



مركز بروكنجز الدوحة  
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POLICY BRIEFING

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MAY 2017

TOWARD A RECALIBRATION OF  
EU-NORTH AFRICA RELATIONS

ADEL ABDEL GHAFAR

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# TOWARD A RECALIBRATION OF EU-NORTH AFRICA RELATIONS

ADEL ABDEL GHAFAR<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Arriving in Rome on August 30, 2010, Moammar Gadhafi received the red-carpet treatment from then-Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, which included a ceremony with full military honors to celebrate the Italian-Libyan friendship accord signed in 2008. Berlusconi, constantly referring to Gadhafi as “my personal friend,” pledged a new era of Italian-Libyan relations that included multi-billion-dollar gas contracts and investments in Libyan infrastructure.<sup>2</sup> In Egypt, former President Hosni Mubarak had similar friendships with various European leaders during his three decades in power, including German chancellors Helmut Kohl and Gerhard Schroder, and French presidents François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac.<sup>3</sup> Chirac’s successor, Nicolas Sarkozy, considered former Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali a close personal friend. Dominique Strauss-Khan, a French politician and former head of the International Monetary Fund, argued that Tunisia under Ben Ali’s leadership was a “model for many emerging countries.”<sup>4</sup>

These apparent friendships between North African and European leaders were grounded in political and economic realpolitik that drove

their approach to EU-North Africa relations prior to the Arab uprisings. European leaders relied on their personal relationships and direct contact with North African autocrats to further the economic and security interests of their respective countries. When the 2010–11 uprisings swept across North Africa, it provided a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the EU to recalibrate its relationship with the region and move beyond the outdated framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the narrow agendas of individual member states.

A 2012 report by the European Council of Foreign Relations (ECFR) warned that if this opportunity was not seized, EU-North African relations risked a return to the old paradigm: Brussels occasionally pontificating on democracy and human rights while individual European states pursued short-term and bilateral economic and security agendas with each North African country.<sup>5</sup> Five years later, this is exactly what has occurred.

This policy briefing argues that now more than ever, there is a need to recalibrate EU-North Africa relations. While in the short term there is impetus to focus on security and illegal migration, this should not come at the expense

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<sup>2</sup> Stephan Faris, “Italy’s Bad Romance: How Berlusconi Went Gaga for Gaddafi,” *Time*, February 23, 2011, [http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2045328\\_2045333\\_2053363,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2045328_2045333_2053363,00.html).

<sup>3</sup> Florian Gathmann, Ulrike Putz, and Severin Weiland, “The West Loses Its Favorite Tyrant,” *Der Spiegel*, February 11, 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/protesters-defeat-mubarak-the-west-loses-its-favorite-tyrant-a-745104.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Stefan Simons, “France Make Awkward U-Turn on Tunisia Policy,” *Der Spiegel*, January 20, 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/dumping-old-friends-france-makes-awkward-u-turn-on-tunisia-policy-a-740551.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Dworkin and Nick Witney, “A Power Audit of EU-North Africa Relations,” European Council on Foreign Relations, September 2012, [http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/a\\_power\\_audit\\_of\\_eu\\_north\\_africa\\_relations](http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/a_power_audit_of_eu_north_africa_relations).

of democratization, human rights, and support for the rule of law. Research shows that in the long term, freer societies can develop faster and in a more sustainable way.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, with the European project itself under threat from Brexit and the isolationism and right-wing populism that is engulfing the continent, it is in the EU's interest to develop more constructive relationships with its southern neighbors.

This policy briefing will begin by giving some background and context on the EU's relationships with Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, both before and after the 2010–11 Arab uprisings. The paper will then provide policy recommendations directed to the EU to recalibrate EU-North Africa relations. The broad set of recommendations includes encouraging regional integration, increasing efforts to stabilize Libya, deepening economic cooperation, and formulating a unified EU approach to support democratization, human rights, and the rule of law.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### ALGERIA

Due to its historical links, France continues to strongly influence the EU's economic, political, and security policies toward Algeria. Spain also has more developed relations with Algeria than other EU nations, having signed a number of agreements with Algiers over the past two decades.<sup>7</sup> Overall, the EU is Algeria's largest trading partner, as it absorbs half of Algerian

trade. Energy and mining products make up a dominant 96.7 percent of Algerian exports to the EU, and Algeria is the EU's third largest energy provider.<sup>8</sup>

During the mid-1990s, the EU embarked on an ambitious plan to promote democracy, stronger economic ties, and political stability in the Mediterranean region, including Algeria. In 1995, the EU laid out the European-Mediterranean Partnership. This was followed by the aforementioned ENP, an updated framework for engagement with North Africa, in 2003. Unfortunately, the ENP encourages EU members to strengthen ties with North Africa bilaterally, not through a unified strategy. Therefore, despite the EU's efforts to approach Algeria with joint initiatives to improve economic and political stability in the country, individual EU members have continued to engage with Algeria directly.

Political scientist Ayşe Aslihan Çelenk argues that “the major legacy of the colonial experience and the war of liberation was the strong, centralized state structure designed by the military and civilian elite, which affected the prospects for democratization in Algeria.”<sup>9</sup> This observation, combined with the memory of Algeria's civil war, drives French and EU policy toward the country, with the objectives of strong economic ties and political stability enjoying preference over democratization.

These objectives regarding Algerian-European relations became more apparent in the post-Arab uprising environment. Instead of

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<sup>6</sup> Morton H. Halperin, Joseph T. Siegle, and Michael M. Weinstein, *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> See for example Ministry of the Spanish Presidency, “Tratado de amistad, buena vecindad y cooperación entre el Reino de España y la República Argelina Democrática y Popular,” October 8, 2002, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2003-20616>; “Algeria Reinforces Ties with Spain,” *North Africa Post*, April 16, 2013, <http://northafricapost.com/3382-algeria-reinforces-ties-with-spain.html>.

<sup>8</sup> “Trade: Algeria,” European Commission, updated April 17, 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/algeria/>; Sara Stefanini, “EU's Energy Hopes for Algeria Tied to Leadership Change,” *Politico*, August 18, 2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/eus-algeria-energy-oil-gas-pipeline-abdelaziz-bouteflika/>.

<sup>9</sup> Ayşe Aslihan Çelenk, “Promoting Democracy in Algeria: The EU Factor and the Preferences of the Political Elite,” *Democratization* 16, no. 1 (2009): 180, doi:10.1080/13510340802575916.

promoting the popular sentiment in favor of democratization throughout North Africa, the EU chose to stand by the autocratic president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, whom it continues to perceive as a guarantor of political stability.

### MOROCCO

Under the ENP, Morocco receives the most EU funding of any North African country, enjoying a privileged economic and political relationship. The European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI) provides the framework for all financial assistance to be distributed to Morocco between 2014 and 2020. Morocco also receives benefits from Erasmus+, a multi-billion-euro EU initiative that seeks to provide educational and sports programs to youth in participating states.<sup>10</sup>

Morocco also has a privileged security relationship with the EU, especially with France and Spain. Morocco often participates in joint military and security exercises with some of its European neighbors, highlighting the strong emphasis placed on security by the EU's programs. Additionally, Morocco's intelligence services maintain strong relationships with some of their European counterparts, notably the French.<sup>11</sup>

Morocco does receive EU funding for democracy promotion programs, but King Mohammed VI maintains a strong grip on the levers of power, as did his predecessor, King Hassan II. The strong relationship between the current and previous Moroccan

kings and European political elites makes it difficult for the EU to suggest sweeping reforms, which could potentially undermine the authority of the sovereign. Specifically, the Franco-Moroccan relationship has had ups and downs over the years, but as some commentators note, it generally warms after short periods of estrangement.<sup>12</sup>

### TUNISIA

When the 2010–11 Arab uprisings started in Tunisia, the EU was caught off guard. The initial response was to strongly back autocratic leaders despite the increasing protests. Just three days before Ben Ali was forced from his long-held position of power, Michèle Alliot-Marie, then-French foreign minister, proposed sending security forces to help prop up the embattled Tunisian regime. This proposal was a continuation of the policies of President Chirac, which were characterized by the mantra of “stability first.”<sup>13</sup>

However after the overthrow of Ben Ali, the EU strongly supported the Tunisian transition. In fact, Tunisia is the only country in North Africa where the EU did not revert to its pre-uprising approach of valuing security over democratization and the promotion of human rights.

In the aftermath of the 2010–11 revolution, the EU rapidly responded to the evolving economic and political challenges and almost doubled the amount of aid allocated to Tunisia for the 2011–13 period (from 240 million euros to 445 million). The EU's assistance was

<sup>10</sup> For 2014–2017, the EU's bilateral assistance to Morocco under the ENI ranged between a minimum allocation of 728 million euros and a maximum allocation of 890 million euros. See “European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations: Morocco,” European Commission, updated December 6, 2016, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/morocco/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/morocco/index_en.htm).

<sup>11</sup> Reuters, “France's Hollande Thanks Morocco for Help after Paris Attacks,” *al-Arabiya*, November 21, 2015, <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/21/France-s-Hollande-thanks-Morocco-for-help-after-Paris-attacks.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Hakim Ankar, “France Buries Hatchet with Morocco after Diplomatic Row,” *The New Arab*, February 12, 2015, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/politics/2015/2/12/france-buries-hatchet-with-morocco-after-diplomatic-row>.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Traynor and Kim Willsher, “Tunisian Protests Have Caught Nicolas Sarkozy Off-Guard, Say Opposition,” *The Guardian*, January 17, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/17/tunisian-protests-sarkozy-off-guard>.

intended to support economic recovery, judicial reform, gender equality, disadvantaged urban districts, border management, and migrant protection, as well as a program focusing on cross-cutting issues such as the development of civil society and capacity building.<sup>14</sup> The current agenda of EU-Tunisia cooperation is spelled out in the Privileged Partnership Action Plan 2013–2017 and financed mainly through the ENI, providing specifications on sectors and operations to be financed.<sup>15</sup>

### LIBYA

Prior to the Arab uprisings, Libya and the EU exhibited a robust trade relationship, accounting for 70 percent of Libya's total trade. Despite being one of the few Mediterranean countries that did not have a free trade agreement with the EU, Libya was one of the EU's major energy suppliers.<sup>16</sup> Even when Libya was a pariah state from the 1980s through the early 2000s, Italian oil and gas companies maintained their presence there.<sup>17</sup>

Starting in 2003, Europe began expanding its relationship with Libya beyond trade and into the security sphere. As the former colonial ruler, Italy naturally demonstrated the greatest interest in cultivating a better relationship. This resulted in the now infamous friendship between Berlusconi and Gadhafi. Their close relationship spawned several important

agreements, culminating with the signing of the 2008 Treaty on Friendship, Partnership, and Cooperation, also known as the Benghazi Agreement.<sup>18</sup> As part of the agreement, Libya was to receive \$5 billion that would serve as reparations for the suffering caused by the Italian colonization, and to finance numerous infrastructure projects.<sup>19</sup>

After Libya's uprising and the ensuing civil war, however, Italy suspended its Benghazi Agreement commitments.<sup>20</sup> Despite this, as early as February 2012, Italian diplomats expressed a desire to restore relations between the two countries. Clearly, the motivation on the Italian side is to maintain a vigorous trade partnership, as 25 percent of Italy's oil and gas comes from Libya. Additionally, Italy plays an instrumental role in training Libya's security and police forces.<sup>21</sup>

Since 2011, EU support to Libya has been focused heavily on security and humanitarian aid that has sought to bolster the country's borders and stability.<sup>22</sup> However, even after the 2015 Skhirat agreement established a U.N.-backed national unity government, Libya's political deadlock has continued, hindering the development of an EU-Libya relationship that goes beyond cooperation on security matters.

Moreover, European engagement in Libya has not been unified. France has allegedly supported

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<sup>14</sup> "European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations: Tunisia," European Commission, updated December 6, 2016, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/tunisia/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/tunisia/index_en.htm).

<sup>15</sup> See "Trade: Tunisia," European Commission, updated April 17, 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/tunisia/>.

<sup>16</sup> "Trade: Libya," European Commission, updated April 17, 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/libya/>.

<sup>17</sup> Natalino Ronzitti, "The Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya: New Prospects for Cooperation in the Mediterranean?" *Bulletin of Italian Politics* 1, no.1 (2009): 126.

<sup>18</sup> Emanuela Paoletti, "Power Relations and International Migration: The Case of Italy and Libya," *Political Studies* 59, no. 2 (2011): 274, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.2010.00849.x.

<sup>19</sup> Ronzitti, "Treaty on Friendship," 127.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> David Willey, "Italy and Libya Move to Re-establish Old Friendship," *BBC News*, February 4, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-16854355>.

<sup>22</sup> Assem Dandashly, "The EU Response to Regime Change in the Wake of the Arab Revolt: Differential Implementation," *Journal of European Integration* 37, no. 1 (2015): 45, doi:10.1080/07036337.2014.975988.



Field Marshal Khalifa Hifter in the east with weapons, intelligence, and special forces. After the death of French soldiers in Libya was confirmed in 2016, protests against France's involvement erupted in Tripoli and Misrata.<sup>23</sup> The protests, coupled with complaints by U.N.-backed Prime Minister Fayez Serraj to the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) about French support of Hifter, seemed to cause a change in French policy. In September 2016, Serraj visited President François Hollande in Paris, and they held a press conference in which Hollande promised full backing to Serraj.<sup>24</sup> Since then the French have dramatically reduced their support for Hifter.

## EGYPT

After the fall of Mubarak's regime in early 2011, an opening for democratic change in Egypt emerged, but it did not take hold. In an effort to promote democracy after the 2011 uprising, the EU injected 20 million euros into Egyptian civil society and approved other socio-economic programs with the promise of a 132 million euro aid package. The EU was willing to support a democratic transition through financial aid packages, but the Egyptian authorities resisted its political initiatives, like its offer to monitor parliamentary and presidential elections.<sup>25</sup>

Realizing that democratic change in Egypt would not materialize, the EU shifted its foreign policy objectives and instead prioritized the maintenance of political stability in the

country. When President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi took power in June 2014, his regime perpetrated a large-scale crackdown on political dissent, essentially suspending civil liberties for Egyptians in the name of state security. Although the EU voiced concern over the political violence that surrounded the popularly backed coup that deposed former President Mohammed Morsi in 2013, a similar call for calm or condemnation never came during the violent crackdowns subsequently committed at the behest of President el-Sissi.<sup>26</sup>

On the contrary, European leaders embraced el-Sissi. Hollande attended the inauguration ceremony for the newly expanded Suez Canal as his guest of honor in August 2015. Additionally, France seemed to reward el-Sissi's regime for maintaining stability in Egypt through several lucrative arms deals.<sup>27</sup> German and Italian leaders lauded el-Sissi, and citing their "strategic partnership" with Egypt in combating Islamic terrorism, rewarded the regime with valuable trade deals and energy contracts.<sup>28</sup>

The trade deals several European countries made with the Egyptian regime signal a return to the pre-2011 strategy of prioritizing security and political stability over human rights and democratization. The latest developments in the EU's relationship with Egypt harken back to the times of Mubarak, where European countries did not actively attempt to address human rights issues, but instead expanded trade partnerships and offered economic benefits.

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<sup>23</sup> "Libya: Tripoli Condemns French Military Involvement," *Al Jazeera*, July 22, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/07/libya-tripoli-condemns-french-military-involvement-160721142118151.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Jacopo Barigazzi, "Diplomatic Divide over Libya Threatens EU Unity on Defense," *Politico*, October 12, 2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/accusations-of-french-ambiguity-in-libya-show-difficult-eu-security-integration/>.

<sup>25</sup> Dandashly, "EU Response to Regime Change," 47.

<sup>26</sup> "Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on Developments in Egypt," EU, July 3, 2013, accessed May 8, 2017, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137704.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137704.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Alain Gresh, "June 30, 3 Years On: How Europe has Re-oriented Itself on Egypt," *Mada Masr*, June 30, 2016, <http://www.madamasr.com/en/2016/06/30/opinion/politics/june-30-3-years-on-how-europe-has-re-oriented-itself-on-egypt/>.

<sup>28</sup> Alain Gresh, "Europe's Convenient Relationship with Egypt," *The New Arab*, July 12, 2016, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2016/7/12/europes-convenient-relationship-with-egypt>.



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A common thread running through EU relations with North Africa is the focus on stability and security. While this is an understandable goal, the events of 2010–11 showed that North African autocrats cannot be counted on to deliver either. A report by the Barcelona Center for International Affairs argues that “the EU may not have the power to transform these realities, but being trapped once again in the illusion of stability in the region is a guarantee of failure.”<sup>29</sup> What is needed is a new, integrated approach that involves support for human rights and the rule of law, a stronger push to mediate Libya’s conflict, and deeper economic and energy cooperation. To be clear, such a recalibration will not solve all of Europe and North Africa’s problems, but pursuing these policies will certainly benefit both regions.

### *REVISE THE ENP TO ENSURE A UNIFIED EU APPROACH*

There is consensus within the EU that the ENP and its policy tools need a reboot. This is clear in the 2015 review of the ENP conducted by the EU Commission and the European External Action Service, in consultation with neighboring states. Nonetheless, there are some inherent contradictions in that review.<sup>30</sup>

On one hand, the document states, “Human rights and democracy will continue to be an agenda item in our political dialogue with all

our partners.” On the other hand, another part of the document states, “Differentiation and greater mutual ownership will be the hallmark of the new ENP, recognising that not all partners *aspire* to EU rules and standards, and reflecting the wishes of each country concerning the nature and focus of its partnership with the EU” (emphasis added).

Arguably, this differentiation is diplomatic speak that implies that the EU will put aside its focus on human rights when it is convenient. Indeed, one European parliamentarian commented that “such elasticity in support for human rights and democratization is in full contradiction of European values, but is an unfortunate manifestation of how the security and economic interests of member states supersedes EU policy.”<sup>31</sup>

This should not be the case. While understanding the peculiarity of each case in North Africa, the EU should always stand by its espoused values. This is not for purely idealistic reasons, but also for its own interest. In the long run, free and democratic societies are more likely to develop socio-economically, whereas authoritarian rule arguably can and will foster more instability.<sup>32</sup>

While there are limitations to the EU’s leverage in North Africa considering the current problems that the region faces, the EU is not without influence, considering existing economic, political, and security ties. The key point for EU policymakers to understand is that the conditions that sparked the 2011 uprisings

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<sup>29</sup> Eduard Soler i Lecha and Nathalie Tocci, “Implications of the EU Global Strategy for the Middle East and North Africa,” Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, Opinion no. 424, July 2016, [http://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication\\_series/opinion/mediterraneo\\_y\\_oriente\\_medio/implications\\_of\\_the\\_eu\\_global\\_strategy\\_for\\_the\\_middle\\_east\\_and\\_north\\_africa](http://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/opinion/mediterraneo_y_oriente_medio/implications_of_the_eu_global_strategy_for_the_middle_east_and_north_africa).

<sup>30</sup> European Commission, “Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy,” November 2015, [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118\\_joint-communication\\_review-of-the-enp\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Interview with the author, Brussels, November 2016.

<sup>32</sup> For example, see Andy McKay and Polly Vizard, “Rights and Economic Growth: Inevitable Conflict or ‘Common Ground?’” in *Human Rights and Poverty Reduction*, ed. Tammie O’Neil (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2005); Jack Donnelly, “Human Rights, Democracy, and Development,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (Aug. 1999): 608–632; World Bank, “Human Rights and Economics: Tensions and Positive Relationships,” March 2012, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PROJECTS/Resources/40940-1331068268558/Report\\_Development\\_Fragility\\_Human\\_Rights.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PROJECTS/Resources/40940-1331068268558/Report_Development_Fragility_Human_Rights.pdf).

still exist, and if they are not dealt with, an even more turbulent wave of unrest is likely.

### *MEDIATE LIBYA'S CONFLICT*

A key aspect of any long-term EU approach toward North Africa should be the stabilization and rebuilding of Libya. The EU's major role in helping to mediate the Iran nuclear deal gives it added credibility and experience to pursue other mediation efforts in the region. Libya is the linchpin of a stable North Africa, and thus mediation efforts are key for regional stability and prosperity.

The EU's current focus on stemming illegal migration through the proposed construction of camps in Libya may be helpful to European interests in the short term, but it does not address the fundamental issues that Libya faces in the long term.<sup>33</sup> The EU and Italy's most recent deal with Libya has drawn sharp criticism from many quarters, including Libyan NGOs, which have argued that the deal showed an "immoral and inhumane" attitude toward migrants.<sup>34</sup> In addition, Mattia Toaldo at the ECFR argues that there are concerns over whether this deal would practically work.<sup>35</sup>

EU policy toward Libya should be unified and carried out within the context of supporting

reconciliation and providing economic aid. European efforts to uphold the Support to Libya for Economic Integration, Diversification and Sustainable Employment project should be built upon.<sup>36</sup>

On the reconciliation side, the EU should take a more active role in mediating between Libya's warring parties. Further, it should continue to use its leverage to encourage regional players such as Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Qatar to support reconciliation between the major factions. The EU should also coordinate with Tunisia and Algeria, who have a key interest in preventing Libya's conflict from escalating.<sup>37</sup> As a recent International Crisis Group report recommended, the international community should push for a reboot of the Skhirat agreement, which is failing.<sup>38</sup> This should involve a move to deescalate the conflict in hotspots such as the Gulf of Sirte, where Libyan factions recently fought for control over key oil facilities.<sup>39</sup>

The April 2017 meeting that took place in Abu Dhabi between Serraj and Hifter is a promising step toward reconciliation, but there is a long way to go.<sup>40</sup> Libyans continue to face a number of urgent issues including electricity shortages, a liquidity crunch, and a health care crisis, all metastasizing in a challenging security

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<sup>33</sup> Lizzie Dearden, "EU Malta Summit: Leaders Warned against Stranding Thousands of Refugees in 'Concentration Camps' in Libya Deal," *The Independent*, February 3, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/eu-malta-summit-leaders-warn-strand-thousands-refugees-libya-deal-concentration-camps-crisis-a7560956.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Alessandra Bocchi, "EU and Italy Migration Deal with Libya Draws Sharp Criticism from Libyan NGOs," *Libya Herald*, February 10, 2017, <https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/02/10/eu-and-italy-migration-deal-with-libya-draws-sharp-criticism-from-libyan-ngos/>.

<sup>35</sup> Mattia Toaldo, "The EU Deal with Libya on Migration: A Question of Fairness and Effectiveness," European Council on Foreign Relations, February 14, 2017, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_the\\_eu\\_deal\\_with\\_libya\\_on\\_migration\\_a\\_question\\_of\\_fairness\\_a](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_eu_deal_with_libya_on_migration_a_question_of_fairness_a).

<sup>36</sup> "Economic Diversification Programme Backed By EU and France to Be Launched Monday," *Libya Herald*, November 23, 2016, <https://www.libyaherald.com/2016/11/23/economic-diversification-programme-backed-by-eu-and-france-to-be-launched-monday/>.

<sup>37</sup> Mattia Toaldo, "How to Stabilize Libya if Haftar Won't Play Ball," *Middle East Eye*, February 23, 2017, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/how-stabilise-libya-if-haftar-won-t-play-ball-988020679>.

<sup>38</sup> International Crisis Group, "The Libyan Political Agreement: Time for a Reset," Middle East and North Africa Report no. 170, November 2016, 13, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/170-the-libyan-political-agreement.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> "Factions Fight for Two Libyan Oil Terminals," *Al Jazeera*, March 6, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/factions-fight-libyan-oil-terminals-170305213126297.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Taimur Khan, "Libya Rivals Sarraj and Haftar Meet Face to Face in Abu Dhabi," *The National*, May 2, 2017, <http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/libya-rivals-sarraj-and-haftar-meet-face-to-face-in-abu-dhabi>.

environment. Further reconciliation talks should be followed by concrete efforts by the Libyan authorities and the international community, led by the EU, to deal with these issues, which are severely affecting Libyan citizens.

### *DEEPEN ECONOMIC COOPERATION*

On the economic front, it is in the EU's long-term interest to deepen its relationship with North Africa. The election of Donald Trump, Brexit, and significant domestic opposition on both sides of the Atlantic have effectively killed off the proposed U.S.-EU Transatlantic Trade Investment Partnership. Speaking in Brussels in November 2016, EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstroem said, "TTIP will probably be in the freezer for quite some time."<sup>41</sup> Yet the EU's recent trade deal with Canada reaffirmed its intent to deepen and formalize its trade relations globally.<sup>42</sup> While Morocco and Tunisia enjoy privileged relations with the EU, cooperation with Egypt, Algeria, and Libya should be deepened.

Further economic cooperation and integration is key for stability. In North Africa, the population has reached a staggering 183 million, and is forecasted to continue to grow rapidly.<sup>43</sup> The largest segment of that population is youth, which could either be an important part of North Africa's development and growth, or have a negative impact on the

stability and security of the region, and even Europe. Therefore, EU efforts at deepening economic cooperation should also have a focus on the education and employment of youth.

Increased European investments in industry and infrastructure in North Africa will provide not only jobs, but also opportunities to re-industrialize, which would foster value-added production, both for domestic consumption and for export.<sup>44</sup> The establishment of economic free zones that allow for greater movement of goods is also likely to have a positive impact on regional economic integration, as well as on growth on both sides of the Mediterranean.

Further investment through platforms such as the European Commission's ANIMA project will contribute toward improving business conditions, foreign direct investment flows, and overall EU trade with North Africa.<sup>45</sup> A report by the German Institute for the Study of Labor argues that the volume of trade between the EU and the Middle East and North Africa region could be 3.5 to 4 times larger than it currently is, providing the two regions are able to reach higher levels of integration.<sup>46</sup>

### *SUPPORT SOLAR ENERGY INITIATIVES AS ENABLERS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION*

The lack of integration and cooperation among North African states is a barrier to deepening

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<sup>41</sup> Cyrus Engineer, "TTIP Dead By Christmas? EU Pessimistic on Trade Deal, Says 'Ball in Trump's Court,'" *Express*, November 11, 2016, <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/731410/TTIP-Donald-Trump-EU-trade-deal-Cecilia-Malmstroem>.

<sup>42</sup> "Trade: EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement," European Commission, updated February 16, 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/in-focus/ceta/>.

<sup>43</sup> World Development Indicators, "Population, total" and "Population growth (annual %)," World Bank DataBank, updated April 27, 2017, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?>

<sup>44</sup> "North Africa and the EU: Partnership for Reform and Growth," Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Regional Programme Political Dialogue and Regional Integration South Mediterranean, October 11, 2016, <http://www.kas.de/poldimed/en/publications/46648/>.

<sup>45</sup> The ANIMA project was established to reinforce the capabilities of South Mediterranean investment promotion agencies, focusing mainly on institutional support, network creation, and regional investment promotion. See Sebastian Große-Puppenthal, "A Balancing Act: EU's Development and Commercial Goals in North Africa," *Talking Points* (blog), European Center for Development Policy Management, March 11, 2016, <http://ecdpm.org/talking-points/a-balancing-act-eu-development-and-commercial-goals-in-north-africa/>.

<sup>46</sup> Anna Ferragina, Giorgia Giovannetti, and Francesco Pastor, "A Tale of Parallel Integration Processes: A Gravity Analysis of EU Trade with Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European Countries," Institute for the Study of Labor, Discussion Paper no. 1829, October 2005, <http://ftp.iza.org/dp1829.pdf>.

the region's relationship with the EU. North African policymakers should push for further regional integration, as it would enable their countries to speak to the EU, and indeed the world, with a more united voice. A European member of parliament commented, "It is increasingly difficult to formulate a unified European position towards North Africa while speaking to five different neighboring governments who can't agree on much."<sup>47</sup>

Regional integration will not happen overnight, but through a process. In the case of the EU itself, cooperation started in the coal and steel industries with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).<sup>48</sup> The idea was that if the production of coal was centralized among European states, the probability of another war would decrease.<sup>49</sup> While it is highly unlikely that North African states would combine industries at this stage, if they collaborated in the field of renewable energy in general, and on solar energy in particular, it would provide wins for all.

According to the World Bank, North Africa has some of the world's best solar energy resources.<sup>50</sup> The EU has made significant investments in Morocco's green energy sector, and specifically the Noor Ouarzazate solar project, which is slated to become the largest concentrated solar power plant in the world. Increasing such investments in

Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and even Libya, upon stabilization, could make North Africa a global solar energy powerhouse.

This objective has long been espoused by the Desertec industrial initiative, which was backed by a number of German firms including E.ON, Munich Re, Siemens, and Deutsche Bank. While the project has faltered due to a number of issues including onerous funding requirements and European countries' financial struggles, Morocco nonetheless went ahead with the Ouarzazate project.<sup>51</sup> North African governments, with the help of European partners, should do the same.

If similar plants were built across North Africa, they could be connected in a regional power grid that would enable its states to diversify their own energy mixes, and boost exports to Europe. According to the CEO of a European energy supplier, close cooperation on solar energy could be the gateway toward further regional integration, as the ECSC was in Europe.<sup>52</sup>

There is also a strong environmental case to be made for EU-North Africa cooperation on renewable energy, as the impact of climate change continues to affect Mediterranean countries. If temperatures continue to rise, water levels will as well, resulting in coastal flooding and erosion. The worst affected areas are likely to be the Nile Delta, Venice, and

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with the author, Brussels, November 2016.

<sup>48</sup> See Desmond Dinan, "Fifty Years of European Integration: A Remarkable Achievement," *Fordham International Law Journal* 31, no. 5 (2008): 1118–43; Miroslav Jovanović, *European Economic Integration: Limits and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2002); Karen Alter and David Steinberg, "The Theory and Reality of the European Coal and Steel Community," Buffet Center for International and Comparative Studies, Working Paper no. 07-001, January 2007, <http://buffett.northwestern.edu/research/publications/working-papers/buffett/the-theory-and-reality-of-the-european-coal-and-steel-community.html>.

<sup>49</sup> Metter Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Daniel Verdier, "European Integration as a Solution to War," *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 1 (2005): 99–135.

<sup>50</sup> "The Middle East and North Africa Concentrated Solar Power Knowledge and Innovation Program," World Bank, November 8, 2016, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/brief/the-middle-east-and-north-africa-concentrated-solar-power-knowledge-and-innovation-program>.

<sup>51</sup> Selwa Calderbank, "Desertec Abandons Sahara Solar Power Export Dream," Euractiv, updated August 9, 2013, <http://www.euractiv.com/section/trade-society/news/desertec-abandons-sahara-solar-power-export-dream/>.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with the author, Doha, March 2017.

Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city.<sup>53</sup> Investing in renewable energy and energy integration throughout the Mediterranean should not be viewed as a luxury, but as necessary for survival.

## CONCLUSION

These are challenging times on both sides of the Mediterranean. Brexit, Trump, refugee flows, and the ascendance of right-wing populism are shaking the European project to its core. In North Africa, ruling elites are scrambling to revive and recalibrate authoritarian bargains that were strongly challenged in 2011.

As European leaders grapple with a wide array of domestic, regional, and international challenges, it may seem easier to revert to the pre-2011 mode of EU-North Africa relations, when they embraced and supported autocrats. To do so would be a grave mistake. Clearly, there is an urgent need to recalibrate EU-North Africa relations, where cooperation on economic and security issues does not come at the expense of support for democratization and the rule of law. While such a recalibration will not solve all of Europe and North Africa's problems, it will help create the conditions for a healthy, sustainable, and mutually beneficial relationship.

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<sup>53</sup> See Gaia Galassi and Giorgio Spada, "Sea-level Rise in the Mediterranean Sea By 2050: Roles of Terrestrial Ice Melt, Steric Effects and Glacial Isostatic Adjustment," *Global and Planetary Change* 123 (2014): 55–66, doi:10.1016/j.gloplacha.2014.10.007.

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