors of the status quo and stability in the context of the post-9/11 war on terrorism launched by the Bush administration. The Algerian regime was able to overcome the 'moral embargo' imposed upon it by the West during the 1990s by presenting the country's civil war as an early battle of the war on terror. Libya's involvement in the war on terror was also used as a lever by Coronel Qaddafi's regime to convince the international community to lift the sanctions imposed as a punishment for the country's involvement in the Lockerbie bombing. Other regimes like Mubarak's Egypt and Ben Ali's Tunisia also used this argument to limit the reach of the 'democratisation' project advocated in the Greater Middle East by neo-conservative sectors of the United States administration after the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

More recently, the impact of the 2011 anti-authoritarian uprisings that challenged the regimes in North African and Middle Eastern countries was not homogenous. In Tunisia and Libya, they produced regime changes that gave way to transition processes that have evolved in different ways. The Tunisian transition process consolidated the democratic experience and produced a situation in which power is shared between the country's two major political parties, i.e. the Islamist Ennahda and the secular Nidaa Tounes party. In Libya, on the other hand, the disruptive effect of international intervention and the lack of solid institutional structures caused the state to collapse, producing a civil war in which two rival parliaments contend for political legitimacy. In

Egypt, Mubarak's ouster opened the political field, allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to win both legislative and presidential elections, and resulting in an ephemeral coexistence between this group and the army, the guiding spirit of the Egyptian state. However, the coup d'état in July 2013, which resulted in the ouster of President Mohamed Morsi and the illegalisation of the Muslim Brotherhood party, revealed the reversibility of the processes of change unleashed in 2011 and the resilience of the 'deep state', which was able to largely restore the former regime.

There was no substantial modification to the power structures in Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania, countries where authoritarian reforms were implemented. Mohammed VI was able to defuse protests calling for a constitutional and democratic monarchy, instead reforming the Moroccan constitution to limit some of the monarch's powers. The result of the electoral victory of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD, according to its French acronym) was a 'subordinated coexistence' in which the PJD declined to pursue an open interpretation of the constitution which would strengthen the powers of the executive to the detriment of the king (López García and Hernando de Larramendi 2017). In Algeria, the regime managed to subdue the protests without modifying its power structure. Thanks to an injection of public funds and the lingering traumatic memory of the civil war of the 1990s, the status quo was maintained. However, whoever succeeds President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, whose health has deteriorated significantly since 2013, will have to contend with this status quo.

Revisiting Subaltern Realism in Light of the Case Studies' Findings
At this point, it is germane to discuss some of the empirical findings from the country case studies in this special issue in relation to theoretical debates on subalternity in international relations and Ayoob's subaltern realism. The results must be understood as

reflections on research questions that remain open, although the different authors offer particular perspectives that advance the general understanding of the foreign policies of North African countries. What follows are some reflections on theoretical debates about foreign policy and international relations that have been challenged by the events that have shaken the MENA since 2011. While no definitive conclusions can be drawn – especially with regard to processes that are still underway – a consideration of the value of the different factors makes it possible to analyse the situation with greater complexity.

One of the questions that guides the articles in this special issue concerns the structural and agential factors that best explain the processes behind foreign policy-making. The starting point is the observation that hierarchical organisation models can be identified in the economic, social and political relations of most societies and that these hierarchies divide the members of society. The main characteristics of the systemic dependence of countries in the region are defined in the following pages. For example, the articles show how Egypt's economic dependency and weakness have restricted the foreign policy leeway for the successive governments after the fall of Mubarak globally, regionally and domestically; how the drop in oil prices has threatened the viability of the Algerian rentier state model supporting the social contract that has guaranteed the country's political stability; and how Morocco cannot survive financially without interacting with Europe. Undoubtedly, one of the most blatant examples of this power asymmetry is the decision taken by France, the United Kingdom and the United States to initiate military actions against Qaddafi's regime in Libya, strongly pressuring NATO to take charge of the operation with the backing of UN Security Council Resolution 1973.

Ayoob's subaltern realism takes these global inequalities into consideration from a particular, albeit somewhat restricted, view of the subaltern and dependency, which emphasises the relationship established between the different countries in the

international system. The result is the consequence of asymmetrical economic relationships dominated by the most powerful members that produce certain positions related to security. The importance of this economic dependence, along with the role of the state and the security considerations of the regimes in power, form the cornerstone of Ayoob's position. These hierarchies are analysed in a global historical context in which the process of neoliberalisation – understood as an uneven, combined and contested process with a particular genealogy (Peck 2013) – is one of the most important features. The impact of these processes on the countries studied is uneven and characterised by the presence of hybrid arrangements where 'state' and 'market' are closely related. The study of the different foreign policies reveals the selective impetus of occasionally contradictory ideas, projects and policies bound up with this general context and dependent upon the interests of the elites (Zemni and Bogaert 2009; Lemke 2000). Based on these structural elements, and bearing in mind agential factors, Ayoob's approach to the study of the domestic drivers for state action in the Global South is pretty much in line with FPA perspectives, as it give a central role to the interests and objectives of the elites who control the different states in the region, in a context where the state apparatuses are weak and there is legitimacy deficit among such ruling elites.

One aim of FPA is to understand the policy-making or decision-making processes (*how*) led by a bureaucratic corps that represents the state. This type of analysis of foreign policy as a public policy is present in the various case studies, which assess domestic political changes in each country, depending on the outcome of the 2011 Arab uprisings. Following Ayoob, the focus is on the drive for domestic survival among the elites, who have appropriated foreign policy as a tool to that end. Different articles identify processes of this nature, in which foreign policy is a restricted area belonging to some elites and a battlefield for power and influence where alliances and rivalries are established. This is

prominent, for example, in the way the Algerian President Bouteflika has used foreign policy to consolidate his own power within the regime – demonstrating how foreign and security policy continue to serve as a battleground for various sectors –, in the continuing dominance of the Moroccan king and his entourage over foreign policy matters, in the conflict between the various private actors in Libya, and in the consensus-building and elite compromise dynamics which constitute the prevailing feature of Tunisia's post-revolutionary domestic politics.

Moving beyond policy-making (*how*), when it comes to explaining the *why* of these foreign policies, the different chapters extend the analytical focus to other spheres, going beyond Ayoob's proposal, to identify a wide range of factors that shape foreign policy agendas and their development. The focus on power structures is important, from a perspective that emphasises the need to study power systems as a whole and address very different resources and determining factors – institutional, ideological and informational, religious (the so-called religious diplomacy), military and coercive, as well as political – none of which can be dissociated from the economic and security factors stressed by Ayoob. These resources are interconnected, forming part of an overall structure, and must be assessed as a whole. Capital cannot be analysed separate from ideology; coercion cannot be analysed separate from the institutional resources of the state, or from information. Moreover, these policies may have been designed beyond the governmental-bureaucratic arena and, indeed, may even correspond to loyalties and interests inconsistent with what is considered 'national'. The task at hand is to observe the transversal dynamics created and perpetuated by particular influential actors in terms of power and politics rather than a state that is bound by its sovereignty and territoriality. This reality is characterised by its hybridity and the existence of grey areas that can be conceptualised in different ways.

The articles in this special issue are guided by the concept of subaltern realism in the ontological priority bestowed upon the state, the repository of legitimate authority, but also offer empirical insights to go beyond this framework, not treating its limits as boundaries, but observing how they are created, reinvented and surpassed. Social, economic and political processes cross territorial limits simultaneously and in varying degrees. Because the state represents a very important power resource for economic and political elites, certain limits whose function is more symbolic than real are often established. Consequently, national actors may also be global or transnational actors, just as the resources within the reach of these elites can be mobilised at different levels. To some extent, if the elites have the capability, they must choose the level on which to operate, while some external actors operate as local actors, becoming involved in national/local processes (Izquierdo-Brichs and Etherington 2017). The different levels of analysis examined in each of the articles reveal the interrelations between levels and spheres/fields of action.

Foreign policy, then, is formulated in a context of complex power relations, whose primary characteristics can be observed at a specific time, but are in constant transformation with multiple processes of confirmation or resistance occurring on different scales and in different sites (for example, the coexistence of compliance and resistance policies in Tunisia in the face of neoliberal norms and practices). The articles show that a national framework delimited by state borders is only one of the possible fields where power is manifested. Moreover, its importance in the study of political and economic processes is determined by the fact that the state must be understood as a structure that conditions the agents and processes that develop within it as well as a field of activity, a resource over which various elites battle for control. Through the state, its institutions, resources, human capital and legitimacy, it is possible to act in different

fields, including foreign policy. Obviously, the clearest example of this is Libya, where the fragmentation of state authority has exposed the action of multiple players devising distinct foreign policies that are highly influenced by both external and local factors, perverting the concept of foreign policy as state policy and dislocating foreign action.

Although these articles do not fully question conventional binary dichotomies, they do offer a number of examples of the difficulties inherent in conceptualising actors as internal or external and policies as internally or externally oriented. Although most of the works are based on classical delimitations, the narratives inevitably blur the pre-established limits. Dominant elites, for example, may have a transnational physiognomy, being the 'double agents' of which Didier Bigo speaks (2016: 34), simultaneously living and acting nationally and transnationally in a specific field. The observation of practices that break unambiguous moulds makes it necessary to combine the analysis of the state as an actor, observations of individuals, communities and groups – whether techno-bureaucrats, global capitalist business leaders, elected politicians or any combination thereof – and the specific practices and power relations that emerge during agenda-setting. The African tour of King Mohammed VI near the end of 2016, which reached the main capitals on the continent, and the select group of businesspeople and politicians who accompanied him manifested the dual nature of political leaders who are simultaneously global business leaders, as well as the importance of multi-levelled connections. In this respect, the scalar reorganisations of neoliberalism result in new regulations of capital, labour, information and other resources, which are spread unevenly over different territorialised regimes.

Furthermore, it is difficult to spatially pigeonhole the politics behind foreign policy, since most foreign policy actions occur within states: the collaboration of the Libyan authorities in controlling their borders to stop immigrants from crossing them;

Morocco's cooperation in the fight against terrorism with Western countries; Tunisia's debt and financial agreements with international financial institutions. Many of these actions are decided, negotiated, applied and have consequences in particular spaces and places that are not exclusively defined by being foreign or domestic. What is political and social cannot be reduced to the national level, but must be understood as 'the dynamics of actors deployed horizontally by the connectedness of local places internationally' (Bigo 2016: 33). These places and spaces of encounter connect individuals in processes with their own meaning: Tunisian interim Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi, for instance, was one of the third-country representatives invited to the 2011 annual meeting of the G8 in Deauville; Libya's military strongman Khalifa Haftar has visited Moscow several times since he was appointed commander of the armed forces loyal to the House of Representatives in March 2015; meetings organised between the different Libyan actors were held in various negotiation cycles in 2015 with Algerian mediation, and so forth.

The implosion of the clear distinction between domestic and international has blurred the classical concept of borders. Formal borders are withdrawn or redrawn, while simultaneously being reinforced in some fields of action. Algeria, for example, has responded to terrorist actions by militarising its borders, including the deployment of some 75,000 troops and the preparation of a 120-km long electrified fence along its border. At the same time, the space may expand through the negotiations of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) offered by the EU to Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Jordan in December 2011. Some places have taken on new meanings or their importance has intensified, linking the external and the internal. Examples include Sirte, with the largest concentration of Libyan hydrocarbon terminals, and the Sinai Peninsula, with its deteriorating security situation.

This acknowledgment of the need to go beyond classical dichotomies provides the perspective from which to address questions related to agency in foreign policy and change. The possibility that 'there is no alternative', as discussed in the analysis of the Tunisian case, is thus rejected. The actors examined act and wield their influence, and their actions matter and have symbolic and material consequences. The Egyptian authorities announced their political and military support for the campaign in Yemen; Libyan political actors have been proactive in establishing contacts and maintaining alliances – often antagonistic – with external powers; Algeria began to adopt a defensive position reflected in its firm opposition to Western military involvement in both Libya and Mali; Rabat gave 50 million dollars to the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA); Tunisia's resistant foreign policy pragmatically deployed by Moncef Marzouki achieved some material results. All of these events matter for numerous individuals and institutions at different levels and must be analysed in the context of different power games and structures if they are to be properly assessed. As explained by the classical dependency theory recovered by Ayoob, the elites in the centre and periphery construct their common interests (the aforementioned search for consensus), enjoying the possibilities that come from holding privileged positions in different power systems. By the same token, the subaltern classes can play a leading role – although Ayoob's theoretical framework does not develop all of the potential consequences in this regard (Barnett 2002: 56) – and are capable of influencing numerous items on the agenda, including foreign policy.

Finally, the response to the question regarding the extent to which and how the foreign policy behaviour (*what*) of North African states has changed in the aftermath of 2011 can be answered in different ways according to the perspective. Some of the authors here emphasise the elements of continuity, focusing on the reproduction of structural

dynamics, despite changing protagonists. However, the changes taking place at different levels of analysis, whether associated with larger structural factors or affecting the configuration of the actors and the resources in their power, make foreign policy an important tool and field of action that will undoubtedly follow the evolving fate of the spheres of power, as the articles in this issue demonstrate. And this set of processes does, indeed, matter for the people living in the countries of North Africa.

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