SECURITY POLICIES AND DEFENCE PRIORITIES

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When analysing the security and defence policies of northern African countries, one must distinguish between Egypt and the countries of the Maghreb, and treat the latter individually. The first distinction is necessary because one is dealing with separate sub-regions, and the second because there exist between these states conflictive relationships that results in them forming distinct strategies and security and defence options. In this domain, policies, in particular alliances, have conveyed the wish of each country to distinguish itself from the others.

Whereas Egypt's strategic options and defence priorities will continue to be linked to the presence of Israel and affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict, neither Israel nor the West, which is seen as Israel's main source of support, will be central to the threat perception in the Maghreb, despite the public's mistrust. Libya can be considered something of an exception, but in general concerns in the Maghreb tend to be linked to the situation within the region. Border issues rather than the public's perception have had the greater impact on the definition of governments' priorities and defence policies.

One of the major difficulties encountered when analysing the security and defence policies of countries in the region is that it is often difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins, because of the nature of the regimes and because they again feel particularly threatened from within by the rise in Muslim extremism.

Another difficulty, which has been mentioned earlier, is that apart from Egypt, these countries do not have any tradition of conducting strategic and defence studies; in other words there is a lack of documentation, information and debate in general.

Given these limitations, their security and defence policies will be examined using a number of criteria so as to bring out the different viewpoints. The sequence of criteria chosen, which is the same for all countries, does not imply any order of priority, and the space devoted to each point depends only on its importance for the country in question. The criteria are:

- the perception of threats and the evolution of those threats;

- civil-military relations and their impact on security policy;

- the main lines of security and defence policy;

- possible defence policy in the near future.

Egypt

The direct, external threat has been particularly significant in Egypt. Even after independence in 1922, the country was subjected to British presence and influence in internal affairs of state. Even before the end of this process (in 1956, with the nationalisation of the Suez Canal), that is, as from 1948, Israel was perceived as a real threat, and that was to affect its defence policy in a determining, lasting way.[43]

Libya was also considered to be a potential threat on account of the growth in its military potential (a minor confrontation between the two armies was to occur in 1977), its territorial ambitions (the conflict with chad is an example of this) and its support for actions to destabilise the region, particularly since the 1970s. Currently, the threat from Libya is at once less credible and less probable, and this has led to a political *rapprochement* between the two countries. Relations with Khartoum are developing in a less positive way, indeed they continue to deteriorate. In addition to their territorial dispute over the Halaib 'triangle' that has continued since Sudan became independent,[44] President Hosni Mubarak accuses the Sudan Government, a strong defender of Islamist ideology, of supporting extremists in Egypt, while Khartoum maintains a relationship with Iran that is perceived by Cairo as an alliance that is dangerous for national, or even regional stability.

However, despite the strategy of all-round defence that the Egyptian authorities have seemed to favour since the end of the Cold War, other external threats seem to them less serious than that once posed by Israel and over which uncertainty still hangs. Despite such questioning and a certain residual mistrust, a war between the two countries appears improbable at present. Questions of 'economic security' and internal security are what now predominates. The challenges are decreasingly military in nature, but can have an effect in this area: control of the waters of the Nile, which is considered vitally important; threats to stability in the Gulf region and consequences for the Egyptian economy; the danger of the spread of radical Islamism (with the support of Iran and Sudan[45]), which has become a more significant potential threat because of the economic and social problems it could create.

In the field of civil-military relations, the wars with Israel and the perception of this permanent threat, not only to Egypt's territorial integrity but to the Arab world in general, have helped to strengthen the political role of the armed forces. Following the *putsch* of 1952,[46] the army became the backbone of the new regime and strengthening Egypt's military capability became a priority. In 1967, after its defeat at the hands of Israel in the Six Day War, the army relinquished its part in active political life but has retained a non-negligible, indeed decisive influence over matters concerning national security and defence, such as the definition of defence priorities and investments in the defence sector. The army is also an important economic actor, which allows it to maintain a political role. On the one hand, it is a source of public contracts related to the infrastructure and the modernisation of the country; many former military personnel have moreover become businessmen and are managers or help to manage companies. On the other hand, the Egyptian defence industry, which is the largest in the Arab world, represents a big proportion of Egyptian industry, even if its growth is irregular; during the 1980s it employed 70,000 people and had an annual turnover of $340 million.[47] Today, major investment is in hand that could lead to the development and modernisation of other sectors of Egyptian industry.

Despite the changes that have taken place in the regional environment, maintaining a powerful army that is even capable of facing up to Israel's military potential is for Egypt still an essential objective. The declared mission of the armed forces is still to defend the country against any attack from Israel. With a more powerful army than those of its Maghreb neighbours, in terms of both numbers and equipment,[48] Egypt would be easily capable of countering any military threat posed by Libya or Sudan, but is still in a position of weakness *vis-à-vis* Israel. Programmes to re-equip and train its military forces are designed particularly to modernise them and make them mobile and professional, in other words capable of responding to a variety of situations. These programmes, which were begun in 1983 and cover successive five-year periods (the third started in 1993), benefit from financial aid from the United States.[49] They have enabled the Egyptian army to renew and replace its equipment, for the most part of Soviet origin, with Western equipment; the process has been completed in the army and is continuing in the navy and air force.

Having benefited from substantial financial aid, in particular American, and the cancellation of a part of its debt in return for its participation in the Gulf war, Egypt has increased its defence effort. Its defence budget has risen continually: according to some estimates, it rose from $1.6 billion in 1993 to $2.96 billion in 1995, and defence expenditure could represent over 5% of GDP.[50]

Egypt's decision to have modern armed forces capable of rapid reaction merely reflects a more general tendency in its foreign policy since the beginning of the 1970s: a gradual distancing from the Soviet Union and *rapprochement* with the United States which, following the signing of the Camp David accords in 1979, became its principal support and guarantor against Israel.[51] In this context of closer political, economic and military ties with the West, Egypt resumed military cooperation, including in the areas of defence industry and training, which included combined exercises, in particular with Britain, France and the United States.

Furthermore, relations with the countries of the Gulf have always been a priority for Egypt, which sees security in that region as an element of its own security.[52] In particular, Egypt is attempting to re-launch cooperation with them in the field of defence.

Military participation in peace operations is another justification for the modernisation of Egypt's armed forces, and it is worth noting the number of Egyptian troops participating in UNpeacekeeping operations (2,192 in 1994); they are by far the largest contingent among northern African countries and surpassed in the Middle East only by Jordan.[53] This participation is seen as helping in the development of relations with other states, the Egyptian armed forces' military and technical training, and as a factor that enhances Egypt's international credibility.

It is unlikely that Egypt will reduce its defence spending during the next decade; it is even tending to raise it, but it will have to take account of the worsening of its economic and financial problems. The crisis also concerns Western countries, who at present represent the most important source of financial aid to Egypt, and the countries of the Gulf, which Egypt would like to involve in its plans for both national and Arab military modernisation. These factors could moreover help regional

cooperation in security and defence among Arab countries, something that Cairo wishes and encourages (as illustrated by the recent Damas declaration). However, divisions, distrust and conflicts between Arab countries, and their 'every man for himself' attitude that persists in almost all spheres, prevents progress towards a system of collective defence in the region, an idea that has existed since the creation of the Arab League.

A reduction in defence spending is all the more difficult to envisage since Egypt has not yet completed the restructuring and re-equipping of its armed forces. In particular, it is trying to improve its ballistic missile capability,[54] but does not consider nuclear, biological or chemical (NBC) weapons of mass destruction to be an option. Although it has the means to defend itself against chemical weapons (its present equipment is Soviet and Western in origin), and possesses the means to produce them, there is no indication that Egypt is pursuing research into biological and chemical weapons. Egypt's refusal to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention in January 1993 was intended more as an instrument of negotiation and a means of applying pressure than a declaration of intent, and should be analysed in the framework of the nuclear debate in the Middle East. Its principal concerns are the threat that Israel's arsenal poses to the country and the region, and the risk of proliferation in the Middle East where Iraq, and more recently Iran, are accused of trying to develop a military nuclear capability. Egypt has no military nuclear ambitions, but is concerned at the lack of coordination of nuclear and chemical arms control measures in the region, as this encourages greater militarisation.[55]

Tunisia

Tunisia's defence policy has often been marked by the country's turbulent relations with its Algerian and Libyan neighbours,[56] which are militarily stronger and have hegemonic ambitions, whereas Tunisia is smaller and has limited resources. Even though the reasons are different in the two cases, the difficult relationship with its neighbours is seen today as the main source of threat.[57]

If the risks of military confrontation seems at present remote, they are sometimes more plausible in the case of Libya. This perception is heightened by the more or less permanent tensions in the two countries' political relations, often due to incidents such as the expulsion in 1985 of Tunisians resident in Libya, the closing of borders or mutual accusations of attempts at internal destabilisation. Libya's potential in terms of military equipment - even if the standard of training of the military casts doubt on its effectiveness in practice - the nature of the Gaddafi regime, border disputes and certain differences that the question of economic zones continues to create, are important factors in the evaluation of the threat from Libya. They are, moreover, accentuated by the rise in radical Islamism in the region and the fear that it will contribute to internal destabilisation. Libya is in particular accused of training and supporting Tunisian and Algerian Islamists, not in order to promote the Islamist ideology (something with which Tunis reproaches Sudan, Iran and Saudi Arabia) but with a view to undermining internal stability.

Algeria is also seen as a potential threat, but of a different kind. Whereas the military regime and nationalist ideology of this country were once perceived as threats, today the concern is of a civil war between Islamists and the army, and the implications of

this for stability within Tunisia.[58] Even if it is the Algerian military regime that emerges strengthened from this crisis, it will not be seen as a danger as long as it continues to give priority to the fight against the armed Islamist groups; in Tunis, its role will on the contrary appear to be in a sense a *guarantee* of security and regional stability. There are, moreover, common economic interests, in particular in the field of energy, that would benefit from the improvement of political relations between the two countries.[59] However, as long as the situation in Algeria is not stable, as long as violence there continues and the future strength and political role of the Islamists is not clear,[60] Tunisia will continue to regard Algeria with concern and mistrust, and will cooperate with its neighbour's Interior Ministry on the control of frontiers and the activities of armed groups. In this way, Tunisia is seeking to gain greater influence over its own extremists and contain the Algerian conflict.[61]

Yet if Tunisia considers Algeria, which is at once the cradle and the victim of the Islamists, to be a potential threat, it is equally due to certain weaknesses of the Ben Ali regime. At the very moment when he had neutralised and controlled the phenomenon, the Algerian crisis and external support for the FIS reawakened his fears. Tunisia has several concerns: the infiltration of armed Algerian groups, the extension of violence to its territory, or support from Algeria to Tunisian Islamic fundamentalists. Equally, however, Tunisia fears the social impact that a wave of immigrants and refugees from Algeria could have on a society whose fabric is still fragile despite good economic growth.[62]

Neither the hostile environment nor permanent concern over the military strength of its neighbours, Libya in particular, has had any significant impact on the relationship between the military and civilians in Tunisia. In this country, power has never been in the hands of the armed forces, which are completely subordinated to the government and controlled by it. Habib Bourguiba, the first president of Tunisia following independence, considered that an army that was too powerful and too much in evidence in political life represented a risk. This explains why the army has never had significant means at its disposal and has never played a political role nor constituted threat or legitimized the regime.[63] That did not prevent it from helping maintain law and order during the riots of 1978 and 1984; it could well intervene again in the event of an intensification of Islamist activities or, if there were an internal conflict in Algeria, be called upon to assist the gendarmerie to carry out checks on the border between the two countries. The Tunisian Army will, however, not be the main instrument in the fight against Islamism: that would not be in the government's interests, especially as, being composed mainly of conscripts, it would be easily influenced by those it was meant to be fighting. The responsibility for combating Islamism would fall to the internal security forces; these have been considerably strengthened in recent years.[64] The Tunisian Army's mission is, and has always been, subject to the real, effective control of the President of the Republic.

The participation of Tunisian armed forces in UNoperations should also be noted, in particular in Africa, which demonstrates growing governmental interest and diplomatic involvement in black Africa. This contribution is admittedly modest, but it may help increase the armed forces' standing without indicating any change in the government's attitude to them.

However, Tunisia's limited military capability adds to its vulnerability. Efforts made in this area have been intensified since 1980, following the Gafsa affair, regarding the size of the armed forces (which rose from 28,600 in 1980 to 35,500 in 1993), and equipment, which may be of Western origin but is obsolete. The Tunisian Government is investing in the modernisation of its armed forces but also the internal security forces. It is attempting in particular to improve their mobility and the Navy's equipment. Tunisia's defence expenditure in 1992 was $596 million, around 3.8% of GDP, of which 50% went to the internal security forces.[65] In any event, Tunisia's defence spending is much lower than that of its neighbours in both relative and absolute terms.

Having invested very little in his defence capability, Bourguiba put the priority on relationships that might offer security guarantees in the event of attack from neighbouring countries.[66] A bilateral accord with France that covers extensive military cooperation, in particular regarding the training of Tunisian officers, and close collaboration with the United States - for financial support, procurement of military equipment and training - are the pillars of the defence policy of Tunisia which, since it gained independence and during the Cold War, clearly opted for the West. Although these relations continue to be considered crucial, they seem insufficient, or perhaps less credible, in a strategic and security context in which countries feel much less threatened by military aggression than by low-intensity conflicts, and in which the countries to the south of the Mediterranean have the impression that they have been marginalised, especially compared with Central and Eastern Europe.

The proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction has never been and is still not a Tunisian defence policy option. On the other hand, the development of collective defence systems in the region would probably be welcomed by Tunisia, to judge by its interest in developing regional cooperation in general, including in the field of security, and in particular within the AMU, but also in the Arab world and the rest of Africa.

Morocco

Like its Maghreb neighbours, Morocco has since independence in 1956 essentially been preoccupied by relations with its neighbours as a result of border disputes inherited from the colonial period and its pretensions to regional leadership, to which Algeria also aspires. Relations within the Maghreb have always been fairly difficult, but those between Morocco and Algeria have been the most conflictive. A first dispute, the 'war of the sands', arose between them in 1963, shortly after Algerian independence, as Morocco laid claim to an area of desert on its southern border that had been included in colonial Algerian territory.[67] There was also the quarrel over the Western Sahara. Although Algeria does not participate in this directly,[68] it plays a fundamental role by supplying military support and logistics to the Polisario Front and by giving diplomatic backing to the SADR (Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic) created in 1976, in particular within the OAU (which immediately recognised the SADR) and the UN. This conflict, which began in 1975, lay at the heart of Algerian-Moroccan relations and affected all of Morocco's defence policy, including its policy on alliances, throughout the period of the Cold War. Directly or indirectly, Algeria has therefore until now been the main threat to Morocco.

The future of relations between the two countries will be determined to a large extent by the way in which the question of the Sahara is settled. A referendum on self-determination among the Sahrawi people has been put off several times because of differences between Morocco and the Polisario Front on issues such as the nationality of international observers, the constitution of electoral lists and the census of Sahrawi voters. Rabat wants to be sure that the result of the referendum will be in its favour, but it seems equally keen to obtain a political agreement with Algiers before it is resolved. Although not directly involved in the conflict, Algeria has none the less an important part to play in settling it. There remains the question of the demobilisation of the 3,000 to 5,000 soldiers of the Polisario Front. These forces could continue to have a destabilising effect, and for Morocco it is important that they do not have Algerian support for attacks from Algerian territory or guerilla operations within Morocco.

Apart from the dispute over the Western Sahara, there are other issues, both internal and regional, political and social rather than military, that affect security and defence policy.

Morocco is not spared the threat to internal and regional stability posed by the rise in radical Islamism in northern Africa, particularly because of the implications of the crisis in Algeria. The political and religious legitimacy of the monarch - who is the 'commander of the believers' - gives the Moroccan regime benefits that others in the region do not have: until now, no national Islamist movement has challenged the religious legitimacy of the monarch or the monarchy itself, and this would allow the government to deal with the Islamist question within the existing framework. The economic, social and political context in Morocco could however favour the rise and radicalisation of Islamist movements. For the time being, the most immediate effects of the Algerian crisis seem to be limited, in Morocco, to networks supporting Algerian armed Islamist groups and a greater flow of arms. Yet that makes the Moroccan authorities fear that armed Islamist groups will be formed and violent demonstrations held on its territory. The possibility of an Islamist government in Algeria would make these even more likely, as Algeria could prop up Islamist movements in the region.

Civil-military relations are less marked by concerns with the external context than with the perception of the armed forces as an internal threat. Attempted *coups d'état* in 1971 and 1972 (a third may have planned for 1983) showed up the army as a danger to the government. It has to a large extent been the conflict in the Western Sahara that has enabled the army to re-establish its image in the eyes of the public and its credibility, as seen by the Moroccan political class, as the guarantor of national sovereignty and independence.

That war, however, above all served the cause of the government. On the one hand it allowed the government to send the officers far away and keep them occupied in the war while King Hassan II strengthened measures designed to control the army that dealt a serious blow to the hierarchy and removed its autonomy.[69] On the other hand, thanks to the conflict in the Sahara and the internal threat that the army represented, the monarch was able to increase his authority and narrow the political field by presenting himself as the guarantor of political pluralism.

The army still has a lot on its plate, whether in the conflict itself or in preparing defences in the Sahara and surveillance of the border, a task that the situation in Algeria makes even more necessary. If the Islamist groups were to destabilise the situation, the army could also be called upon to help. Its role is nevertheless clearly defined and its functions within the state controlled, especially as it has no powers of decision, questions of security and defence now being the exclusive province of the monarch, the Parliament having only a consultative, even symbolic role.

The army has even become a diplomatic instrument used by the government in support of its cause on the basis of bilateral accords. That is how most of its interventions or military presence outside Morocco since 1975 should be viewed: in the United Arab Emirates in 1986 and in Equatorial Guinea; the threat to help chad militarily in 1983 was in addition a clear message aimed at Gaddafi, one of the Polisario Front's main supporters, and the sending of 1,500 troops to Saudi Arabia during the Gulf war in 1990-91 also has to be seen in a bilateral framework rather than in that of the international coalition against Iraq.[70] Previous interventions in Africa (in particular in Zaire in 1960 and again in 1977) and in the Middle East (in Sinai and the Golan Heights during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war) were carried out in the name of, respectively, African solidarity and Arab solidarity. It is only recently that overseas expeditions seem less linked to the question of the Sahara and are once more part of UNoperations involving international forces. In 1993, 1,000 troops (and 60 civilians) were sent to Somalia, and military observers participated in UNAVEM in Angola and more recently in Bosnia.

The question of the Western Sahara and tensions with Algeria also determine Morocco's policy towards the great powers. The Moroccan Government attempted to take advantage of the ideological proximity of Algeria and the USSR to establish a link between the conflict in the Western Sahara and the East-West confrontation. Rabat thus drew closer to the West, strengthening military cooperation with the United States and France, its principal suppliers of arms and equipment.[71] But this policy has not played the same role as in Tunisia: it has never been a security or defence guarantee. Given the dispute with Algeria, it was designed in particular to obtain diplomatic backing for its cause in international bodies and financial assistance to improve and modernise its military potential. It is the army's symbolic responsibility to uphold national sovereignty and independence, and this has justified the army's increase in strength and the purchase of military equipment. Defence expenditure rose from 3.3% of GDPin 1975 to 8.9% in 1982, and manpower from 65,000 in 1973 to 141,000 in 1982. At present, the Moroccan armed forces are the largest in the Maghreb and among the most professional and efficient,[72] thanks in particular to their considerable combat experience and the technical superiority of their equipment (mostly Western in origin) compared with Algeria's. Its defence spending has dropped considerably since the 1980s, but remains at a level of around 4% of GDP: in 1993 it was $1.09 billion and the 1994 defence budget was estimated at $1.23 billion, 4.3% of the estimated GDP for that year.[73]

The mobility and defensive assets of the army, which are far greater than those of the air force or navy, even though Morocco has a long coastline, well illustrate Morocco's defence priorities. For the most part in the Western Sahara,[74] and to a lesser extent

on the border with Algeria (in the south and north-east), efforts to modernise will continue to be made despite the financial constraints.

Morocco has never been tempted to acquire nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, or ballistic missiles. It has nothing - neither hardware nor research projects - that might suggest it has an interest or intentions in this area.

Rabat is trying in particular to offset its loss of strategic weight in the post-Cold War period by increasing its diplomatic influence, especially as a mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict and by developing its relations with the EU, although it appears to be giving priority to bilateral cooperation (notably with the United States and France).

Morocco is paying particular attention to *rapprochement* with the EUand bilateral links. Having initially taken considerable interest in the AMU, Morocco is now giving the organisation a lower priority. Those that would like to see the organisation developing, in particular in the field of common security and defence, think that Morocco will for the present probably not be a partner.

Algeria

The decade following Algeria's independence was marked by conflicts and tensions on its borders, notably with Tunisia, Libya (on the Ghat strip),[75] Mauritania[76] and Morocco. There is also the question of the Tuareg people; this concerns rather Mali and Niger, but also the Algerian Government, not so much because of the military threat it poses but because it could affect the stability of these regions in the south.[77]

Algeria does not feel that there is any military threat to it in the region. Strong tensions with Morocco, the ambition to gain regional or even international hegemony, but also domination of the political powers by the military, initially and up till the 1980s determined strategic options and security and defence policy. From the end of the 1970s, but especially since the oil crisis of 1986, the economic situation has deteriorated continuously, and social and political instability have increased questioning of the regime and the popularity of the Islamist opposition; concerns over stability and internal security have become priorities for both the government and the army, which has resulted in improved relations between Algeria and Morocco and made the prospect of a settlement of the conflict in the Sahara more promising. Islamism (above all support for the movement from Sudan and Iran) is therefore seen as a much more serious danger than Morocco.

Islamism is seen as a threat not only to the élites, but also as a threat to national unity, since it has helped heighten divisions within the country and strengthen regional or even secessionist tendencies in Algeria: that is the case for the Kabylia region, whose claims to autonomy have never been recognised. When the confrontation between radical Islamists and the military began, there were even fears for the unity of the army because of desertions, infiltration by Islamists and divisions over the strategy to adopt.

It is therefore internal order and the maintenance of national unity and stability, rather than Algeria's international or regional role, that concern the Algerian Army in the short term, and this strengthens the army's position in political life and its control of

centres of decision. The army has always legitimized the government. It has itself been the ruling body, both for the defence and security of the country and for the economic and social development of the nation. It was only in 1989 that the new Constitution institutionalised multipartyism and recognized the separation between the army and the political leadership of the state. But the events of 1991 and the interruption of the electoral process following the victory of the FIS in the first round of elections handed back the reins of power to the military.

Islamism is not, however, the army's sole preoccupation. The beginnings of an easing of political restrictions at the end of the 1980s and, more recently, economic liberalisation, have incited the army to maintain a dominant position, if only to manage the process of transition better. It has to be understood that in the 1980s the Algerian political leadership changed the strategic direction adopted following independence. There was not, however, time for the new options to consolidate; they were in a sense interrupted by the pressing question of the Islamist threat, which determined choices not necessarily corresponding to the long-term perspective.

Until the beginning of this period, the logistic and other military support given by the Algerian Army to the Polisario Front, and the threat arising from the rearmament of Morocco, had incited Algeria, like Morocco, to increase its military effort, in order to ensure its defence. Algeria was the country in the region that most strongly resisted any policy of alliances, which it saw as a form of dependence and incompatible with its nationalist policy and non-alignment. Even though it developed close relations with the former Soviet Union, its main arms supplier, these never resulted in accords on defence or military assistance other than the training of Algerian officers in the Soviet Union and the presence of military advisers in Algeria.

For a decade, Algeria has reduced its dependence on Moscow for arms, and has modernised its equipment, which had become obsolete compared with those of Morocco, which were of Western origin. This policy of modernisation has for Algeria, like Morocco, meant a *rapprochement* with Western countries, particularly France and the United States.[78] Despite the economic crisis, these plans remain matters of priority because of the Islamist threat, but with the accent on anti-guerilla warfare, with improved land and air mobility and logistics,[79] areas in which the Algerian Army is weak. Other important aspects are the education and training of military personnel, in which the United States and France have a dominant role. Algeria's effort to improve its forces has also included a rise in the number of men involved in the fight against the fundamentalists: since the beginning of 1995, reservists have apparently been recalled to strengthen the numbers in the army and other security forces.[80] Compared with 1994, the defence budget for 1995 ($1.33 billion) has risen by 48% - 12% in real terms.

Despite their weaknesses, the Algerian armed forces are some of the largest in the region;[81] in terms of numbers, its air and land assets are larger than those of Morocco, although the effectiveness of a large part of this equipment is questionable. Plans to modernise, which include restructuring the army and the creation of a national defence industry, are designed to improve Algeria's military effectiveness. The country also has a ballistic missile capability and may have the basic capability to carry out research on and produce chemical weapons, but there is nothing to indicate that it has the intention of bringing missiles with chemical warheads into service.[82]

As regards nuclear proliferation, the fact that Algeria has two nuclear power stations initially caused concern over its intentions,[83] but this subsided considerably following Algeria's signature of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in January 1995 and verification agreements with the IAEA.

Algeria is at present one of the most inward-looking countries in the region because of the radical nature of the Islamist opposition. Its plans for modernisation of the armed forces are important but the Government is convinced that the fundamental issue in the fight against the Islamists is econo-mic development. It is in particular from that viewpoint that the Government is endeavouring to develop relations with the EU in order to obtain financial support but also international political backing, which is equally vital.

That situation also explains why Algiers is trying to re-establish political and security cooperation within the AMU. The development of that organisation is very much in Algeria's interests: on the economic level, with intensified regional cooperation, and from the political point of view, as it sees the AMU both as a source of support at the local level and as a means to grow closer to Europe. As far as defence is concerned, however, Algeria, like its Maghreb partners, does not seem to want to cooperate either within the AMU or in any other regional or international organisation. Even its participation in UNpeacekeeping operations has to date been very modest.

Mauritania

Mauritania, the weakest of the Maghreb countries, has very little political and strategic influence in the region. Its geographical situation, between the Maghreb and, to the south, Senegal and Mali, and the perception of internal threats, determine its security and defence priorities.

Because of the question of the Western Sahara, Mauritania's relations with not only Rabat but also Algiers were until recently very tense. Although in August 1979 it renounced any claim to that territory, and given the distance separating it from that conflict, Mauritania still fears Morocco's ambitions for a number of reasons: the historical arguments put forward by Morocco to justify its claims; its attitude to the holding of a referendum and the status of the port of La Gouera; and the security of the rail link from Zouerate to the sea,[84] the last two being economic issues of importance to Nouakchott. Regarding Algeria, its involvement in the conflict and its support of the Polisario front Front have hindered *rapprochement* between the two countries.

Tensions between Mauritania and both Mali and Senegal are quite different in nature: they are connected with the question of refugees and disturbances between the populations living in the area of their borders. There are in Mauritania some 40,000 Tuaregs and Moors from Mali who are frightened of returning to Mali despite the signature, in April 1992, of the Bamako accord. Moreover, there are 15,000 black Africans from Mauritania in Mali, where they frequently clash with the army, whereas in Senegal thousands more, having been expelled in 1989 by the military regime in Nouakchott, fill the refugee camps on the Senegalese side of the river separating the two countries.[85]

Although still fairly marginal, the radical Islamist tendency nevertheless has its followers, both among the opposition (Ould Daddah's Union of Democratic Forces in particular) and in government (the Democratic and Social Republican Party). This ideology (which has been subject to Afghan, Pakistan and Sudanese influence) is, however, also spread through numerous associations, has many sources of finance (Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Kuwait, for example) and recruits among the social outcasts that inhabit the capital's shanty towns, who have already given an indication of their potential - during the riots of 1994 and 1995, when the army had to be called in.

Dealing with these domestic problems is a matter of priority for Mauritania's security policy and forces, and will probably continue to be since the social and political situation (not to mention the economic situation) seem to be getting worse. The possibility of armed confrontation cannot be excluded.[86] Armed conflicts could yet have a negative effect on Mauritania's foreign relations, but that should not lead to significant new military operations.

The army plays an important role in Mauritania's internal affairs. It was the army that overthrew the Ould Daddah regime in 1978 and was a pillar of the regime set up by Sid' Ahmed Taya. In 1992, a civil government was reinstalled following elections, but the army is still a leading actor, in particular in the maintenance of internal stability, and indeed of the regime and national unity.

Yet Mauritania would not be able to defend its territory against military aggression or territorial claims using military force alone. Its army is the weakest in the region in terms of both equipment and manpower: it numbers only 14,670 (including 4,870 internal security forces) and the country is sparsely populated (2.2 million inhabitants), and twice the size of Morocco. Even by increasing its defence effort, Mauritania will remain very vulnerable compared with its neighbours and still heavily dependent on a policy of alliances and security guarantees, from France in particular. But it is not trying to develop its military potential to any notable extent (in 1994 its defence budget was $36 million, 2.7% of GDP; in 1995 it was slightly higher, at $37 million);[87] nor does Mauritania intend to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

Deeply concerned by the conflict in the Western Sahara, the country also has an interest in the AMU's continued existence, but is not sufficiently powerful politically to determine the future of regional cooperation and even less able to form a view on security and defence.

Libya

Since the military coup of September 1969, Libya's foreign policy has had twin aims: to fight against the influence of the West and to work towards Arab unity, which Gaddafi has on several occasions tried to promote by signing short-lived treaties of union with nearby countries. Yet in spite of these pan-Arab leanings, the country's foreign policy is based above all on nationalism. In the area of defence that has meant the pursuance of military power, confrontation with neighbouring countries,[88] and opposition to Israel and Western countries, notably by supporting terrorist movements in Europe but especially in the Arab world that have attacked the West or its interests in the region.

This nationalist, pan-Arabist attitude is proclaimed with virulent anti-Western rhetoric, aimed in particular at the United States,[89] but also Westernised Arab élites, who are accused of pursuing a policy that is detrimental to the cohesion of the region. Arab unity and Libyan interests thus often merge, since Gaddafi sees himself as the champion of pan-Arabism after Nasser and presents his foreign policy as an instrument of that unity.

As for countries bordering on Libya, these are not regarded as threats, even if armed conflicts and quarrels have for the most part been initiated by Tripoli. It seems unlikely today that these disputes, any Libyan support for Islamists or even the construction of a large artificial river to use underground reserves of water could cause relations with these countries to degenerate. Moreover, Libya no longer really frightens its neighbours, even if Colonel Gaddafi attacks them verbally from time to time.

Despite some weaknesses, the military power of Libya is a factor of instability for some states in the region, Tunisia in particular. Even if Tripoli still reproaches some of its AMU partners for not having supported it at the time of the United Nations embargo, relations are none the less a little more relaxed, the Libyan leader's priorities being in the first place concerned with domestic issues and general policy. He seems now to be more preoccupied with internal stability, which has worsened in recent years. This is generally seen as implying a loss of authority resulting from the nature of his regime, in which membership of a particular tribe and tribal alliances play an important role.

Islamic extremism is not seen as the main threat to the regime. Part of this movement, the weakest part, still has ties with the former regime of King Idris; more recent, revolutionary (and therefore more attractive to young activists) movements still only have marginal influence, despite several attempts to infiltrate the military and confront the security forces. Further, the fact that Islam is presented as a pillar of the revolution (that has adopted Islamic religious law), Tripoli's anti-Western ardour, the fight against 'Western morals', the absence of unemployment, the wealth of the country (even if there is not an abundance of consumer goods) and the still tribal structure of Libyan society are all advantages that can help control and limit the spread of Islamism in Libya.[90] Nevertheless, the confrontations in 1995 between the security forces and armed groups calling themselves Islamist suggests that the regime is not so impervious to that movement as it would seem or would wish it to be believed.

Other demonstrations of discontent with the regime have originated in the army, even among the elements nearest to Gaddafi, who has subjected the army to thorough, frequent purges and restructuring in order to maintain his control of it. On several occasions he has had to deal with dissidence among the military in his entourage that participated in the 1969 *coup* and some of whom come from other tribes. The army may thus equally be seen as an instrument of power over which Gaddafi has absolute control or as a threat to the government.

How will the Libyan head of state be able to pursue his internal and foreign policies in this new context? Basically, neither his policy nor his revolutionary tendency have

changed very much, but his attitude towards the outside world has been modified. The country's isolation and internal dissidence are leading him to seek allies among his near neighbours, like Egypt. Relations with Cairo have improved considerably, especially since the end of the Gulf war and the imposition of sanctions on Tripoli. Egypt has, then, become Libya's principal source of diplomatic support on the international scene and an economic and political link with the rest of the world. The question of support to Egyptian fundamentalists, which has sometimes cast a shadow over relations between the two countries, no longer seems to arise, the two countries following fairly similar policies in this respect. It is therefore in the Libyan regime's interest not to look for quarrels in the West; these could harm its relations with its neighbours, which wish to remain on good terms with Europe and the United States. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Gaddafi has tried to make gestures of reconciliation towards the West, not by renouncing his ideology but because international isolation damages his position, in particular in economic terms (even if an embargo on Libyan oil is unlikely, despite the efforts of the United States). During the Gulf war, he criticised Iraq's attitude and did not take advantage of the situation to launch fresh invective against the West even though Arab public opinion was strongly anti-Western.[91] Also, he seems to have reduced or even ended his support for Islamist and nationalist movements in Europe and in the Arab world.

Gaddafi's Libya, with its pretensions to leadership of the post-Nasser Arab world, counted above all on military strength to affirm its regional and international role. Thanks to oil revenues, it has been able to build up powerful armed forces.[92] Its defence expenditure has often been among the highest in the Arab world, but the reductions begun in 1985 probably increased after 1991 because of the embargo. According to estimates given in *The Military Balance*, its defence budget for 1995 is $960 million, and therefore much lower than that of Egypt or even Algeria or Morocco. The effects of the embargo on defence expenditure do not therefore seem negligible, but that is not the only consequence: it has an adverse effect on the Libyan army's effectiveness, in particular because of the lack of technical training of personnel by foreigners,[93] the bad state of numerous equipments of Soviet origin and the difficulty in obtaining spare parts for equipment.

The Libyan armed forces have, despite everything, considerable offensive capability. They are certainly not the largest in the region,[94] but have more equipments (tanks, other armoured vehicles, combat helicopters and aircraft) than most countries in the Maghreb. They also possess ballistic missiles[95] and can produce chemical weapons,[96] which chad accuses Libya of using during the war between the two countries. As for biological weapons, Libya merely has a few research installations but does not seem able to manufacture weapons. On the nuclear side, Libya has a 10 MW reactor used for research (and supplied by the former Soviet Union) and may be building a 40 MW reactor; however, despite several attempts it seems unlikely that Libya will succeed in acquiring or developing a nuclear capability.[97]

However, given the low profile recently assumed by Gaddafi, it is hardly to be expected that he will promote a policy of increased arms acquisitions, especially since, as has been suggested, that would arouse the mistrust of neighbouring countries (especially in the Maghreb) and create further tensions with the West. The Colonel seems at present to prefer the political approach and the fostering of bilateral

relations, especially with Egypt, rather than cooperation with regional organisations, the AMU in particular.

Prospects

In summary, the attention of the countries of northern Africa is focused more on *security* than on *defence*. Their threat perception is dominated by fears of internal instability; stability is threatened by the questioning of regimes and national unity, even the existence of the state itself.

What policies might countries in the region adopt to meet the challenge? Governments in the region have up till now responded with the repression or control of Islamists, and no great change should be expected in that respect. There has been an increase in the size and equipment of the forces of law and order, especially in countries where Islamist groups are most powerful or an increase in this trend is feared.[98] In these countries, an effort will be made in the fields of conventional weapons, communications and land mobility.

The intraregional threat, that is to say the possibility of a conflict between neighbouring countries, is small. Most disputes over borders have been resolved, with the exception of the Western Sahara and the quarrel between Egypt and Sudan over the Halaib triangle, the only one that may yet cause a new armed confrontation in the region. However, so long as these questions have not been resolved in accordance with principles and rules set by the United Nations and the parties involved, they will remain an obstacle to political harmony in the Maghreb and a hindrance to cooperation in the region.

Today, the threat is more political than military. It is linked to the fear of seeing radical Islamism serve as an instrument of destabilisation, and the implications and effect within individual countries of the rise of fundamentalism in neighbouring countries. The way in which this threat is seen has no direct implications for possible military conflicts in the region, although it could act as a detonator. It does nevertheless have effects on political relations between states: it makes them more distrustful of each other while driving them towards solidarity in the face of a common danger. Cooperation between interior ministries in the fight against radical Islamists has not however implied either an improvement in the situation or political *rapprochement*. It has not revitalised the AMU, despite Egypt's request for membership which, moreover, produced varying reactions among the Maghreb countries: some seem to see in it the opportunity to give regional cooperation new impetus, while others view it as an attempt by Cairo to widen its influence in the Maghreb, with the attendant risk of importing the problems of the Middle East into the region.

If this need for security cooperation has not made any real impact on political *rapprochement* between the countries of the region, it will have even less on relations where defence issues are concerned. Provision is made in Articles 14 and 15 of the Treaty of Marrakesh,[99] the AMU's founding document, for a sort of assistance and mutual solidarity pact; a Defence Council was moreover created in January 1990, but these initiatives amount only to declarations of intent and have not yet had any practical application. Although the regional context has evolved and defence issues

have become less important than security, it will take time for these countries to modify radically their mutual attitudes and their cooperation in this sphere. That will not happen without substantial and lasting political *rapprochement*, of which there is for the moment no sign.

As regards the position of these countries on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a distinction has to be made between nuclear, and biological and chemical weapons. If, previously, nuclear weapons were seen as a way of making up for the loss of strategic importance of these countries at the end of the Cold War, these countries today seem rather to be investing in political and economic instruments in their quest for regional and international influence. Yet they are still preoccupied by biological and chemical weapons and the ballistic missiles that could be used to deliver them. It remains to be seen whether such a situation will encourage these countries to participate in arms control initiatives at the regional level and with Europe.