A View from Addis Ababa: From "1989" to Today's Revolutions in Africa

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ABSTRACTS

Dieser Artikel befasst sich mit den Reaktionen der Organisation für Afrikanische Einheit (OAU) und ihrer Nachfolgeorganisation, der Afrikanischen Union (AU), auf Volksaufstände und Revolutionen in den Mitgliedstaaten. Mit einem Schwerpunkt auf den kritischen Punkten von 1989, 2011 und 2019 kommt der Beitrag zu dem Schluss, dass diese Veränderungen hauptsächlich vor dem Hintergrund kontinentaler Erfahrungen behandelt, jedoch selten in einem globalen Kontext verortet wurden.

This article looks at responses over time by the OAU and its successor, the African Union, to popular uprisings and revolutions in member states. With a focus on the critical junctures of 1989, 2011, and 2019, the article concludes that these changes were mainly dealt with against the backdrop of continental experiences, but rarely situated in a global context.

1. Introduction

How is the African Union, as the continent's supra-national organisation of all African countries, narrating democratic changes and r evolutions on the continent and placing them in a global context? How is, in this case, the "inside" and the "outside" of Africa negotiated? In this article I discuss how "1989" has initially been situated in continental and global politics by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963–2002), and how its successor, the African Union (AU, established in 2002), has dealt with comparable critical junctures since, i.e. the uprisings throughout the Maghreb in 2011 and the cur-

rent situations developing since late 2018 in Algeria and Sudan.[1] Regional organisations, such as the OAU and the African Union, have played a major, though heavily under-researched role in the global history of democratic changes and revolutions – in terms of producing norms, giving meaning to and framing events unfolding, developing policy responses as well as coordinating communication on these issues to the outside world. But before delving into the OAU's take on "1989", it is worthwhile to briefly look back at the nature of "1989" in Africa. Politically, and with reference to a speech delivered by the then British Prime Ministers Harold Macmillan on 3 February 1960 in Cape Town, South Africa,[2] "1989" has been described as Africa's "second wind of change". Academically is has been claimed as part of the "third wave" of global democratisation.[3] As I have argued elsewhere,[4] timewise Africa's "1989" actually started earlier, namely in Southern Africa where after September 1986 a slow and fragile process of disentangling the war-ring parties in Angola and Namibia had started.[5] This culminated in the ecember 1988 Tripartite Accord between South Africa, Angola and Cuba and the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. The US/ oviet rapprochement in this part of the world finally led to the independence of Namibia in 1990, and the end of the civil wars in Angola and Mozambique in 1992. Moreover, during the course of these events some liberation movements in power dropped their commitment to Marxism-Leninism (Mozambique's FRELIMO in July 1989) or attempts to legally introduce a one-party state (Zimbabwe's ZANU-PF in January 1990). And, finall , in South Africa a pacted transition from apartheid to democracy was made possible (1990–1994). At a more theoretical level, and inspired by the spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences, Africa's "1989" has been identified as a cipher for "h w power relations and sovereignty in Africa in the late 20th century were respaced and reordered".[6] Developments in Southern Africa intersected with "1989" trends elsewhere and accelerated the global momentum that had been building-up for many years already.

In any case, "1989" has unleashed two mega-trends on the African continent: first, a fundamental process of re-democratisation, including peaceful regimes changes, but also

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1   In addition, there was a similar situation in 2014 in Burkina Faso when President Blaise Compaoré, who had been in power since 1987, was toppled after days of public protests. Though Zimbabwe when President Robert G. Mugabe was ousted in 2017 through a coup d'etat has been a very different case. See D. Rogers, Two Weeks in November. The astonishing untold story of the operation that toppled Mugabe, London 2019.

2   South African History Online, "Speech made to the South Africa Parliament on 3 February 1960 by Harold Macmillan", <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/wind-change-speech-made-south-africa-parliament-3-february-1960-harold-macmillan> (accessed 29 February 2020).

3   S. P. Huntington, Democracy's Third Wave, in: Journal of Democracy 2 (1991) 2, pp. 12–34. On "1989" in Southern Africa see also C. Saunders, "1989" in Southern Africa, in: U. Engel / F. Hadler / M. Middell (eds.), 1989 in a Global Perspective, Leipzig 2015, pp. 349–361; for Africa as a whole see D. Simo, Africa and the Turning Point of 1989, in: Engel, Hadler and Middell, 1989 in a Global Perspective, pp. 362–374.

4   U. Engel, Africa's "1989", in: Engel / Hadler / Middell (eds.), 1989 in a Global Perspective, pp. 331–348.

5   C. Saunders / S. Onslow, The Cold War and Southern Africa, 1976–1990, in: M. P. Leffler / O.A. Westad (eds.), The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Cambridge 2009, pp. 222–243.

6   Engel, Africa's "1989", p. 348.

sometimes less peaceful r evolutions in many countries, [7] as well as, second and at the same time, a relapse into violent conflict in as many countries[8] Another critical juncture in this respect occurred in 2011 when in many Maghreb countries revolutions broke out that seemed to carr y the promise that Northern African countries could catch-up with the second wave of change of the early 1990s in S ub-Saharan Africa. Yet while, by and large, these hopes didn't materialize – and quite contrar y, Libya disintegrated into civil war with long-lasting spill-o ver effects all ver the S ahelo-Saharian region and E gypt experienced a military backlash – events in Sudan and Algeria since late 2018 br ought a déjà vu of a mor e democratic future on the horizon. In any case, the continuing dual condition of ongoing political transformations on the one hand and violent conflicts on the other is shaping the backgr ound against which African states position themselv es vis-à-vis global change.

In the following second section, I will briefly discuss the long shad w of "1989" that has materialized into the dual condition of sustained democratic transitions on the one hand and violent conflict on the othe . In the third section, the OAU's response to "1989" will be reconstructed. In the fourth section, the African U nion's discussion of the dynamics of the Arab uprisings 2011 will be discussed. And in the fifth section, the nion's take on the situations in Algeria and Sudan in 2018–2019 will be looked at. This is foll wed by conclusions.

## 2. The Long Shadow of "1989": Democratic Transitions and Violent Confli ts

Very briefl , "1989" of course was a watershed that was maked by the transition of many African regimes from one-party states or military dictatorships to formal multi-party states. The idea of multi-pa tyism has gained currency, as can be seen from the develop-ments captured in graph 1. While the number of African military regimes declined from 18 in 1990 to 6 in 2015 and the number of one-party states dropped from 18 (1990) to 1 (2015), at the same time the number of multi-party regimes increased from 7 (1985), 12 (1990) to 45 (2015).

Now, of course, this does not necessarily mean that the quality of democracy in these countries has improved at the same time. When measured by the Freedom House scores on political rights and civil liber ties (which, by all its weaknesses, is the only index that allows for a cr oss-continental and cr oss-time perspective since 1972), it becomes clear that in many cases formal transitions to a "democratic" regime did not go hand-in-hand with substantial changes of governance performance (see graph 2).

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7   M. Bratton / N. van de Walle, Democratic Experiments in Africa. Regime Transition in Comparative Perspective, Cambridge 1997; and N. Cheeseman, Democracy in Africa: Successes, Failures, and the Struggle for Political Reform, Cambridge 2015.

8   S. Straus, Making and Unmaking Nations. War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa, Ithaca 2015.

Graph 1: African Regimes, 1960–2015
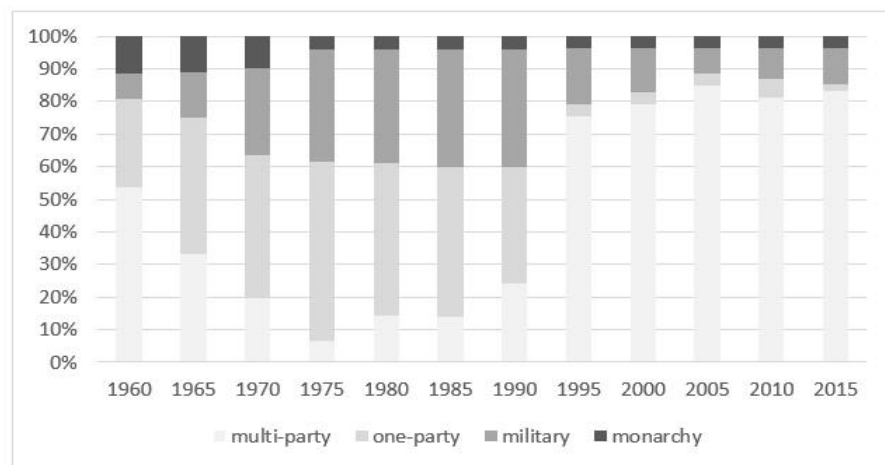
Notes: By and large, following the typology of M. Bratton and N. van de Walle, Democratic Experiments in Africa. Number of countries varies. Excluding Namibia for 1960–1989, South Africa for 1960–1994, and Southern Rhodesia for 1965–1979.
© U. Engel (2019). Sources: M. Bratton and N. van de Walle, Democratic Experiments in Africa; D. Nohlen / M. Krennerich / B. Thibaut (eds.), Elections in Africa. A Data Handbook, Oxford 1999.

On a scale fr om 1 to 7 (" free" to "unfree"), on average African during the 1979s and 1980s scored somewhere between 5 and 6 (which, in the terminology of F reedom House, made most r egimes "not free"). After "1989", the scor es improved, but only to the range between 4 to 5 ("partly free" to "unfree"). And since around 2005 a slight decline of the quality of democracy can be obser ved that basically is in line with Larr y Diamond's argument on the "global recession" of democracy[9] – a perspective that is also supported by the UN Economic Commission for Africa regular reports on governance in Africa.[10] The African Union has attributed this decline to an increase in the number of coups d'etat, incidents of electoral violence and debates about presidential term limits that have created sharp confrontations in some African societies.[11]

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9   L. Diamond, Facing up the Democratic Recession, in: Journal of Democracy 26 (2015) 1, pp. 141–155.
10   See UN Economic Commission for Africa, African Governance Report 2005, Addis Ababa 2005; UNECA, African Governance Report II. Oxford 2009; UNECA, African Governance Report III. Elections & the Management of Diversity, Addis Ababa 2013; and UNECA, Measuring corruption in Africa: The international dimension matters. African Governance Report IV, Addis Ababa 2016.
11   AUC Chairperson 2010, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Prevention of Unconstitutional Changes of Government and Strengthening the Capacities of the African Union to Manage Such Situations. 14th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly, 31 January to 2 February 2010, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Assembly/ AU/4 (XIV).

Graph 2: Regime Quality, 1972–2017
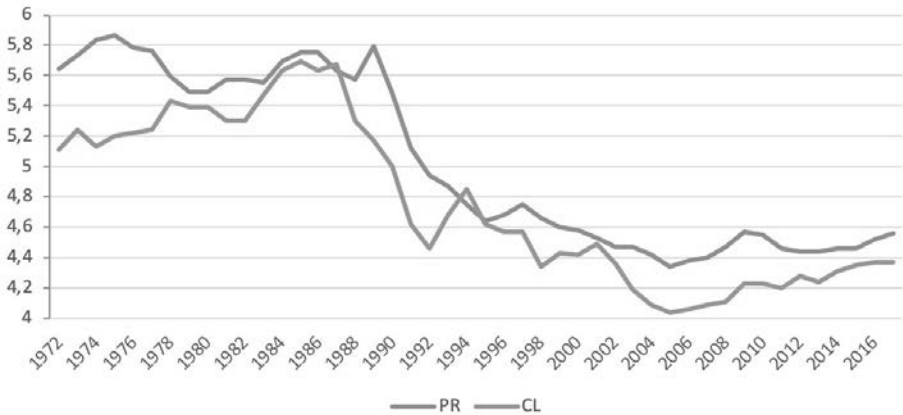
Note: scale 1 = free to 7 = unfree.
© U. Engel (2019). Source: Freedom House Index (1973–2018).

At the same time, elections incr easingly started to matter.[12] Democracy as a principle has gained in importance,[13] democratic rules have become more and more institutionalised.[14] But they also got more and more contested as the primary means to gain access to power and state resources. Thus, not only the number of elections in Africa has inceased since "1989", but also the number of elections that hav e been hijacked by incumbents and ruling parties (see graph 3).

The second lasting effect of "1989" on the African continent has been the sp ead of violent conflict and the development of transregional conflict complexes.[15] This is not the place to discuss in detail how and why violent conflict in Africa has changed, suffi to state that the number of violent conflict has sharply inc eased in the 1990s, dropped since 2002, and is on the increase to unprecedented levels again since around 2010 (see graph 4). Initially this dev elopment has pr ompted the OAU to establish, in 1993, a Mechanism for Conflict revention, Management and Resolution.[16] Against the back - ground of violent conflicts unfolding in the 1990s in ierra Leone, Liberia, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other places as well as the 1994 genocide in

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12   J. Bleck / N. van de Walle, Electoral Politics in Africa since 1990. Continuity and Change, Cambridge 2019.

13   M. Bratton, Formal Versus Informal Institutions in Africa, in: Journal of Democracy 18 (2007) 3, pp. 96–110; and R. Mattes / M. Bratton 2016, Do Africans still want democracy?, Cape Town 2016 (= Afrobarometer Policy Paper; 36).

14   D. N. Posner / D.J. Young, The Institutionalization of Political Power in Africa, in: Journal of Democracy 18 (2007) 3, pp. 126–140.

15   See U. Engel, Africa's Transregional Conflicts, in: Comparativ 28 (2019) 6, pp. 7–25.

16   OAU, Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the Establishment within the OAU of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. 29th Ordinary Session of the OAU Assembly, 28–30 June 1993, Cairo, Egypt, AHG/DECL. 3 (XXIX).
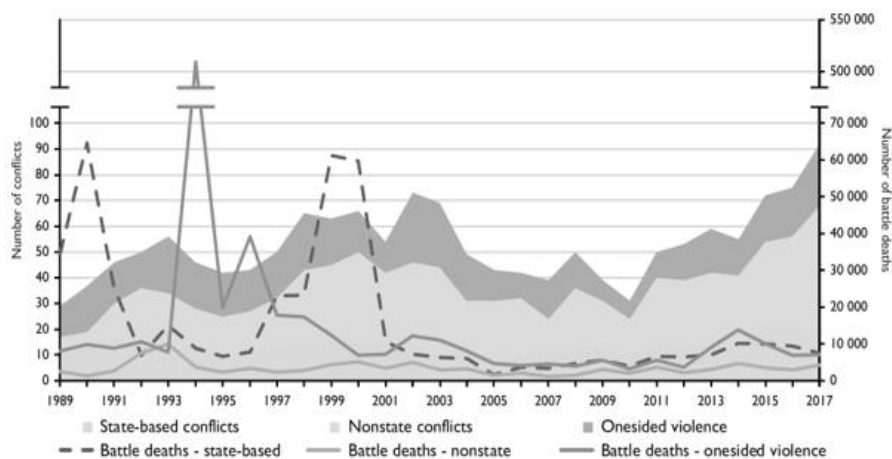
Rwanda, and the insufficiency of the   AU Mechanism,[17] a far-reaching approach was taken in 1999–2002. As a result, the OAU was transformed into the African Union.[18]

Graph 3: Election Trends in Africa, 1946–2016
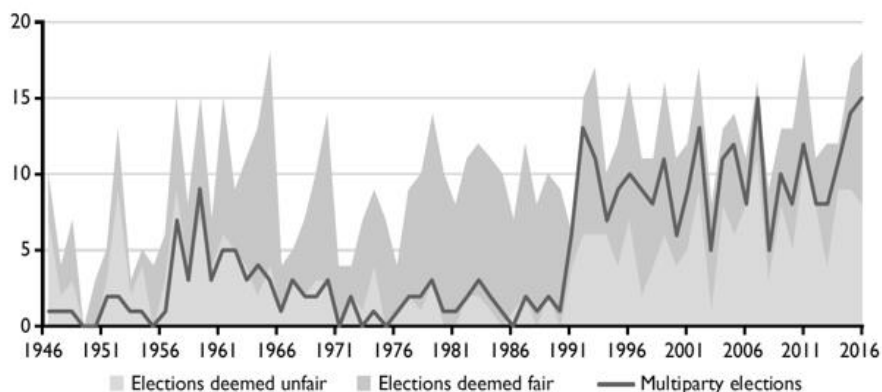
Source: I.V. Bakken and S.A. Rustad, Conflict Trends in Africa, 1989–2017, in: PRIO Conflict Trends (2018) 6, p. 4.

Graph 4: Conflict Trends in Africa, 1989–2017

Source: Bakken and Rustad, Conflict Trends in Africa, 1989–2017, p. 2.

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17   M. Muyangwa / M. A. Vogt, An Assessment of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, 1993–2000, New York 2003.

18   To name but two overviews: K.M. Khamis, Promoting the African Union, Washington DC 2008; and T. Karbo / T. Murithi (eds.), The African Union. Autocracy, Diplomacy and Peacebuilding in Africa, London 2018.

3. OAU Response to "1989"

To start with the irony: The AU treated "1989" as external to the continent, without realising how much of "1989" actually was of African origin. The AU Council of (Foreign) Ministers, as early as … 1988, recognized "signs of change in international climate" and "of the emergence of a period of détente where a relaxation of tension would prevail in the relations between the two super power and would be extended to the international scene".[19] The de elopments leading up to the signing of the Tripartite Accord between South Africa, Angola and C uba in 1988 w ere cautiously w elcomed, and interpr eted within the larger history of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and the proxy wars waged by the United States and the Soviet Union.[20]

A broader reflection of the changing global or der was discussed by the OAU Assembly in 1990. At the 26th Ordinary Session of the OAU Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 9–11 July 1990 a declaration was adopted on the "Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World". It was based on a landmar k report of the organisation's Secretary-General, Salim Ahmed Salim, on the "Fundamental Changes taking place in the World and their Implications for Africa: Proposals for an African Response". First of all, this implied that the global change of "1989" was happening outside of Africa:

> In particular, we have noted the changing E ast-West relations from confrontation to cooperation, the socio-economic and political changes in Eastern Europe, the steady move towards the political and monetary union of Western Europe, the increasing global tendency towards regional integration and the establishment of trading and economic blocks, as well as the adv ances in science and technolog y. These, e found, constitute major factors which should guide Africa's collective thinking about the challenges and options before her in the 1990s and bey ond in view of the real threat of marginalisation of our continent.[21]

Yet at the same the OAU noted "with satisfaction":

> […] the achievements of Africa, in the str uggle for the decolonization of the continent and, in the fight against acism and apartheid; as well as the positive role played by the OAU in this respect. The independence of amibia has pushed further Africa's frontiers of freedom.[22]

19   OAU CoM, Resolution on Current International Development. 48th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers, 19–23 May 1998, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, CM/Res.1158 (XLVIII).

20   See, for instance, Resolution on Namibia. 49th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers, 20–25 February 1989, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, CM/Res.1177 (XLIX); and Resolution on People's Republic of Angola. 49th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers, 20–25 February 1989, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, CM/Res.1185 (XLIX).

21   OAU 1990, Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World. 26th Ordinary Session of the OAU Assembly, 9–11 July, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, AHG/Decl. 1 (XXVI), §2.

22   Ibid., §3.

Interestingly after more of decade of economic str uggling, as an institution the O AU at that moment in time was, may be of course, far mor e concerned with its economic agenda: The 1980 Lagos lan of Action for the economic dev elopment of Africa up to 2000, Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (1986–1990), and the Afri- can Common Position on Africa's External Debt Crisis.[23] Yet the connection to political developments was easily made in terms of a commitment to the new "good governance" agenda:

> We are fully aware that in or der to facilitate this pr ocess of socio-economic t ransforma- tion and integration, it is necessar y to promote popular participation of our peoples in the processes of government and development. A permitting political environment which guarantees human rights and the observance of the rule of law, would ensure high stand- ards of pr obity and accountability, particularly on the par t of those who hold public office In addition, popular-based political pr ocesses would ensur e the involvement of all including in particular women and youth in the development effo ts. We accordingly recommit ourselves to the further democratization of our societies and to the consolidation of democratic institutions in our countries.[24]

However, given the diffe ent trajectories towards democracy in OAU member states, at the same time the OAU was quite wary about the extent of its commitment to genuine "democracy":

> We reaffirm the right of our countries to deter mine, in all so vereignty, their system of democracy on the basis of their socio-cultur al values, taking into account the r ealities of each of our countries and the necessity to ensur e development and satisfy the basic needs of our peoples. We therefore assert that democracy and development should go together and should be mutually reinforcing.[25]

So still, the organisation's emphasis was very much on economics rather than on politics. As an institution, it seems, the OAU hadn't fully grasped the political dimension of what was happening on the continent and how it related to the global:

> At this crucial juncture when our continent is emerging with difficul , from a phase in its history that focused mainly on political liberation and nation building, and is about to embark on a new er a laying greater emphasis on economic dev elopment, we need to strengthen the Organization of African Unity so that it may also become a viable instru- ment in the service of Africa's economic development and integration.[26]

The 1991 OAU summit continued discussing the economic challenges the continent was facing, but neglected the political dimension of what was unfolding in member

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23 Ibid., §5.
24 Ibid., §10.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid. §11.

states,[27] thus still constructing "1989" as something external to the continent. The global implications of the end of the Cold War were not reflected in the Assembly decisions at all. In July 1992 the OAU Council of [Foreign] Ministers in view of the ongoing democratic transitions in some member states very cautiously reaffirme "the right of every State to determine freely, in full sovereignty and complete freedom, its political institutions without foreign influenc" and in addition called on "extra-African Powers to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of African countrie".[28] And in the June 1993 Cairo Declaration, that commemorated the 30th anniversary of the organisation, the OAU Assembly only hinted at "fundamental changes that have taken place in the post-independence era, and more particularly since the end of the cold war",[29] but didn't take a position whatsoever on the issue – presumably because member states couldn't agree on a concrete position as they were involved in their own domestic struggles about democracy. Other than that, the OAU was very much concerned with its own economic and security problems, most importantly regarding the establishment of the African Economic Community and the OAU Mechanism for Conflict revention, Management and Resolution.

Revealing cumbersome and controversial policy processes both between member states, but also within the continental body, finall, in February 1994 the OAU Council of Ministers adopted a "Resolution on the Democratization Process in Africa" in which "the sovereign right of our countries to determine for ourselves an appropriate system of democracy on the basis of the sociocultural values of our respective countries" was reaffirmed; and stressed that "peace, political stability and economic development as well as the respect for Human Rights are necessary conditions for further democratization". But at the same time, the Council also warned "that the process of democratic transition and economic transformation of our countries should evolve in an orderly manner in order to avoid the rupture of the socio-cultural fabric of African societies".[30] The Council also appealed to the international community

> *to refrain from taking any measures or punitive conditionalities which would have adverse and counter productive effects on African Countries engaged in genuine eff ts at democratizing their societies and institutions.*[31]

27   OAU, Declaration of the Twenty-Seventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments on Employment in Africa. 27th Ordinary Session of the OAU Assembly, 3–5 June 1991, Abuja, Nigeria, AHG/Dec. 1 (XXVII).

28   OAU CoM, Resolution on the Right of States to Decide on Their Political Options Without Foreign Interference. 56th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers. 22–28 1992 June, Dakar, Senegal, CM/Res. 1389 (LVI) Rev. 1.

29   OAU, Declaration on the Occasion of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Organization of African Unity. 29th Ordinary Session of the OAU Assembly, 28–30 June 1993, Cairo, Egypt, AHG/Decl. 1 (XXIX), §8.

30   OAU CoM, Resolution on the Democratization Process in Africa. 59th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers. 31 January to 4 February 1994, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, CM/Res.1496 (LIX).

31   Ibid., §8.

Again, the major political changes were treated has happening in a container called Africa. At least, at this point in time "1989" was not perceived as a global dynamic, but something connected only through possible foreign intervention.

4. AU Responses to "2011"

With a view to the Arab uprisings in the Maghreb in 2011,[32] the successor of the OAU, the African Union, embedded the dynamics in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia both in a continental, but also in a global perspective. Importantly, in May 2011 the Chairperson of the AU Commission, in those days Jean Ping from Gabon, tabled a report to an Extraordinary AU Assembly in which he not only discussed at length what was happening in these countries and linked this to the Commission's quest for democracy and good governance, but also – though fairly diplomatically – contextualised these dynamics internationally by criticizing "the reluctance of members of the international community, and particularly the NATO alliance, to fully acknowledge the AU role in the promotion of peace in the continent and their selective application of the principle of ownership".[33] First, the AU interpreted the developments in Tunisia and Egypt as a process of catching-up with the second wind of change in Sub-Saharan Africa twenty years before:[34]

> *The uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt have unveiled a profound process that potentially contributes to democratic consolidation across Africa. Building on the great strides towards democratisation in Africa since 1990, the popular revolts and uprisings resemble the mass protests, food riots, and urban strikes that propelled the initial wave of democratization in Africa in the late 1980s.*[35]

By the same reasoning, the report continues constructing a common continental history by stating that

> *The North African uprisings have removed some of the ambiguities in the discourse of democratization across Africa. North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa can now draw from the same shared experiences of building systems that underwrite liberties, freedoms, and accountability.*[36]

Second, the African Union placed these dynamics in a global narrative:

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32   See A. Branch / Z. Mampily, Africa Uprising. Popular Protest and Political Change, London 2015; J. Brownlee / T. E. Masoud / A. Reynolds, The Arab Spring. Pathways of Repression and Reform, Oxford 2015; E. Kienle / N. Mourad Sika (eds.), The Arab Uprisings. Transforming and Challenging State Power, London 2015; and L. Sadiki (ed.), Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring. Rethinking Democratization, London 2015.

33   AUC Chairperson, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Current Challenges to Peace and Security on the Continent and the AU's Efforts. Enhancing Africa's Leadership, Promoting African Solutions. Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly, 25–26 May 2011, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, EXT/ASSEMBLY/AU/2. (01.2011), §48

34   On this argument also see L. Way, Comparing the Arab Revolts. The Lessons of 1989, in: Journal of Democracy 22 (2011) 4, pp. 13–23.

35   AUC Chairperson, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Current Challenges, §5.

36   Ibid., §8.

> *The grievances that have driven North Africa revolts have a universal ring to them: widespread dissatisfaction with authoritarian and insular governments that have been adept at manipulating constitutional rules to retain power; increasing income inequalities, high poverty levels, and declining living standards for middle classes; and disproportionately high levels of youth unemployment, leading to social alienation. New tools of mobilization, such as the social media, have only contributed to sharpening the organizational tools of the new groups and constituencies. In leading a wide range of aggrieved groups and constituencies, the middle classes in Egypt and Tunisia looked to the future optimistically, because they perceived authoritarian governments as the major impediments to realizing their real potentials.*[37]

Third, the African Union used the developments in Tunisia, Egypt and also Libya to call on member states to fully sign-up to the democratic agenda of the Union, and implement "existing instruments in the areas of human rights, the rule of law, democracy, elections and good governance", in order to be able to prevent similar developments in their own countries.[38] In this view, "the uprisings in North Africa should be used as an opportunity to further the democratic and governance agenda of the AU", the Chairperson of the Commission stated.[39]

And with regard to global politics the Chairperson insisted that

> *partnerships are fully based on Africa's leadership: because without such leadership, there will be no ownership and sustainability; because we understand the problems far better than even the closest partners; because we know which solutions will work, and how we can get there; and because, fundamentally, these problems are ours, and our peoples will live with their consequences.*[40]

In the meantime, he was adamant that the NATO campaign should come "to an immediate end", as it was "significantly expanding beyond the objectives for which it was in the first place authorised".[41]

Other than that, the African Union did not take any decisions for immediate action on the situation in Tunisia or Egypt. It only reiterated the continued relevance of its mediation plan for Libya,[42] that obviously was made needless by the intervention. Yet the African Union has to admit that it had a serious problem with one of its core norms: the rejection of "unconstitutional changes of government". This policy was adopted in 2000 and updated in 2007.[43] Based on a universal understanding of human rights and

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37   Ibid., §6.
38   Ibid., §46.
39   Ibid., §47.
40   Ibid., §48.
41   Ibid., §51.
42   African Union Decision on the Situation in Libya. 27th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly, 30 June to 1 July 2011, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, Assembly/AU/Dec. 385 (XVII).
43   See U. Engel, The African Union and mediation in cases of Unconstitutional Changes of Government, 2008–2011, in: U. Engel (ed.), New Mediation Practices in African Conflicts, Leipzig 2012, pp. 55–82. See also I. K. Souaré, The AU and the challenge of unconstitutional changes of government in Africa, Pretoria 2009; J. S. Omotola,

democracy as well as the need for free and fair elections, good governance and the rule of law, as laid out in the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance,[44] the Union had developed a legalistic policy script that should be invoked against any perpetrator of a coup d'etat, or incumbents who didn't cease power after an election lost, or presidents who manipulated the constitution to extent their stay in office (also referred to as the third-term debate).

In his report on the situation the Chairperson of the AU Commission disarmingly states that

> *The popular uprisings that occurred in Tunisia and in Egypt were unparalleled and posed serious doctrinal problems, because they do not correspond to any of the cases defined by the Lomé Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government* [...][45]

And furthermore, he noted that

> *Social protests without clear leadership and in circumstances of rapidly-unfolding events often take time to translate into steady and stable democratic outcomes. Moreover,* spontaneous revolutionary impulses [emphasis added, UE] *may not necessarily lead to orderly institution-building. Tunisia and Egypt are, however, gradually stabilizing themselves as a result of intricate bargaining among the various stakeholders about the shape of new institutional dispensations.*[46]

Th ough this formulation the Chairperson, though some what lightly, introduced the term "revolution" into the African Union's political discourse.[47] The situation in Li ya, too, was characterised by the Chairperson as a "democratic revolution", though seen different from the dynamics unfolding in Tunisia and Egypt.[48] However, revolutions were simply not foreseen in the Union's policy script. Member states, but also the Commis - sion itself were deeply divided on ho w to respond to the dynamics unfolding.[49] After the UN Security Council adopted a r esolution by through which a no-flight one was introduced in Libya on 17 March 2011, and the launch of O peration *Unified Protector* by the NATO military alliance two days later, the African Union lost important time in

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Unconstitutional changes of government in Africa: what implications for democratic consolidation?, Uppsala 2011; K. Sturman, Unconstitutional Changes of Government: The Democrat's Dilemma in Africa, Johannesburg 2011; and S.A. Dersso, Defending constitutional rule as a peacemaking enterprise: the case of the AU's ban of unconstitutional changes of government, in: International Peacekeeping 24 (2017) 4, pp. 639–660.

44   African Union, African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, Addis Ababa 2007.

45   AUC Chairperson, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Current Challenges, §4.

46   Ibid., §7.

47   For the current academic analysis of the "revolutionary moment" in the Maghreb see S. Lacroix / J.-P. Filiu, Revisiting the Arab Uprisings: The Politics of a Revolutionary Moment, London 2018; and A. Bayat, Revolution Without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring, Stanford CA 2017. Of course, there have been revolutions in North Africa before. See L. Hahn, The Revolution in North Africa, in: Africa Today 14 (1967) 3, pp. 20–22. For an overview on the debate about what constitutes and what prompts "social revolutions" see G. Tiruneh, Social Revolutions: Their Causes, Patterns, and Phases, SAGE Open, (2014) July–September, pp. 1–12.

48   AUC Chairperson, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Current Challenges, §13.

49   Personal observations at the African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, 19 February, 1 April and 1 May 2011.

coming to terms with its own response to the drama in Libya. In the end, it was too late for the Union to find suppo t for a mediated conflict esolution.[50]

5. AU Responses to "2019"

In late 2018 thousands of people star ted demonstrating against the regime in Sudan, in early 2019 they were followed by the people in Algeria. I n the case of S udan protesters initially demanded the r esignation of the militar y regime led b y Gen. Omar al-Bashir (aged 75) since 1989. And in Algeria people protested against the plan of Algerian presi-dent Abdelaziz Bouteflika (82), who had been in p   wer since 1999, to r un for a fifth term of office. n both cases the regimes initially had to make major concessions: on 11 April 2019 the Sudanese military removed al-Bashir from office and imprisoned him, i Algeria the ruling party forced Bouteflik 's resignation from offic [51]

Developments in Algeria and Sudan resonate the 2011 popular uprisings and revolutions in the region, with the counter-revolutionary spectre of a military backlash remaining.[52] And as such the African Union was faced with a "conundrum".[53] After the popular upris-ings and revolutions of 2011 the U nion had revisited its doctrine. O n the occasion of Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the then Minister of Defence, removing democratically-elect-ed Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi, a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, amidst a wave of public protests from office on 3 uly 2013 – which most observers including the African Union considered to be a coup d 'etat[54] –, the U nion established a H igh-Level Panel to look into the situation in Egypt.[55] The country's new leadership rejected this move, claiming that it was "based on a wrong interpretation of the 'popular revolution'"

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50   On 10 March 2011 the AU Peace and Security Council had adopted the *AU Roadmap for the Resolution of the Crisis in Libya* and established a High-Level ad hoc Committee on Libya. See AU PSC, Communiqué adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 265th meeting, held at the Level of Heads of State and Government, 10 March 2011, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, PSC/PR/COMM.2 (CCLXV).

51   See Africa Research Bulletin. Political Series 56 (2019) 4, pp. 22247A-22250C; and 56 (2019) 3, pp. 22211A-22213C, respectively. On Algeria also see International Crisis Group, Post-Bouteflika Algeria: Growing Protests, Signs of Repression, Brussels, 26 April 2019 (= ICG Middle East & North Africa Briefing; 68). On Sudan also see M. Hassan / A. Kodouda, Sudan's Uprising: The Fall of a Dictator, in: Journal of Democracy 30 (2019) 4, pp. 89–103; and International Crisis Group, Safeguarding Sudan's Revolution, Brussels, 21 October 2019 (= ICG Africa Report; 281). In more general terms see Michele Dunne, Fear and Learning in the Arab Uprisings, in: Journal of Demo-cracy 31 (2020) 1, pp. 182–192.

52   A. Adebayo, Africa: On the Revolutions in Sudan and Algeria, Guardian, 13 May 2019, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201905130490.html> (accessed: 9 August 2019); and G. Achcar, The seasons after the Arab Spring, Le Monde Diplomatique, 6 May 2019, <https://mondediplo.com/2019/06/05sudan> (accessed 9 August 2019).

53   A.K. Abebe, Africa: Popular Protests Pose a Conundrum for the AU's Opposition to Coups, The Conversation, 5 May 2019, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201905060175.html> (accessed: 9 August 2019); and the same, Sudan: a chance for the AU to refine support for countries in crisis, The Conversation, 7 June 2019, <http://theconver-sation.com/…> (accessed 9 August 2019).

54   AU PSC, Communiqué adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 384th meeting, 5 July 2013, Addis Aba-ba, PSC/PR/COMM.2 (CCCLXXXIV).

55   The Panel was constituted on 8 July 2013, consisting of Alpha Oumar Konaré (former President of Mali, and for-mer Chairperson of the AU Commission), Festus G. Mogae (former President of Botswana), and Dileita Mohamed Dileita (former Prime Minister of Djibouti). Morsi passed away on 17 June 2019, while on trial.

in Egypt .[56] Also, following protocol the African Union suspended Egypt's membership until the restoration of constitutional order.

The panel was of the view that constitutional order was restored through the subsequent elections held on 26–28 M ay 2014. Gen. el-Sisi became president – though ther e is a provision in the *African Charter* that perpetrators of a coup d 'etat shouldn't be allowed to run for presidency.[57] The anel also noted that Egypt did not sign nor ratify the Afri-can Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance .[58] Weighting up the choices the Panel then stated:

> *The Panel held an extensiv e discussion on this issue. I n so doing, it took into account the following: on the one hand, the need for consistency in the implementation of A U norms on unconstitutional changes of G overnment and consolidation of the democr atic advances on the continent and, on the other hand, the need not to o verlook other con-siderations of serious impor tance to the AU and the continent, par ticularly the need for the AU to continue to effecti ely and constructively engage the Egyptian authorities and other stakeholders on the democr atization process in their country and the stabilization of the situation on the ground.*[59]

Because of the "unique set of circumstances", the Panel recommend to lift the sanctions against Egypt.[60] And with regard to the future of the norm on unconstitutional changes of government, the Panel made the following recommendation:

> *In light of the difficulties encount ed in applying the A U norms on unconstitutional changes of Government, particularly in the context of popular uprisings the Panel recom-mends elaboration of a guideline for deter mining the compatibility of popular uprisings with AU norms on unconstitutional changes of Government. Taking into account recent experiences in North Africa, including in E gypt, the Panel recommends the follo wing elements for such a guideline: (a) the descent of the government into total authoritari-anism to the point of for feiting its legitimacy; (b) the absence or total ineffecti eness of constitutional processes for effecting change of g vernment; (c) popularity of the uprisings in the sense of attracting significant po tion of the population and involving people from all walks of life and ideological persuasions; (d) the absence of inv olvement of the military in removing the government; (e) peacefulness of the popular protests.*[61]

Against this backgr ound, the African U nion responded in v ery diffe ent ways to the popular uprisings in Algeria and Sudan.

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56 African Union, Final Report of the African Union High-Panel for Egypt. 442nd meeting of the Peace and Security Council, 17 June 2014, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, PSC/AHG/4. (CDXVI), §30.
57 African Union, African Charter, §25(4).
58 African Union, Final Report of the African Union High-Panel for Egypt, §75.
59 Ibid., §76.
60 Ibid., §83.
61 Ibid., §83. See also S. A. Dersso, The Status and Legitimacy of Popular Uprisings in the AU Norms on Democracy and Constitutional Governance, in: Journal of African Law 63 (2019) Supplement S1, pp. 107–130.

After the forced resignation of Bouteflika in Algeria the former chief-of-staff, Deputy Minister of Defence Gen Ahmed Gaid Salah (aged 79) took over control and started purging Bouteflik's inner circle, but not heading public calls for delivering on a "real democracy". Cabinet was reshuffled and elections were initially scheduled for 4 July, but then postponed until 12 December 2019 when the former prime minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune (74) was elected president as an "independent candidate". The elections were widely boycotted with an official voter turnout of 39.83 percent (out of which 14.62% were annulled or invalid); opposition parties claim that the turnout was even far lower. Only a few days later, on 23 December, the mastermind of the controlled transition within the ruling military-party complex, Gaid Salah, passed away.[62] Throughout these dynamic developments, the African Union did hardly pronounce itself on the situation in Algeria: In a rare statement on the situation the AUC Chairperson on 18 March 2019 called for a national dialogue to solve the "crisis" – i.e. before Bouteflika was forced to resign.[63] But at the end of the day Algeria is a member state that has been in charge of the important AUC Peace and Security portfolio since the beginning (i.e. 2004) and also is one of the five key member states bankrolling much of the Union's activities.[64] In addition, Algeria is seen as an important partner in the African Union's efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahelo-Saharan part of the continent.[65] Since 2017 the country is coordinating the Union's counter-terrorism efforts; it also hosts the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT).[66]

However, in Sudan the situation was markedly different. In this case the Union African swiftly invoked its policy script on unconstitutional change of government: It called the removal of al-Bashir on 11 April 2019 a coup d'etat. Initially it gave the new military leadership 15 days to hand-over power to a civilian government.[67] At first a stalemate developed in which combined public and AU pressure did not succeed in establishing a civilian government. A "Consultative Summit of the Regional Partners of The Sudan", hosted by Egypt on 23 April 2019, then gave the leadership another 60 days to find a negotiated solution and hand over power to a civilian Transitional Authority.[68] Accordingly, the ruling Military Transitional Council (TMC) led by Gen Abdel Fattah

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62   See Africa Research Bulletin. Political Series 56 (2019) 7, pp. 22363C-22365A; 56 (2019) 9, pp. 22467B-22468B; and 56 (2019) 12, pp. 22535A–22537C.

63   Middle East Monitor, African Union calls for 'national dialogue to bring Algerian crisis to an end, 18 March 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190318-african-union-calls-for-national-dialogue-to-bring-algerian-crisis-to-an-end/> (accessed 30 January 2020).

64   See U. Engel, Revisiting the African Union's Finances post-Kigali 2016, in: U. Engel / F. Mattheis (eds.), The Finances of Regional Organisations in the Global South: Follow the Money, London, New York 2019, pp. 19–34, at pp. 22f.

65   See Yahia H. Zoubir, Algeria's Roles in the OAU/African Union: From National Liberation Promoter to Leader in the Global War on Terrorism, in: Mediterranean Politics 20 (2015) 1, pp. 55–75.

66   Middle East Monitor, African Union chooses Algeria as counterterrorism coordinator, 1 December 2017, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20171201-african-union-chooses-algeria-as-counterterrorism-coordinator/> (accessed 30 January 2020).

67   AU PSC, Communiqué adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 840th meeting, 15 April 2019, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, PSC/PR/COMM. (DCCCXL).

68   AU PSC, Communiqué adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 846th meeting, 30 April 2019, Tunis, Tunisia, PSC/PR/COMM. (DCCCXLVI).

al-Burhan and his deputy Lt-Gen Mohamed Hamdan "Hemeti" Dagalo[69] on the one hand and the oppositional umbrella organisation Declaration of Freedom and Changes Forces (FFC) on the other, reached an agreement to allow for the establishment of a 300 member civilian council to lead the country until next elections to be held in three years. And when the violent backlash against the opposition forces was escalated by the Rapid Support Forces on 3 June 2019, the AUC Chairperson called on the TMC "to protect the civilians from further harm", called for an "immediate cessation of the violence and rapid resumption of negotiations for a political settlement" and appealed to "all concerned to exercise outmost restraint and to respect the rights of citizens".[70] But the AU did not, for instance deploy a field mission to make its own assessment of the dynamics in Sudan. Instead, on 6 June, the AU decided "to suspend, with immediate effect, the participation of the Republic of Sudan in all AU activities until the effective establishment of a civilian-led Transitional Authority, as the only way to allow the Sudan to exit from its current crisis".[71] Furthermore, it threatened that "should the Transition Military Council fail to hand-over power to a civilian-led Transitional Authority, Council shall, without any further delay, automatically impose punitive measures on individuals and entities obstructing the establishment of the civilian-led Transitional Authority".[72] In the end, the AU through its Special Envoy to Sudan, Mohamed El Hassan Ould Labbat, as well as Ethiopian Special Envoy Mahmoud Dirir begun mediating between the Military Council and the Forces of Change. This prepared an intervention finally led by AUC Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (the latter on behalf of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, IGAD).[73] As a result, the TMC and the FFC signed a "political declaration" agreement on power-sharing during the transitional period (17 July) and a *Constitutional Declaration* (4 August) that paved the way for the formation of an interim mixed military-civilian government.[74]

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69 The head of the notorious Rapid Support Forces, or RSF, which originated from the infamous Janjaweed militia that was responsible for the genocide in Darfur after 2003. See T. Etefa, Explainer: tracing the history of Sudan's Janjaweed militia, The Conversation, 9 August 2019, <http://theconversation.com/…> (accessed 30 January 2020).

70 AUC Chairperson, Statement on the Situation in Sudan, 3 June 2019, Addis Ababa.

71 AU PSC, Communiqué adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 854th meeting, 6 June 2019, Addis Ababa, PSC/PR/COMM. (DCCCXLIV), §12.

72 Ibid., §13.

73 AUC Chairperson and Ethiopian Prime Minister, Joint Communiqué on the Situation in Sudan, 2 July 2019, Addis Ababa; AUC Chairperson, Statement on the situation in Sudan, 5 July 2019, Addis Ababa; and African Union High-Level Ad Hoc Committee for South Sudan (C5), Communiqué adopted at a meeting at ministerial level, 6 July 2019, Niamey, Niger.

74 Africa Research Bulletin. Political Series 56 (2019) 8, pp. 22391A-22394C. Following its policy script, the African Union subsequently lifted the sanctions imposed earlier. See AU PSC, Communiqué adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 875th meeting, 6 September 2019, Addis Ababa, PSC/PR/COMM. (DCCCLXXV). The African Union remained seized with the matter. See AU PSC, Communiqué adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 884th meeting, New York, United States, 10 October, PSC/PR/COMM (DCCCLXXXIV); and AU PSC, Communiqué adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 906th meeting, 30 January 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, PSC/PR/COMM. (CMVI).

After some initial stalling, this power-sharing government under the lead of former UN economist Abdallah Hamdock then managed to take some far-reaching decisions which gave rise to moderate optimism about the futur e path of the transition. Among others, the Sovereign Transition Council agreed on a ceasefi e in Sudan's internal conflict ones Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan (21 November); it disbanded the former r uling party, the National Congress Party (26 November); al-Bashir was convicted on charges of corruption and currency irregularities, and sentenced to two years in a "correctional facility" (14 December) and the government announced its intention to transfer the ousted military dictator and others indicted to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague on charges of war crimes and genocide committed during the war in Darfur (10 February 2020).[75]

Yet both in Algeria and S udan, dismantling the "deep state" has only just begun. The uprisings clearly are unfinished business.

6. Conclusions

In this article, I have discussed how the Organisation of African Union and its successor, the African Union, have perceived a number of popular uprisings and revolutions on the continent, for the sake of simplicity referred to as "1989, "2011" and "2019". A number of conclusions can be drawn from the African experience which may also help to reassess more general scholarship on "1989" with its bias on E urope. First, the global "1989" received a tremendous push from developments in Africa, already as early as 1985/1986. Second, in most cases these changes were not discussed by the OAU as part of any global dynamics, but as v ery contingent, continental dev elopments. Later, political changes were situated in terms of how they related to the *second wind of change* on the continent and how, in these terms, the M aghreb related to S ub-Saharan Africa. Thi d, "1989" created a dual and lasting condition on the continent of democratic transitions on the one hand and violent conflicts on the othe . Against this background, and four, in support of democratic transitions the African Union developed systematic policy responses to unconstitutional changes of go vernment. Five, but this did not r esult in a common understanding of popular uprisings and revolutions, as evidenced during the uprisings in Northern Africa in 2011 or the latest wav e of change in Sudan and Algeria in 2019. As a result, some effo ts were made to integrate popular uprisings and r evolutions into the Union's policy script – yet based on a narrow definition of the notion revolution", which excludes any violent action. Hence, the situation in Sudan will serve as a litmus test for

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75   Africa Research Bulletin. Political Series 56 (2019) 11, pp. 22525B-C; Radio Dabanga, 29 November 2019, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-dissolves-national-congress-party-repeals-public-order-bill>; Radio Dabanga, 14 December 2019, < https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/khartoum-court-convicts-sudan-s-ousted-dictator-al-bashir-of-corruption>; and Radio Dabanga, 11 February 2020, <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-govt-to-extradite-al-bashir-to-icc> (all accessed 13 February 2020).

this new policy and the commitment of the Union's member states to democracy on the continent. For sure, the revolutions of 2011 and 2019 sho wed an element of transr egional embeddedness and signs of synchronization, both in the way they actually played out, and also with regard how they were perceived outside the continent. But there was no "global" ring to them. Neither in the case of Algeria nor in Sudan reference has been made by the African Union to dynamics outside the African continent – revolutions are still homegrown, and so are the African Union's responses, or lack thereof.