

The ENP and EU-Maghreb relations

The recipients of the southern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) include a quite distinct grouping of countries, the Maghreb, which can be approached either as a full-fledged regional unit by itself or as a sub-regional setting comprised in the broader regional system of the Middle East and North Africa. The fact that the western part of the Arab world, or northwestern Africa, is constructed and recognised as a distinct geopolitical unit owes much to its intimate historical connection with – and external penetration by – European powers. Besides a similarly mixed Arab-Amazigh ethnic and linguistic background, and an also common Islamic religious identity, what has drawn the borders of the region as an imagined community is a somewhat shared colonial experience under the rule of predominantly France (in the case of the three “central Maghreb” countries, i.e. Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, as well as Mauritania) and secondarily Italy (Libya) and Spain (parts of Morocco and Western Sahara). For the purposes of geopolitical outlining and labelling, this commonality has prevailed over significant divergences between the concerned countries in terms of their contemporary histories – belonging to the Ottoman Empire, form and length of colonial rule, access to independence –, their economic, social and demographic structures, and their postcolonial political systems.

This chapter addresses the questions of what are the structural characteristics of EU-Maghreb relations, and what factors account for these global features as well as bilateral differentiation vis-à-vis each individual country of the region in the framework of the ENP. The different answers provided are broadly connected to the main theoretical approaches in International Relations (IR), namely realism, liberalism and constructivism, incorporating also some insights from international political economy and postcolonialism. The following sections will examine the postcolonial legacies and background of the process of institutionalisation of EU-Maghreb relations; the debate on the degree of interdependence or dependency which can be observed in this relationship from an international political economy perspective; the realist hindrances to liberal region-building and integration between the Maghreb countries; and the allocation of foreign policy roles and bilateral differentiation between them in the context of the ENP. The focus will be placed on Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, since Mauritania is not included in the geopolitical scope of the ENP, Libya has so far remained outside most of the ENP structures despite being recognised as a potential participant, and the Western Sahara conflict has never been directly targeted by this EU policy.

The weight of history: postcolonial legacies half a century later

In 1957, at the same time that the European Economic Community (EEC) was created by the Treaty of Rome, one of its six founding members, France, was immersed in the third year of one of the bloodiest decolonisation conflicts of the 20th century, the Algerian war of independence (1954-1962). The paradoxical coincidence of such two paradigmatic instances of international cooperation and conflict, respectively, somehow set the tone of Euro-Maghreb relations for the subsequent decades. Without falling into historical determinism, it can be claimed that colonialism and the ensuing decolonisation processes largely shaped the structural features of this relationship as we know it today, over half a century later. Firstly, from the point of view of international political economy, French colonialism established a hub-and-spokes model of economic relations between the metropole and the various territories under its protectorate or direct administration, which foreshadowed the centre-periphery structure of contemporary exchanges between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. Secondly, in terms of liberal interdependence, the fact that most of the colonial economic, social and cultural flows were channelled through Paris certainly favoured the regional isolation of, and lack of horizontal interdependence between, the various future North African states. Thirdly, from a realist perspective, colonial border redrawing, mainly in favour of French Algeria, played a role in giving rise to bilateral territorial disputes which provoked

intense inter-state mistrust and security dilemmas from the 1960s onwards – even brief open conflict in the case of the 1963 Sands War between Morocco and Algeria (Abed Jabri 1985). At the same time, Algeria's territorial expansion fell short of turning it into an indisputable regional hegemon, paving the way for power balancing and competition to become the prevailing dynamics within the Maghreb system.

Fourthly, a constructivist reading would place the focus on two identity-based ideational factors which were largely forged during the Maghreb countries' anticolonial struggle but pulled in opposite directions: on the one hand, the norm of regional federation or unification that was embraced by allied Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian nationalist leaders in the 1940s; on the other hand, the strong ideological imprint of each young state's own nationalism and the different national role conceptions underlying their respective foreign policies and relationships with Europe (Stora 2003). Fifthly, as far as European foreign policy is concerned, the legacy of colonialism also includes the pattern of 'geo-clientelism', or 'patron-client like relationships between EU member states and certain non-EU countries or groups of countries' (Behr and Tiilikainen 2015: 27), which has marked EU-Maghreb relations for decades, with the former colonisers – France and, to a lesser extent, Spain and Italy – playing the role of patrons. Sixthly, this 'geo-clientelism' also extends to scholarship on the aforementioned relations, which has been comparatively scarce and shown an apparent French-speaking bias. While English-speaking academic literature has often diluted this issue in the wider discussion of Euro-Mediterranean relations, some French-speaking outlets have insisted on defending the distinctiveness and resistance of the Euro-Maghreb 'space' and 'proximity' (Henry 2006) in the form of an exceptional socio-economic interdependence as well as the successful reactivation of the 5+5 Dialogue between the five Maghreb countries and five southern EU member states (Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Malta) in the 2000s.

Going back to 1957, it is also worth considering how the trajectory of the institutionalisation of EEC-Maghreb relations started from a duality caused by the asymmetric progress of decolonisation in this region. On the one hand, France was interested in preserving and transferring to the EEC the preferential trade conditions it had bilaterally granted to recently – and peacefully – decolonised Morocco and Tunisia. Therefore, it made sure that the Treaty of Rome included two provisions guaranteeing the continuity of the "special treatment" enjoyed by their goods. On the other hand, Algeria was still part of metropolitan France and hence subject to the intra-Community trade regime that had just been established by the EEC founding members. After it painfully gained independence in 1962, Algeria maintained a provisional trade relationship with the EEC and soon halted the negotiations on an "association" proposed by the European Commission because of the latter's perceived neo-colonial connotations. As a result, in 1969, only Morocco and Tunisia entered into a new stage of association with the EEC. They both concluded first-generation bilateral association agreements which were essentially confined to commercial matters – trade concessions qualified by a strong European agricultural protectionism. It was not until 1976 that Algeria joined its neighbours in institutionalising its bilateral relationship with the EEC under the 1972 Global Mediterranean Policy. This new framework promoted by France led to the signing of more wide-ranging second-generation cooperation agreements, which included financial assistance and social/labour issues in addition to trade provisions (Aghrout 2000).

Meanwhile, Mauritania was dealt with by the EEC under a different, more "African" cooperation framework, since it was included in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group when it became independent in 1960. Libya's foreign policy followed an atypical and idiosyncratic path after the 1969 revolution led by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, which was to prevent the establishment of any contractual relations with the EEC/EU for decades (Joffé 2001). And Western Sahara remained outside the EEC's agenda even after the Spanish withdrawal, the Moroccan-Mauritanian occupation

of the territory and the outbreak of the conflict between the latter and the pro-independence Polisario Front in 1975-1976 (Vaquer 2004; Fernández-Molina 2016).

The international political economy perspective: interdependence or dependency?

A new era in the institutionalisation of EU-Maghreb relations that lasts until today in bilateral terms started with the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), or Barcelona Process, in 1995. Besides adding a novel multilateral dimension to (bi)regional cooperation across the Mediterranean basin, the EMP framework upgraded the traditional hub-and-spoke pattern of bilateral relations between the EU and individual partner countries, which materialised in a new batch of association agreements and the respective bilateral institutions set up under each of them (Association Councils and Association Committees). Two Maghreb countries, namely Tunisia and Morocco, were, along with Israel, the frontrunners in signing (1995, 1996) and implementing (1998, 2000) their third-generation association agreements with the EU. Only negotiations with Algeria were postponed due to the civil war into which terrorist and “counterterrorist” violence plunged the country during the 1990s – the so-called “black decade”. The EU-Algeria Association Agreement only saw the light of day in 2002 (in force in 2005) after the domestic situation had stabilised and the international rehabilitation of the Algerian regime was underway (Begga and Abid 2004). In terms of content, the bilateral association agreements between the EU and Mediterranean partner countries were presented as multidimensional and going far beyond trade: they envisaged the establishment of regular political and security dialogue, and cooperation in a wide range of sectoral areas, and social and cultural matters. A standard democracy and human rights clause was included in article 2 of all of them. In practice however, in keeping with the tradition of EU-Maghreb relations, the aspects that were to take precedence during their implementation were commercial liberalisation – with the prospect of gradually establishing a free trade area over 12 years, yet maintaining the existing “agricultural exception” – and the accompanying financial support (Aghrout 2000).

Notwithstanding this, from an international political economy perspective, the gradual trade concessions agreed over decades could barely alter the structural nature of the EU-Maghreb relationship. The latter’s main constant feature has been a strong asymmetry between the weight of mutual trade for each of the sides. For example, in 2014 the EU-28 was the first trading partner and first supplier of all of the five Maghreb countries. Exchanges with the northern bloc represented more than 50 percent of the total trade with the world of all of them except Mauritania. Conversely, the Maghreb countries occupied quite secondary or even negligible positions (below 1 percent of total trade) in the ranking of the EU’s top trading partners. The percentages for Morocco and Tunisia were strikingly similar to those from 50 years earlier, when the EEC had only six members (Aghrout 2000: 46-47). The only partial exception to this pattern of trade asymmetry was Algeria, the EU’s third largest supplier of gas after Russia and Norway.

Share (%) of trade with EU-28 in the Maghreb countries’ total trade with the world (2014)

	Imports	Exports	Total trade
Algeria	50.6	64.3	57.8
Libya	39.4	76.4	57.8
Mauritania	36.7	26.9	33.1
Morocco	51.0	63.4	55.2
Tunisia	61.5	72.8	65.7

Source: European Commission trade statistics (http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/statistics/index_en.htm); data processed by author.

Share (%) of trade with Maghreb countries in EU-28’s total trade with the world (2015)

	Imports	Exports	Total trade
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Algeria	1.2	1.2	1.2
Libya	0.4	0.2	0.3
Mauritania	0.0	0.0	0.0
Morocco	0.7	1.0	0.9
Tunisia	0.6	0.6	0.6

Source: European Commission trade statistics (http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/statistics/index_en.htm); data processed by author.

At the same time, trade balance statistics provide a good indicator of the main differentiating force that has drawn a dividing line between two groups of Maghreb countries: “oil haves” (Algeria and Libya) have a positive trade balance with the EU, while that of “oil have-nots” (Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania) has been consistently negative. This cleavage has also been observed in the sphere of foreign direct investment (FDI), where Tunisia and Morocco have competed for decades to attract EU capital and companies, with each of them trying to distinguish itself from its Maghreb neighbours and project an image of domestic political stability (Murphy 1999: 60). Algeria and Libya were to join this race only in the 2000s.

Against this background, the existing academic literature on EU-Maghreb relations has addressed two major questions stemming from the point of view of international political economy. The first of them concerns the overall structural “nature” of this relationship. Ahmed Aghrout (2000) assessed whether its main features correspond to the liberal concept of “interdependence” – which highlights the interconnection and mutual reliance between international actors, not necessarily in a symmetrical fashion – or the post-Marxist notion of “dependency”. He argued that the Maghreb displays some apparent symptoms of dependency on the EU, since the relationship between the two of them involves two economically unequal parties, a centre-periphery pattern of domination and exploitation of the peripheral economy, and common interests between the capitalist centre and the peripheral “clientele class”. However, he did not find sufficient evidence of a strong historical reliance on foreign investment and penetration by multinational corporations that could be comparable to that of other southern regions such as Latin America. For this reason, he concluded that the EU-Maghreb relationship is better described as one of ‘high asymmetrical interdependence’, in which ‘both parties would incur costs if the relationship were broken’ (*ibid.*: 14-16). This mixed answer seems all the more appropriate when taking into account the EU’s reliance on Maghreb countries in the energy domain (*vis-à-vis* Algerian natural gas) as well as in non-economic fields such as security and migration control.

The second question interrogates the extent to which natural resource endowment and political economy factors account for the differentiation between the various Maghreb countries’ bilateral relationships with the EU. “Oil have-nots” have certainly followed much more – and more consistently – cooperative trajectories *vis-à-vis* the EU, which they view as their inevitable partner. This cooperative stance includes not only the economic opening (*infitah*) and export-oriented extroversion which has guided their official development strategies since the 1970s (Tunisia) and 1980s (Morocco) (White 2001; Murphy 1999), but also a permanent political will to strengthen ties with Brussels as much as possible. Also, beyond economic cost-benefit calculations, various authors have discussed how the pro-European orientation of Moroccan and Tunisian elites has led them to accept what were ‘sub-optimal agreements’ or ‘poor deals’ from a trade and development perspective (Dawson 2009: 2, 9). The opposite case of that of “oil have” Algeria, whose selective and pragmatic – when not reluctant – attitude towards cooperation with the EU has often been attributed to the financial strength provided by energy resources, especially during the boom of oil prices in the 2000s, and the leverage granted by its position as key gas supplier for Spain, Italy, France and Portugal (Darbouche 2008). It can be contended, however, that Algeria is much more dependent on the EU than the other way around, since it exports to that market around 85% of its

gas, with few alternatives for diversification, and the sale of hydrocarbons represents over 60% of its budget revenues and 90% of its export earnings (2010-2014) (International Monetary Fund 2016).

Purely economic factors aside, another structural element of asymmetry in EU-Maghreb relations is the absence of any effective regional integration between the Maghreb countries. The academic discussion of the Maghreb regional system has tended to describe it in essentially realist terms. Security dilemmas and power balancing behaviour by the states that form it have spoiled regional integration since the 1960s, chiefly the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) launched in 1989. The main economic rationale for this initiative was that Spain and Portugal's 1986 accession to the EEC had substantially deteriorated their southern neighbours' preferential trade conditions to export to the Common Market, which could be theoretically improved by some kind of collective bargaining. However, this region-building eagerness was short-lived and the overall activity of the AMU was virtually deadlocked in the mid-1990s. A liberal discourse has thenceforth developed denouncing and trying to quantify the high economic 'cost of non-Maghreb' (Ghilès 2010), that is, the development opportunities missed by these countries by not taking advantage of their potential economic complementarity. The EEC/EU has been one of the main external instigators of this debate although, in reality, the bilateral practice that took precedence within the EMP actually contributed to 'dividing rather than unifying the sub-region' in the 1990s (Murphy 1999: 119). A joint communication by the European Commission and the high representative resumed this talk in 2012, examining the ways in which the EU could 'support closer cooperation' in 'one of the least integrated regions in the world' (European Commission/High Representative, 2012). However, the recipes mentioned for this purpose – e.g. promoting sub-regional cooperation in existing flexible frameworks such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the 5+5 Dialogue, and supporting 'diversified and enhanced south-south trade integration' (*ibid.*) – hardly sounded new.

Diverging foreign policy roles and bilateral differentiation

The political economy structure and realist spokes in the wheels of liberal region-building have thus concurred in favouring bilateralism and 'geographical differentiation' (Barbé and Herranz-Surrallés 2012: 3) within EU-Maghreb relations. A constructivist analysis would also explain this variation by referring to the influence of the different Maghreb countries' national identities and foreign policy roles, the latter being understood as social constructions resulting from the interaction between their own self-definitions ("ego") and external – in this case European – expectations or prescriptions ("alter"). Three quite divergent roles can be observed in these states' relationships with the EU, which were mainly forged during the decolonisation era and have endured due to some kind of socially constructed path dependence: two competing "model students" of the EU (Tunisia and Morocco) coexist with a somewhat "bad student" (Algeria) and a former "rogue state" which was hastily "reintegrated" into the international community in the 2000s (Libya). This allocation of roles is reflected in the dissimilar bilateral paths followed by the Maghreb countries in their relations with the EU and more particularly in the context of the ENP, a policy that was precisely launched in 2004 in order to encourage bilateral differentiation and thus improve the EU's leverage and positive conditionality vis-à-vis individual countries in its periphery.

EU-Maghreb relations in 2016

	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) / Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)		European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)	
	Association Agreements (AA) (bilateral legal/contractual framework)			
	Signature	Entry into force	ENP Action Plans	Special bilateral

				relationships
Morocco	February 1996	March 2000	June 2005	Advanced Status 2008
			December 2013	
Tunisia	July 1995	March 1998	July 2005	Privileged Partnership 2012
			November 2012	
Algeria	April 2002	September 2005	No Action Plan * Negotiations launched in 2012	Strategic Energy Partnership 2012
Libya	No Association Agreement * Observer status in EMP/UfM * Negotiations on Framework Agreement 2008-2011		Potential inclusion but no actual participation in most ENP structures * No Action Plan	
Mauritania	No Association Agreement * Member of EMP/UfM since 2007		Not included in ENP (party to EU-ACP Partnership Agreement)	

The “good”

Morocco and Tunisia both welcomed the ENP’s asymmetric and variable-geometry thrust, and endeavoured to play the role of “model students” by immediately negotiating their bilateral ENP Action Plans with the EU. Their Action Plans were adopted in June and July 2005, respectively. The two countries’ previous trajectories of relations with the EEC/EU had similarly run in parallel, with first-generation association agreements (1969), second-generation cooperation agreements (1976) and third-generation association agreements (1995/1996) having been signed roughly at the same time. Rabat and Tunis had also maintained what was viewed as an exemplary commitment to the EMP at multilateral level. This behaviour revealed a consistent willingness and capacity for adaptation to Brussels’ expectations, whose origins can be traced back to a mix of the structural constraints of economic extroversion and elite interests, identity and socialisation. Ironically enough, both countries’ official discourses were akin to each other in emphasising the respective national exceptionalism in the regional context and alleged exclusiveness of bilateral ties with the EU.

Three differences can be observed between the Moroccan and Tunisian shared pro-European agency, though. First, the continuous strengthening of bilateral relations with the EU has been an unparalleled priority for decades for Tunisian foreign policy, while it only appears as the second top objective in Morocco’s hierarchy, where it stands behind the international management of the “national question” of Western Sahara. Anyway, in practice, the concrete objectives stemming from Morocco’s roles as “territorial champion” and “model student” of the EU have seldom clashed with each other (Fernández-Molina 2015: 96). Secondly, from the 1990s onwards, the Tunisian authorities’ degree of international adaptation is deemed to have been relatively higher on the economic level, whereas their Moroccan counterparts were more ambitious and skilful politically. Chief among the signs of international endorsement of the proverbial economic reformism (Hibou 2006) of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (1987-2011) was repeated praise of the “Tunisian miracle” by the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF): neoliberal privatisation, deregulation and macroeconomic balance were presented as having led to economic growth and an expansion of the middle class, according to what later turned out to be largely manipulated or misleading figures (Kallander 2013: 111). Meanwhile, the Moroccan monarchy raised its pro-European stakes with political statements of intent such as King Hassan II’s formal application for EEC membership in 1987 and Mohammed VI’s demand for “more than association, less than accession” in 2000.

The third difference, in connection to this, is that in October 2008 Morocco achieved the so-called Advanced Status, an upgrade or special relationship with the EU that was similar to what Tunisia also coveted but fell short of reaching due to growing European human rights concerns. Even though this

was a political declaration lacking concrete added value in relation to the opportunities for convergence and integration already created by the ENP (Martín 2009), the Advanced Status still represented a much valued qualitative leap and a powerful sign of EU recognition of the merits of Morocco's pro-European foreign policy and domestic 'courageous process of modernisation and democratisation' (EU-Morocco Association Council 2008). By contrast, the increasingly visible Tunisian hindrances to EU democracy assistance (funding for human rights associations) and the freezing of bilateral political dialogue between 2005 and 2007 led the EU to delay the opening of negotiations on the "reinforced partnership" that Tunis demanded in November 2008. An ad hoc bilateral working group was eventually set up to this purpose in March 2010, just a few months before the 2011 Tunisian revolution which overthrew Ben Ali (Van Hüllen 2012: 123-125).

Beyond these differences and swings, the overall lack of any substantial EU contribution to genuine democratic transformation in either Morocco or Tunisia has opened a scholarly debate on the limits of international socialisation as a mechanism of democracy promotion in the EU's neighbourhood (Powel and Sadiki 2010). The two Maghreb "model students" share the paradoxical situation of being strongly "socialised" by the northern power on both macro and micro levels – since their elites have a long history of interaction with, and exposure to, European norms and practices, typically including training or education in France – without having actually exceeded the level of a superficial and rational-choice adoption of EU political standards. This kind of socialisation amounts to an strategic learning of what is socially accepted in the context of their asymmetric relationships with the EU by both state and civil society actors, but it has not resulted in profound change in interests, values and identity (Fernández-Molina 2015: 101-105; Lacroix 2006). Moreover, according to critics, EU socialisation has played a problematic role in unwittingly legitimising authoritarian regimes like these (Powel and Sadiki 2010: 57-67).

Anyway, the soul-searching and temporary self-criticism shown by the EU in the aftermath of the 2011 "Arab Spring" uprisings did not ultimately change much in the longstanding patterns of bilateral relations with the Maghreb and the sticking to the socialisation approach vis-à-vis the most cooperative partners. In spite of the asymmetry between the domestic political processes witnessed in each of them in 2011 – a revolutionary regime change vs. a top-down constitutional reform devoid of any structural impact – Tunisia and Morocco were to receive a fairly similar preferential treatment from the EU hereafter. They were both chosen by Brussels, along with Egypt and Jordan, as front-running southern neighbours that would benefit from allegedly new EU incentives in terms of "money" – Support to Partnership, Reforms and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) programme –, "market" – negotiations of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) – and "mobility" – negotiations of Mobility Partnerships. New ENP Action Plans replacing those from 2005 were signed with Tunisia and Morocco in November 2012 and December 2013, respectively. "Business as usual" was arguably on the Moroccan side (Colombo and Voltolini 2014). The main distinctive reward granted to post-revolutionary Tunisia was the launch of an EU-Tunisia Task Force to coordinate support for its democratic transition in September 2011. EU Election Observation Missions were subsequently dispatched to monitor the Tunisian Constituent Assembly elections in October 2011 and to the parliamentary and presidential elections held three years later. In the end, the post-2011 context allowed Tunisia to achieve the long-awaited upgrade of its bilateral relations with the EU in the form of a Privileged Partnership established in November 2012. The two Maghreb "model students" of the EU were standing again on an equal footing.

The "bad" and the "ugly"

Meanwhile, Algeria's initial response to the launch of the ENP was even more reluctant than foreseen in Brussels. This country distinguished itself as the only "normal" southern Mediterranean partner of the EU that straightforwardly refused to negotiate an ENP Action Plan. This lack of

interest was in line with a national identity and a foreign policy role that were essentially at odds with those of Algeria's neighbours, as well as a decades-long history of 'awkwardness' (Darbouche 2008: 371-372) in relations with the EEC/EU. Even in the 2000s, the foreign policy of the former standard-bearer of third-worldism, the Non-Aligned Movement and the "radical" Steadfastness and Confrontation Front against Israel was still socially constrained by the norm of opposition to – or at least independence from – the West and maintained a strong emphasis on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. Having institutionalised its bilateral relationship with the EEC with a cooperation agreement only in 1976, Algeria's insertion into the EMP was largely shaped by the liability of domestic civil war in the 1990s, which made the country's military authorities view the new Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework as potential window of opportunity to alleviate their growing international isolation and gather support for their questioned "counterterrorist" strategy. This rational choice did not fully work, since the negotiations of the EU-Algeria Association Agreement were put off and not resumed until 2000, after Abdelaziz Bouteflika had been elected as president, enacted the 1999 Civil Concord Law and joined the global War on Terror, securing the reintegration of the country into the international community.

Against this backdrop, Algeria's official justification of the dismissal of the ENP in 2004-2005 was one of timing: the new EU policy came too early for a country whose Association Agreement was still not ratified and in force – which only occurred in September 2005 – and needed therefore time and resources to implement it. This was coupled with a more principled questioning of the Eurocentrism, unilateralism and lack of real co-ownership that the ENP approach and the very label of "neighbourhood" implied in comparison to the existing "partnership", according to this and other southern Mediterranean states (Jaidi 2005). Beyond the official discourse, observers attributed the Algerian reluctance to political economy factors – the financial strength (in terms of foreign exchange reserves) granted to the country by its gas and oil resources during the 2000s – and identity-related issues – an aversion to conditionality rooted in a long anticolonial and third-worldist nationalism. Structural and constructivist explanations concurred in accounting for an unusual foreign policy assertiveness, or 'Russian syndrome' (Darbouche 2008), which became explicit in February 2006 when Algeria proposed a Strategic Energy Partnership (SEP) with the EU, reproducing the terminology applied to the EU's relations with great powers and the BRICS. A memorandum of understanding on the SEP was eventually signed in July 2013.

Significantly, this milestone coincided with the adaptive u-turn made by Algiers in its relations with Brussels in the context of the 2011 Arab uprisings, when a new perception of regional fragility and encirclement led the Bouteflika regime to search for external backing (Darbouche and Dennison 2011). 2012 was a historic year in which Algeria for the first time invited an EU Election Observation Mission to monitor its legislative elections and communicated its readiness to participate in the ENP. Negotiations on a bilateral Action Plan were launched in October (Hernando de Larramendi and Fernández-Molina 2015: 261). However, this cooperative stance was short-lived and the Action Plan talks stretched on without bearing fruit. Algeria recovered its negotiating strength due to European expectations that it play a key role in curbing the security deterioration in the region and its diplomatic mediation in the Malian and Libyan political dialogues (*ibid.*: 251-252). Even in the midst of domestic instability, the Algerian assertiveness reached the point of calling for a renegotiation of the Association Agreement, which was considered to be damaging the country's economy, in August 2015.

Even odder is the situation of Libya, a country that has never established any contractual relations with the EU despite being mentioned as a potential participant in the ENP's framework documents from the outset. Libya's foreign policy role under the Gaddafi regime, and especially during the 1980s and 1990s, was quite akin to the archetype of the "villain" or "rogue state". Being widely tagged as a sponsor of international terrorism made the country be subject to international isolation

and UN, United States and EC/EU diplomatic (1986) and economic (1992) sanctions. The latter were very severe in the trade and energy domain, and prevented the maintenance of any bilateral political relations or form of multilateral integration within the EMP during this decade. This extreme form of negative conditionality represented the opposite end to the socialisation approach, yet it ended up being seen as equally ineffective. The cooperative turn made by Libyan foreign policy at the turn of the millennium, with the announcement of the abandonment of the programme of weapons of mass destruction and the payment of compensations to the victims of terrorist attacks previously sponsored by the Gaddafi regime, paved the way for a strikingly swift reintegration of the latter into the international community, irrespective of unchanged authoritarianism in the domestic sphere.

The EU established dialogue in 1999 and launched a new policy of “engagement” in 2003-2004 which consisted of four elements: the lifting of all economic sanctions, the arms embargo and restrictions on Libyan representatives (diplomats); the admission of Libya as observer into EMP –and later UfM – multilateral fora; the exchange of high-level official visits, including trips to Tripoli by several EU member states’ heads of government and officials of the Commission, as well as Gaddafi’s invitation to Brussels in April 2004; and some technical cooperation and financial assistance focusing largely on migration and border management. Observers are divided as to whether the European “realist” turnaround was driven more by commercial and energy interests – securing oil concessions and arms sales agreements – or by the EU’s growing reliance on southern Mediterranean states for migration control (Zoubir 2009; Lutterbeck 2009). Bilateral relations with certain EU member states, especially the former coloniser, Italy, also played a major role. The fact that the ENP documents presented this normalisation process as being conditional on Libya’s full adoption of the EMP acquis, which Gaddafi never accepted, did not make any difference in practice. Even though he dismissed the offer of full membership of the UfM in 2008, negotiations on a bilateral Framework Agreement – a rudimentary form of association agreement – that would institutionalise for the first time EU-Libya relations were launched in that same year (Bosse 2011: 451-455). The 2011 Libyan revolution against Gaddafi put an ironic end to the EU’s policy of engagement, in addition to exposing the limits or inadequacies of the ENP for the purpose of crisis management when the domestic violence led to an international military intervention led by France and the United Kingdom.

Conclusion

Neither the disruptions caused by the 2011 Arab uprisings and regime changes nor the increased complexity created by the externalisation of EU migration management and the enlargement of the Maghreb’s regional security complex to the Sahel have altered the major structural features of EU-Maghreb relations, which were to a great extent inherited from the colonial period. Structural political economy determinants and constructivist identity factors more closely related to agency feed into each other in favouring bilateral differentiation. Realist power politics within the Maghreb region has additionally contributed to obstructing any liberal region-building project and thus reinforcing the enduring hub-and-spoke arrangement of EU-Maghreb relations. As a result, each of the Maghreb countries has followed a distinct bilateral path in the context of the ENP. Only those of Morocco and Tunisia show significant parallels, as these two states have consistently played the role of “model students” of the EU and the EU has rewarded them with a similarly privileged treatment – including in post-2011 stage in spite of the divergence of their respective domestic political trajectories. Algeria’s more limited and zigzagging interest in participating in the ENP only materialised as a matter of necessity in 2012, at a time when the regime felt regionally isolated and weakened. Libya has not become a full-fledged member of the ENP in spite of the EU’s policy of “engagement” of the Gaddafi regime in the 2000s, since the point of departure was one of absence of any contractual relations whatsoever with the EU and the negotiations on a bilateral Framework Agreement were interrupted by the 2011 revolution.

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