IAI RESEARCH PAPERS

Re-thinking Western Policies in Light of the Arab Uprisings

Edited by
Riccardo Alcaro and Miguel Haubrich-Seco

Edizioni Nuova Cultura

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Acknowledgements
This publication has been generously supported by the Compagnia di San Paolo, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, NATO Allied Command Operations, and Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Series Editor
Natalino Ronzitti

First published 2012 by Edizioni Nuova Cultura

For Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
Via Angelo Brunetti 9 - I-00186 Roma
www.iai.it

ISBN: ωχψψψφρστχχψφ
Cover: by the author
Graphic Composition: by the author

Contents

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List of Abbreviations

AIPAC	American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee
BMENA	Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative
CENTCOM	United States Central Command (US Armed Forces)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIB	Comprehensive Institution Building Programme
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
DOD	Department of Defence (US)
DC	District of Columbia
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIDHR	European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights
EMP	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FRONTEX	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders
FY	Fiscal year
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
G8	Group of Eight (Summit of advanced economies)
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICI	Istanbul Cooperation Initiative
IEA	International Energy Agency
IMET	International Military Education and Training Programme

JDP	Justice and Development Party (Morocco)
MD	Mediterranean Dialogue
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
MEPP	Middle East Peace Process
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NDP	National Democratic Party (Egypt)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSC	National Security Council (US)
OPEC	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
OQR	Office of the Quartet Representative
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PA	Palestinian Authority
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
P5	Five permanent members of the UN Security Council
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (Egypt)
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TNC	Transitional National Council (Libya)
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIP	United States Institute for Peace
WWII	Second World War

Introduction.
Bouazizi's Inextinguishable Fire

Riccardo Alcaro

As an extreme form of political protest, self-immolation has powerful symbolic value. In 1963, the fire that consumed the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc, who was protesting against persecution of Buddhists by the US-backed regime of Ngo Dinh Diem, grabbed the headlines of newspapers around the world, provoking closer scrutiny, and increased criticism, of the conduct of the Diem government. Two years later, a similar act carried out by a young US Quaker in front of the Pentagon shocked US public opinion, intensifying opposition to the Vietnam War in the United States. And nothing more than the 1969 self-inflicted death by fire of Prague Spring hero Jan Palach came to symbolise the dread and brutality of Soviet oppression. All these acts – sometimes carried out in emulation, sometimes spontaneously – unmasked profound social discontent. Had they not reflected widespread feelings and perceptions of society at large, they could not have risen to symbols. In no case, however, did they spark mass revolts in the countries where they took place (let alone in other countries), although they contributed to the growing momentum for political protests.

The suicide of Mohammed Bouazizi, a young Tunisian who set himself ablaze on 17 December 2010, seemed to be of a different nature. Rather than symbolising a political cause, it was, ostensibly, the result of desperation. The street vendor had seen his wares and wheelbarrow, his only means of subsistence, confiscated by a police officer – allegedly the last of a number of humiliations he had been forced to endure. His self-immolation might have been an act of protest against the absence of any guarantee against government abuses, but lacked, apparently, the far-reaching flavour of an idealistic, epochal fight. And yet, Bouazizi's suicide had the same effect of a spark on a heap of straw. It immediately

became the catalyst of widespread anti-government protests, not only in his country of origin, but also in many others, where the people seemed to share the same sense of frustration and powerlessness that had led Bouazizi to choose death over a life of misery. A new, and perhaps the most important, chapter in the history of political self-immolation was then written.

In less than a month, uncontrolled social tumults led Tunisia's long-standing president, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, to flee ignominiously a country he had ruled with an iron fist for twenty-three years. Weeks later, another powerful autocrat, Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak, was driven out of office by the combined effect of mass demonstrations and pressure from his – hitherto loyal – armed forces. Less than six months had passed since Bouazizi's death before authoritarian regimes, once believed to be stable, were shaking to their very foundations due to popular protests in countries as diverse as Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and eventually Syria. At the time of writing, Muammar Qaddafi's forty-year long rule over Libya has ended in a bloody civil war in which the former dictator lost his life; Yemen's embattled president, Ali Abdullah Salehi, has committed himself (for the umpteenth time) to stepping down; and the regime of Syria's president Bashar al-Assad is fighting for survival. Only Bahrain, thanks to the help of Saudi Arabia, seems to have escaped a regime change, at least for the time being.

There are no pictures available of Bouazizi's self-immolation that can turn his act into an icon (as was the case with Duc), nor was his cause so high-profile as the one that convinced Palach of the necessity to burn himself. And yet, his death will go down in history as the moment in which a decades-old system of authoritarian regimes and regional relations began to crumble and a new era of political participation by Arab masses ushered in. Rather than a symbol of popular discontent, Bouazizi's self-immolation has worked as a trigger for popular protests and, more broadly speaking, for the coming of age of a new generation of Arabs, determined to assert control over their public life through democratic representation.

Whether this historical process, which the international media has quickly christened the "Arab Spring" or "Arab awakening", will succeed in revolutionising Arab countries along a democratic pattern, whether

reactionary forces will be able to re-establish their leadership, or whether new authoritarian actors will replace the old ones, remains uncertain. Nonetheless, irrespective of whether the 2011 Arab Spring will turn into summer (the "Eastern Europe 1989" scenario, in which popular demonstrations succeed in establishing democracy) or backtrack into winter (the "Europe 1848" scenario, in which reactionary forces eventually succeed in resisting change), the Arab world will look like quite different from what it was prior to Bouazizi's death. Accordingly, external actors, and particularly those that are most interested in developments in the region: the United States and the European Union, will have to adjust.

The West's response to the Arab Spring would make a perfect case study for those interested in the conflict between perceived interests and values. On the one hand, the West finds it hard not to sympathise with the demands of the "Arab street": an end to authoritarian and arbitrary rule, popular representation, rule of law, social justice, an end to corruption. These are all in keeping with much of what the West itself says is at the core of its model of organising public life. On the other hand, Western countries, most notably the United States, are wary of the potential outcome of the revolutionary wave that is shaking the Arab world, since it might evolve into a system of regional relations less compatible with Western preferences than the pre-2011 one.

This striking divide between the West's heart and mind hinges on the simple and irrefutable fact that both the United States and Europe have for decades shown acquiescence towards, and often actively supported, Arab authoritarian regimes in return for Western-friendly policies. Chief amongst them are the security of energy supplies, non-confrontational relations with Israel, the keeping at bay of Islam-rooted political movements (deemed to support a policy agenda incompatible with the Western one) and, more recently, cooperation in the fight against *Jihad*-inspired terrorism as well as irregular migration. Tellingly, the countries of the region with which the West was at loggerheads – Syria, Iraq and Libya – were so not as much for the nature of their regimes, as for the anti-Western policies they pursued. As evidence of this, when Libya's rebellion broke out, the West was actually in full conciliatory mode towards Qaddafi because of his 2003 decision to give up Libya's weapons

of mass destruction programme, certainly not because he had turned into a democrat.

Libya, however, was a special case, since Qaddafi's mercurial leadership had unwisely managed to isolate the country from the Middle East context, consequently making revolutionary changes in Libya itself less relevant to regional balances. This has allowed the West to pursue a regime change policy without much prejudice to its perceived interests in the Middle East, as well as for a relatively easy re-alignment of the West's interests (a cooperative regime) with its values (support for an anti-authoritarian rebellion). If the West has reasonable expectations that Libya's new leaders will establish a more pluralistic government and embrace a policy of cooperation, things stand differently as far as other countries are concerned.

The main focus is on Egypt, arguably the most critical of all Arab countries due to its demographic size (at around eighty million, Egypt's population is over twice as large as the second largest Arab country, Algeria), its prominent position in the Arab League, and its mediation role between Israel and the Palestinians.

Initially, the West and particularly the United States hesitated for what many thought it was too long a time before throwing its weight behind the anti-Mubarak street protests in Cairo and other Egyptian cities. Mubarak had for thirty years closely followed a US-friendly policy in return for political backing and massive financial aid, most notably to the military, but at the cost of alienating a public opinion widely suspicious of US influence in the region. In the end, the fear of being associated with the repression of pro-democracy demonstrators convinced the White House and European governments to pull the rug from under Mubarak. Out of concern that the country could plunge into chaos, or that a revolutionary, unfriendly government might be established in Cairo, Americans and Europeans pushed for a closely managed or, as US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton put it, 'orderly' transition to a new, more plural, government in Egypt. The Americans were comfortable with the fact that the military, by way of a soft *Putsch*, established itself as the manager and guarantor of the transition, since it is with the military that the US government has its closest links and it is over the military that it has its main leverage, the annual 1.1 billion dollar worth military assistance.

In Western calculations, the transition would have given enough time to sound out the availability of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist movement with the greatest appeal to the public and the most effective party organisation, to abide by Mubarak's main foreign policy tenets, in particular the upholding of the 1979 peace treaty with Israel. This transitory solution seemed the most appropriate because it gave certain guarantees of continuity in Egypt's foreign policy while, at the same time, putting the West in sync with Egypt's public opinion, widely supportive of the military at the time.

As months passed by, however, political ferment and urban protests have begun to surface again, as the military's control of Egypt is increasingly seen as a continuation of Mubarak's regime. Arbitrary rule, somewhat of a softer nature, continues unabated and the political process leading to a democratic government is in doubt due to an awkwardly long electoral schedule (parliamentary elections are phased over three months, ending in March 2012, not to mention presidential ones which have not been set yet) and the unsolved question of the military's constitutional role within the new Egypt. At the time of writing this introduction, Cairo's streets are again replete with angry demonstrators, and the military junta is struggling to keep control of events. At the end of 2011, the situation in Egypt seems as uncertain as it was at the beginning of this eventful year, confronting the United States and the European Union with the difficult task of operating a new adjustment.

Tunisia, the country where everything started, was and is far from being as strategically important as Egypt. This notwithstanding, the first reactions to the anti-Ben Ali protests by Western countries were either muted or, in the unfortunate case of then French foreign minister Michèle Alliot-Marie, even took the form of an offer of assistance to Tunisian riot police to quell the revolt. While first the United States and then EU member states rapidly changed tack and expressed support for the demonstrators' demands, their initial hesitations reinforced the perception that the West was clinging to its stability-first policy even in the face of pro-democracy protests. The fact that the West did little to prevent the Saudi-led repression of anti-government demonstrators in Bahrain, and that it adopted a rather cautious approach toward the turmoil in Yemen, seemed to confirm that Western countries were only grud-

gingly coming to terms with the possibility that the Middle East was on the verge of a revolutionary change. The French and British push for military action against Qaddafi, the least defendable of all Arab autocrats, was widely believed to be partly motivated by the wish to alter these perceptions by showing concrete solidarity with Arab anti-authoritarian movements.

The overthrow of Qaddafi, which NATO critically contributed to achieving through an air campaign coordinated with rebel forces' operations on the ground, might have partly mitigated perceptions of Western ambiguity. The truth is, however, that the West's response to the Arab Spring has so far been, in fact, ambivalent. It took Western leaders long months of bloody repression and defiance of international calls to halt violence to start calling publicly for the resignation of Syrian president Assad. Syria was anything but a friend of the West, despite recent attempts by France and the United States to re-engage it. Yet, Western powers were reluctant to champion Assad's ousting because Syria, thanks to the ruthless but clever policies of the late Hafez al-Assad (Bashar's father), is so deeply enmeshed in the regional context that a regime change there is a matter of concern even for its foes. The West turned decisively against Assad only once violence in Syria escalated into a civil war, which has already cost the life of over 5,000 people, according to UN estimates.

A balanced appraisal of the West's response to the Arab Spring confirms that it has been fundamentally ambivalent or, to use a more neutral term, heterogeneous. Both the United States and the European Union have hesitated in choosing a preferable course of action until the course of events allowed for only one clear response. So, for instance, support for Tunisian and Egyptian demonstrators came only after the moral difference of the two camps – on one side peaceful, pro-democracy demonstrators and on the other brutal and repressive regimes – had become so strident that further inaction would have cost the West a complete loss of face. Similarly, armed intervention in Libya and harsh sanctions against the Syrian regime were agreed upon after the repression had risked resulting in, or had in fact led to, bloodshed. In other cases, the West has deliberately decided not to intervene (Bahrain) or to adopt a very cautious, low-profile policy line (for instance the United States in Yemen).

On balance, Americans and Europeans have followed a wait-and-see approach to political change in North Africa and the Middle East. Their first response was to seek negotiated solutions between regimes in power and opposition forces, a ruse meant to allow the West to keep together its rhetorical support for anti-authoritarian movements and its unwillingness to force events on the ground. Largely reactive (with the exception of Libya), generally prudent and short-term oriented, highly differentiated with respect to the various countries, EU and US actions towards Arab Spring countries have aimed to preserve regional relations as close to the pre-2011 conditions as possible. While offering support and assistance to successful anti-authoritarian movements (but only after these had gone far enough to make their defence a public diplomacy imperative), the Americans and the Europeans have worked towards securing from the new governments the same benefits they got from cooperation with the old ones.

Thus, neither the United States nor the European Union seems convinced that existing policies towards North Africa and the Middle East are in need of a radical review, based on a long-term perspective of how the region can reasonably look like in the next years. Even the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), whose periodical review fell in the midst of the Arab Spring due to a lucky combination of events, has not brought in significant novelties. It has rather given renewed emphasis on existing principles and policy tools, such as conditioning the actual provision of rewards on domestic reforms, which in the past have failed to deliver the desired results. As for the United States, it has yet to give any signal that it is actually considering the possibility that its regional policies – in particular, uncritical support to Israel – should be adjusted so as to factor in the changes potentially brought about by the Arab Spring.

In sum, for the time being Americans and Europeans are apparently counting on the fact that domestic political change in a number of Arab countries – including the most important one, Egypt – can occur without having a significant impact on regional balances. Such a stance runs counter to the basic rule in foreign policy studies, according to which any foreign policy is always a reflection of domestic politics. It would come as a big surprise indeed if Arab Spring countries were to deviate

from this rule, as one of the reasons why most Arab dictators were despised was precisely their acquiescence towards Western, and especially American, regional policies, with a special focus on the West's bias towards Israel.

The current predicament in North Africa and the Middle East is so fluid that what seems unthinkable today could become possible in the future. In such a situation, a wait-and-see approach might be, if not a brave and visionary policy, at least a prudent option. It might also be that the Americans and their European partners eventually manage to get from the new Arab governments – even in the case that they include representatives from Islamist parties – the same basic assurances as to their main regional interests they got from their predecessors. After all, all new governments are and will remain in need of assistance and cooperation, which the United States and the European Union, their current economic distress notwithstanding, can certainly provide. Nonetheless, the first lesson of the Arab Spring is that, as US President Abraham Lincoln once said, "you can't fool all the people all the time", meaning that whatever policies the new Arab governments will pursue, they will have to be backed by their own public opinion.

The Arab Spring, whatever its final outcome, has laid bare the strategic "original sin" of the West's stability-first policy, notably that the stability it fostered was illusory since its authoritarian foundation was unsustainable. Supporting political, economic, and social sustainability – democratic sustainability in one word – has greater potential to ensure long-term stability and security at the regional level than past Western policies (which, by the way, never succeeded in fostering regional peace; if anything, the case was quite the opposite). Such a course of action implies a more long-term strategic reflection on how the United States and the European Union should re-frame their outlook of the region, what long-term changes they should reasonably expect from the Arab Spring, and how they should re-adjust their interests accordingly.

This was the main conclusion reached by a group of over fifty experts from America, Europe, and Arab countries, who on 12 September 2011 convened in Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome to take part in the 2011 edition of the Istituto Affari Internazionali's *Transatlantic Security Symposium* series. The conference, the fourth of its kind, was

dedicated to the topic "Re-thinking Western Policies in Light of the Arab Uprising". Collecting the papers presented at the Symposium, together with a detailed report of the conference debate, this volume is meant to contribute to the intellectual effort of re-thinking Western-Arab relations which the Arab Spring has made an imperative for any foreign policy analyst and practitioner.

1.

Embracing the Change, Accepting the Challenge? Western Response to the Arab Spring

Steven Heydemann

Transformations underway in the Arab world are reshaping the political landscape of the Middle East, and, in the process, upending established relations between the Arab region and the West. As the so-called "Arab Spring" enters its second year, it is appropriate to step back and address two questions. First, has the West – meaning, for my purposes, the governments of Europe and the United States (US) – embraced the changes the Arab Spring has unleashed in a region long associated more with political stagnation than political dynamism? Second, has the West accepted the challenges associated with these ongoing changes? In other words, have Western governments taken on board what these transformations mean for their relationships with the Arab world, and begun to adapt accordingly?

The West's embrace of the Arab uprisings might have been tentative and uncertain at first, partly reflecting the messy politics surrounding the changes underway in the Arab world – an uneasy mix of excitement and fear, enthusiasm and caution. Nonetheless, there is really very little question at this point among Western governments about the scale and significance of the transformations underway in the Arab world, or about the imperative that Western governments actively engage with and support the demands of Arab citizens for fundamental political and economic change.

By mid-May 2011, six months after the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi, the young Tunisian street vendor who became a catalyst of popular protests by setting himself ablaze, US President Barack Obama made clear the US view of the Arab Spring as an 'historic opportunity.' Setting aside the fears of those who argued that Arab uprisings

would simply empower anti-Western extremists, President Obama aligned the United States with the Arab street. The Arab Spring, he said, offered the US 'the chance to show that America values the dignity of the street vendor in Tunisia more than the raw power of the dictator. There must be no doubt,' Obama added, 'that the United States of America welcomes change that advances self-determination and opportunity. Yes, there will be perils that accompany this moment of promise. But after decades of accepting the world as it is in the region, we have a chance to pursue the world as it should be.'

Similar shifts, from hesitancy and a reluctance to support Arab uprisings to a gradual (and in some respects still selective) embrace of the changes they are bringing is evident among European governments, as well. Who could forget, to cite just one instance, the statements of French foreign minister Michèle Alliot-Marie in early 2011 offering the support of French security forces to the Tunisian regime, followed not long afterwards by her resignation and President Nicolas Sarkozy's full-throated support for NATO-led operations against the regime of Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi? Thus, if the West did not immediately leap to the support of Arab protest movements, and if it continues to view the Arab uprisings with a measure of unease, there is little question that by fall 2011 Western governments had embraced the Arab Spring.

The critical issue, therefore, is not whether the West has embraced the Arab spring, but how it has done so. Of particular importance is how Western responses to the Arab Spring have led the United States and its allies to frame and define the challenges they associate with it in ways that are already beginning to consolidate a distinctive set of understandings and conceptions about both causes and effects of the transformations underway in the Arab world. These understandings and conceptions are not only deeply problematic but also have the potential for mis-calibrating Western responses to Arab uprisings. Specifically, Western governments have tended to define the challenges of the Arab Spring in their own image – as expressions of how Washington, Berlin, Paris, London, and Brussels understand Arab states and Arab societies – rather than in terms defined by the participants in these uprisings.

As a result, the emerging narratives that define the challenges of the Arab Spring for Western governments may well increase the likelihood that Western responses will reinforce, rather than overcome, longstanding tensions and sources of conflict, both between the West and Arab societies, and between Western governments and the political orders that are taking shape in some parts of the Arab world. Misperceptions concerning facts on the ground and their underlying political-social dynamics will likely lead to this unfortunate end result, irrespective of the intention of the Obama administration and its European counterparts to define the Arab Spring as an opportunity to build more positive relationships with a region that has long had an overwhelmingly negative view of the West.

We can see this process at work in a number of different arenas, but two stand out as especially prominent: how challenges of political governance are being framed in the West, and how challenges of economic governance are being defined. What follows will first address how challenges of political governance have been conceptualised in the two "success stories" of Egypt and Tunisia and how the experiences of these two cases have influenced and distorted Western perceptions of the Arab Spring writ large. Attention will then shift to the ways in which challenges of economic governance have been framed, with similarly distorting effects.

THE LEGACIES OF TRANSITOLOGY IN WESTERN RESPONSES TO THE ARAB SPRING

For anyone who has been watching the Arab world and the study of Arab politics for any time, one of the striking things about Western responses to the Arab Spring is the speed with which transitology frameworks have re-emerged as a defining narrative, especially but not exclusively in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt. After more than a decade in which the limits of transition-based models of regime change had become increasingly apparent to those who studied the region's politics,

almost overnight we found ourselves once again in their grip. At dozens of academic conferences and workshops[1] researchers and practitioners from Europe and Latin America sought to extract lessons for Egypt of their own transition experiences. In journals and blogs we debated whether Indonesia's or some other case of authoritarian breakdown might hold lessons for Egypt and Tunisia[2]. We saw the almost immediate flow into Egypt and Tunisia of veterans of authoritarian transitions in Eastern Europe and Latin America, anxious to offer advice and guidance to their Arab counterparts about transition processes. Delegations from Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt were brought to Poland to observe its recent parliamentary elections.

In some cases, these exchanges have been organised and funded by prominent European and American democracy promotion organisations such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI), which have benefited from a resurgence of interest in democracy promotion – a field of practice that relies for its conceptual foundations on the analytic frameworks of transitology – now that conditions in the Arab world have become more conducive to such work. To assist these efforts, the US Congress increased the funding for the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) at the Department of State from 50 million dollars in the 2010 fiscal year, to 80 million dollars in the 2011 fiscal year (FY11), at a moment when the US Congress has singled out foreign assistance as a target for budget cuts. This outcome was made all the more dramatic by uncertainty in the months before the FY11 budget was passed about whether MEPI would survive at all. Funding for the National Endowment for Democracy and its sibling organisations (including NDI) also fared well under otherwise difficult budget circumstances.

To be sure, there is much to be gained in mining previous experiences of transition for lessons that might ease the path to democratic consolidation for Egypt or Tunisia. Indeed, for many of us who have long

[1] Including one in which this author participated at the American University of Cairo in June 2011.

[2] Thomas Carothers, "Egypt and Indonesia: As Mubarak teeters, lessons can be drawn from Suharto's Ouster", *The New Republic*, 2 February, 2011. http://www.tnr.com/article/world/82650/egypt-and-indonesia. Carothers was arguing against the alarmist view that Egypt was likely to follow an Iranian trajectory.

argued that Arab politics are not exceptional, and should be seen as compatible with the conceptual frameworks developed to explain political processes in other settings, the enthusiasm for integrating Arab cases into broader comparative models is a positive step.

Yet in a less positive vein, such comparisons have been used in ways that obscure differences in context and in political dynamics, limiting their value as a guide for understanding the challenges that confront the Arab world today, and potentially distorting how Western governments respond to these challenges. Three quick examples of such differences should suffice to make the point.

First, it has become apparent over the past months that Egypt and Tunisia are not, in fact, models for regime transition in the Arab world, but should be seen, instead, as outliers – cases in which authoritarian breakdowns were supported by conditions that are not widely present in the Arab states experiencing uprisings. These include militaries that defined themselves as defenders of the nation and not as defenders of the regime; high levels of ethnic and sectarian homogeneity; and relatively high levels of economic globalisation that extended beyond energy sectors to other areas of the economy.

In contrast, as we have seen in the cases of Yemen, Syria, Libya, Bahrain, and, to a lesser extent Algeria, the more common experience of Arab uprisings includes levels of social violence that are largely a-typical of the experiences of Third Wave states in general[3]. Libya's transition was marked by civil war. Yemen and, perhaps, Syria, seem to be heading in this direction. This, in turn, creates contexts – with Libya as perhaps the best example – that will require support not only for democratic transitions, but for full-fledged processes of post-conflict reconstruction that pose very different challenges than does regime transition that occurs under less destructive and socially divisive circumstances. All of the problems that attend transitions from authoritarian rule, including the

[3] The phrase "Third Wave", borrowed from Samuel P. Huntington's 1991 book *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, is usually referred to democratisation processes occurring in the developing world. Here the phrase is used, in a narrower fashion, to indicate democratisation processes in East Europe after the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

design of new political institutions and coming to terms with the legacies of the past, become far more fraught in cases in which democratisation must simultaneously contend with the aftermath of large-scale violence, including possible atrocities and crimes against humanity.

Second, there are significant differences in the international context within which Arab uprisings are taking place relative to those of the Third Wave, and these also work against policy frameworks anchored in comparisons to previous episodes of democratisation. Perhaps most important, these uprisings are taking place in an international context which is far more conducive to non-democratic forms of governance than at any time since the end of the Cold War. Today, leading authoritarian states such as Russia and China, with support from emerging regional democracies such as Turkey, India, and Brazil, have far greater capacity to constrain and limit the effects of Western support for democratic change than they did during prior waves of democratic transition. The economic and diplomatic resources of leading authoritarian regimes not only insulate Arab autocrats from the demands of mass uprisings: as is evident in both Bahrain and Syria, they also increase the probability that emerging political orders will be something less than consolidated democracies. This possibility may well extend beyond the stalled if not faltering transitions of Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain to the best-case scenarios for successful transition: Egypt and Tunisia.

Finally, these international trends have been amplified and reinforced by new patterns of regional diplomacy among governments of Arab Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These three regimes have played a significant role in virtually every Arab uprising from Morocco to Bahrain. They have leveraged their economic and diplomatic influence within the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League to engage regional organisations in their efforts to manage and steer Arab uprisings, and to sustain a regional order they view as consistent with their interests.

Their interventions defy easy categorisation, though they all fit within regional balance of power politics. At times, leading Gulf states have acted to repress uprisings, as in the Saudi response to Bahrain's *Intifada*. In others, they have intervened assertively to support processes of re-

gime change, as in Libya. In yet others, they have played a more ambivalent role, adjusting their policies over time as conditions on the ground evolved. This has been the case in Saudi Arabia's interventions in Syria, where some months after an uprising began in mid-March, Saudi leaders shifted from a policy of quiescence to an approach that is more explicitly critical of President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Whatever the differences in the specifics of Gulf diplomacy toward Arab uprisings, however, it is important for the West to recognise that there are important areas in which the interests of the Gulf monarchies do not extend to support for democratic transitions, and to understand how Gulf resistance to democratisation will affect the policy environments that Western governments are working to influence. In Egypt, for instance, funding from the Gulf flows more abundantly and with fewer constraints than does aid from the United States, and has gone, at least in part, to support new political actors whose commitment to democracy remains uncertain, such as Salafist political movements. Thus, if what Western governments hope to do in embracing the changes underway in the Arab world is to support local actors in their own efforts to democratise, then misreading or misdiagnosing how current contexts differ from those that shaped earlier episodes of democratisation will undermine the intent of Western responses to the Arab Spring, however well meaning they might be.

ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE VS. DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

A similar if potentially even more problematic misdiagnosis of the Arab Spring concerns issues of economic governance and, in particular, how Western governments are framing the role of markets in processes of transition in the Arab world. It was surprising for this author to hear an Hungarian sociologist informing an Egyptian audience about the lessons that Egypt might take from Hungary's transition to a market economy during a June 2011 conference at the American University in Cairo. It was so not only because of the seeming lack of awareness of the speaker about the extent to which Arab economies have experienced market-oriented reforms over the past two decades, but also because of the ex-

tent to which popular grievances over the effects of those reforms have been among the most important drivers of Arab uprisings.

To be fair, it is clear that Western governments by and large understand the extent to which Arab uprisings have been fuelled by economic grievances and by perceived failures of economic liberalisation. Nonetheless, what we also see among Western governments, and certainly on the part of the US administration, is an inclination to frame economic grievances in the Arab world along lines that fit within existing policy frameworks. These frameworks reflect, on the one hand, the somewhat distinctively American view that privileges markets as the agent of economic growth and, on the other hand, reflect the extent to which Europe as a whole is bound up in bitter political struggles over debt reduction, redistribution, and shrinking the role of the state in the economy.

The result, at least in the US case, is that economic grievances in the Arab world have been framed largely in terms of corruption, crony capitalism, a lack of accountability, and technical failures of economic governance. These problems are certainly important. Yet in moving them to the fore Western governments obscure the extent to which economic grievances among Arab societies are expressing a much more fundamental critique of markets than this framing suggests, including very deep-seated concerns not only about corruption, but about economic exclusion and inequality, about economic insecurity and vulnerability, and about the failure of authoritarian governments in the Arab world to protect citizens from the worst effects of market-oriented economic reforms.

These differences in perspective – and their implications for how the West responds to the challenges of the Arab Spring – are evident in a manifesto circulated in early 2011 by a coalition of leading Arab civil society organisations following a meeting in Cairo. Titled "Towards a New Social Contract: Declaration of Key Principles by Civil Society Organisations in the Arab Region", the document went on to stress that 'the Arab revolutions are not merely a reaction to rent-seeking states and corrupt and totalitarian regimes, but also the outcome of unjust and failed social and economic policies. These revolutions may not be able to achieve their goals and fulfil their objectives unless an in-depth revision of growth patterns that have failed to realise progress, stability, prosperity, and just and comprehensive development is carried out.'

The gap between Western perspectives that frame challenges of economic governance in terms of corruption and accountability, and those from within the region that appeal for a new social contract anchored in a commitment to distributive justice, is not a small one. Yet to accept regional perspectives as a starting point would require a focus on social policy, a recognition of the continuing need for redistribution, and a willingness to engage issues of inequality and economic exclusion, that would cut against US perceptions of the appropriate role of the state in the economy, and which Europe no longer has the will or the capacity to sustain, either at home or in its foreign relations. As difficult as it might be to bridge this gap, however, a failure to do so is likely to reinforce populist strains within post-authoritarian Arab politics in cases like Egypt and Tunisia, and place new strains on Western relations with the Arab world.

What we tend to see in both of these areas, in other words, is that the West has by and large embraced the changes represented by the Arab Spring. Yet it has tended to define the challenges associated with these changes along lines that make them more tractable and more easily integrated into existing policy frameworks and political preferences. Yet this has come at the cost of misreading and misdiagnosing key elements of these changes, and thus of developing policy frameworks that may well fall short in responding to some of the critical obstacles that confront the Arab Spring. No less troubling, they may also fall short in producing the kinds of changes in relations between the West and the Arab world that Western governments claim to be seeking

With these risks in mind, it may well be that the most significant challenge for the West, over a year after the Arab Spring began in rural Tunisia, is to look critically at how it has embraced the challenges of Arab uprisings; to acknowledge where it has gotten off track; and to undertake the mid-course corrections that will truly support processes of democratic change, and promote the emergence of new social contracts in the Arab world.

2.
The US Response to the Arab Uprising: Leadership Missing

Robert Springborg

The Barack Obama administration's response to upheavals in the Arab world that commenced in Tunisia in December 2010, has been remarkably cautious. What it has done is much less remarkable than what it has said, or what it might have done.

As is characteristic of this administration in general, and of its president in particular, words have been more forthcoming than actions. And those words have followed a pattern. As uprisings gathered steam, language supporting protesters and criticising incumbent regimes grew more pointed, but in almost all cases remained equivocal. Removals of the Tunisian, Egyptian and then Yemeni presidents were tacitly endorsed.[1] Wording of statements about the ruling al-Khalifa family and their draconian crackdown in Bahrain was yet more cautious.[2] The strongest statement by President Obama on Syria's President Bashar al-Assad prior to the intensification of the regime's crackdown in July was that "he can lead [the] transition or get out of the way," a statement described by former State Department spokesman, P.J. Crowley, as "curious," since Assad seemed to have no intent of reforming.[3] When in May

[1] As President Ali Abdullah Saleh was evacuated from Sana to Saudi Arabia in June 2011 to receive medical treatment, the United States made no secret of its desire for him not to return.

[2] Obama's personal comment on Bahrain was included in his 19 May 2011 speech, in which he encouraged dialogue between the government and the opposition, which he said cannot be real "when parts of the peaceful opposition are in jail." He did not condemn the government's excessive use of force against protesters, nor the dispatch of troops to Bahrain by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

[3] P.J. Crowley, "Obama Must Tell Assad to Go," *Washington Post*, 19 June 2011, http://

2011 President Obama signed an executive order approving sanctions against Assad and his inner circle, his stated, limited objective was to pressure Syria to "begin transitioning to a democratic system that ensures the universal rights of the Syrian people."[4] It was not until 18 August when the Syrian issue was on its way to the UN Security Council that the US government called for its president to step down. Only with regard to Libya has the language of regime change been strident, unequivocal, and accompanied with direct action to achieve that end. But even that direct action was limited primarily to the opening stages of establishing the No Fly Zone, itself a tightly confined operation.[5] The Libyan engagement, moreover, resulted not from US urgings, but from diplomatic initiatives commenced by France and then supported by other European states.[6] For the first time since World War II the United States took a back seat to Europe in laying the diplomatic groundwork for joint military action in the Middle East, and then in the actual conduct of the action itself.

Another feature of US rhetoric is that much of it has been pronounced by spokespersons for the president or the secretary of state, thereby distancing those officials from the message, reducing their responsibility for it, and implicitly devaluing its importance. So, for example, in reaction to Bashar al-Assad's speech on 20 June, in which he pointedly refrained from announcing specific reform measures and continued to blame outside agitators, which he likened to "germs," for the

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www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/obama-tell-syrias-assad-he-has-to-go/2011/06/17/AGlZB3bH_story.html

[4] Cited in *IPRIS Digest*, 4, 124, 23 June 2011.

[5] By late June 2011, for example, NATO had launched only one-third of the air sorties over Libya that it did over Kosovo in 1999. Those sorties were conducted almost exclusively by European, not US aircraft. They were deemed by qualified western military experts to be insufficient to change the balance of power on the ground. See for example James Blitz, Michael Peel and Anna Fifield, "An Uncertain Mission," *Financial Times*, 23 June 2011, p. 7.

[6] In virtually his final public statement prior to retirement, Secretary of Defence Robert Gates attributed France's forward posture toward Libya to President Nicolas Sarkozy's "personal reasons", thereby further underlying US scepticism toward this intervention. James Kantner, "Sarkozy Rebuts Gates's Remarks on Libyan Strikes," *The New York Times*, 25 June 2011, p. A8.

upheaval in his country, the French foreign minister, Alain Juppé, said that the Syrian president had reached "the point of no-return." His German counterpart, Guido Westerwelle, said that the speech was that of a "hopeless person who seems not to have understood the signs of the times." By contrast, the American response to what may have been the last chance for the Assad regime to come to terms with its opposition, was provided not by President Obama or Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, but by Victoria Nuland, spokeswoman of the Department of State, who simply characterised the speech as "mere words."[7]

The net effect of its cautious, essentially verbal reactions has been to convey an impression that the Obama administration is anxious not to become sucked into the tumultuous events of the Arab Spring and is grappling with upheavals on a case by case basis. It has shunned formulation of an overall strategy that would force it to choose between security concerns and support for those pouring into Arab streets. It seems to be struggling to find words it hopes will appease protesters, but not commit the United States to specific outcomes or actions. In some cases, such as that of Saudi Arabia's crackdown on women protesters violating the ban on their driving in the Kingdom in May 2011, the administration preferred complete silence, despite appeals by the protesters for words of encouragement.[8] Obama's second major speech on the Middle East since becoming president, delivered on 19 May 2011, sounded like a dusted off version brought down from the US diplomatic shelf. It laid out traditional US concerns with supporting Israel and the peace process, fighting terrorism, opposing nuclear proliferation, and ensuring the flow of oil. This litany of interests is the same as that enunciated by Obama's predecessor, although President George W. Bush typically added a commitment to democratisation. The speech, billed as President Obama's

[7] "They Said in Response to al-Assad's Speech," *al Quds al Arabi*, 22 June 2011, as cited in *Middle Eastwire.com* 22 June 2011.

[8] After a campaign directed against her by Saudi women, Secretary of State Clinton finally issued a statement on 21 June in which she declared that what "these women are doing is brave, and what they are seeking is right." No criticism of the Saudi government was offered. Her spokesperson explained the dilatory response on the grounds that the secretary had been engaged in "quiet diplomacy." Steven lee Myers, "Clinton Praises Protest by Saudis," *The New York Times*, 22 June 2011, p. A8.

reaction to the Arab Spring, was conspicuously not used to declare new departures in US policy toward the region.

In the meantime the absence of major policy reactions by the United States to the Arab Spring is notable. No US troops have been committed to Libya or any other country in the region since that Spring blossomed. Indeed, the draw-down of US forces has continued in Iraq and was announced for Afghanistan on 22 June as the upheavals were in progress. No substantial increase in foreign aid has been declared, even as regards traditional beneficiary Egypt. Despite its straightened circumstances, deemed by its Finance and International Cooperation Ministers to require 12-15 billion dollars in additional external funding in this financial year, it was promised by President Obama in his 19 May speech debt relief of only 1 billion dollars, and that on conditional terms, as well as an additional 1 billion dollars of new loan guarantees. Secretary of State Clinton, speaking in Cairo on 15 March, had announced a rather derisory 90 million dollars of emergency economic assistance. The United States thus committed itself to covering less than five percent of the funding required by Egypt for the coming fiscal year, a very modest amount indeed in comparison to the some 3 billion dollars annually Jimmy Carter committed to Cairo in support of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty back in 1979.[9] In deeds then, if rather less so in words, responses by the Obama administration to Arab countries wracked by internal dissent and/or facing major economic challenges have been characterised by their discreetness, or by their complete absence. Indeed, one former administration insider boasted that this approach reflected the Obama strategy of "leading from behind."[10] Whether that is explanation or justification is unclear, but the low key approach does raise questions as to what alternative responses were possible, why they were not preferred, and what the consequences of leading from the rear have been.

[9] Total Egyptian public debt in 2011 is 183 billion dollars, of which some 3 billion dollars is owed to the United States. Because the debt to the United States is on concessional interest terms, it requires minimal debt servicing, so the 1 billion dollars of debt forgiveness provides Egypt annually an amount about equal to the pledge of additional US funding for 2011. But that amount in any case is required to be committed to a "debt swap" which will create funds for youth employment, not immediate relief from the looming fiscal crisis.

[10] P.J. Crowley, op. cit.

WHAT THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT DONE

The Arab Spring is said to be the most momentous event in the Middle East since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.[11] Even by a lower, possibly more accurate standard, the US response seems remarkably timid. As the brief overview above indicates, the reaction has been primarily verbal and indirect. Washington has deliberately shunned a visible leadership role. While it may be "leading from behind" in that it has sought to coordinate moves from within NATO, the United Nations (UN) and the world financial institutions, that coordination has not resulted in unified, effective actions by the United States and its allies.[12] It is hard to imagine how it could be otherwise as long as Washington's objectives remain unclear. So the lack of substantive, decisive reactions to the near collapse of the long standing post-Ottoman Arab order, begs the question of what has not been done, or put slightly differently, how Washington might have responded were the Obama administration's reactions more like those of its predecessors.

First, the United States has conspicuously refrained from using the traditional levers of its power. Military deployment has been limited to the Libyan theatre and, even in that case, not of major significance. There have been no other special alerts, ship, troop or aircraft movements. Nor have there been any threats of military action, even for protection of US citizens or as possible reprisals for attacks on US interests. Gunboat diplomacy has been shunned, in part no doubt because it would be unclear what the targets would be or, if any potential ones were hit, such as Syria's Fourth Armoured Division under Maher al-Assad's command and responsible for much of the brutalisation of civi-

[11] Gordon Lubold, "Senator John McCain: US Must Sustain Momentum of Arab Spring," *News Feature*, US Institute of Peace, 20 May 2011, http://www.usip.org/publications/sen-john-mccain-us-must-sustain-momentum-arab-spring.

[12] At a minimum, "leading from behind" is a "politically disastrous wording," according to Daniel W. Drezner, who further notes that, "Unless and until the president and his advisers define explicitly the strategy that has been implicit for the last year, the president's foreign policy critics will be eager to define it – badly – for him." "Does Obama have a Grand Strategy?" *Foreign Policy*, 90, 4 (July/August 2011), pp. 57-64.

lians, what the consequences might be. For a while, the most coercive action taken by the United States, other than against Libya, was imposing sanctions on a dozen members of the Syrian political elite, several of whom in any case already were labouring under sanctions previously imposed.

As far as support for democratisation conducted by or with funding provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), there have been some attempts to reconfigure and upgrade existing programmes to provide more direct, substantial support to protest movements. The most notable attempts at such change have been in Egypt. Secretary of State Clinton announced in the wake of Hosni Mubarak's departure in February that some of the 250 million dollars annual economic assistance would be redirected to "support the transition and assist the economic recovery." In March 2011, USAID/Cairo launched a 65 million dollars programme for "democratic development" focused on elections, civic activism and human rights. Fayza Aboul Naga, long serving minister for planning and international cooperation, speaking on behalf of the government – which means the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) – immediately criticised this initiative and formally complained to the US embassy on the grounds that the action violated Egypt's sovereignty.[13] USAID/Cairo delayed implementation of the programme until June, at which time the new US ambassador, Anne W. Patterson, reported to Congress that USAID was about to commence distribution of 40 million dollars for democracy assistance, implying that it had reduced the original commitment by 25 million dollars.[14] In mid August the USAID mission director, James Bever, was recalled simultaneous with the announcement that it had been agreed that all future US funding to Egyptian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) would require the approval of a committee whose members would be appointed by the SCAF. Egyptian NGOs immediately protested what ap-

[13] "Egypt Opposes US's Democracy Funding," *Expat Cairo*, 14 June 2011, http://www.expatcairo.com/2011/06/egypt-opposes-u-s-s-democracy-funding/.

[14] Emad el Din Shahin, "The Arab Spring and Western Policy Choices," *Peace Policy*, 6 July 2011 http://peacepolicy.nd.edu/2011/07/06/the-arab-spring-western-policy-choices/#more-1179.

peared to be the US embassy knuckling under to the SCAF at the expense of civil society.[15] The government of Egypt also continued its ban on the two major organisations that receive democracy funding from the US government – the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute – so they have been unable to operate on the ground in Egypt. Possibly most telling, USAID and the US Office of Military Cooperation in Cairo refused to address the critically important issue of civil-military relations. Various existing sources of funding were available for this purpose, whether from USAID's budget or the Department of Defence's International Military Education and Training Programme (IMET). Unwillingness to seek to enhance civilian capacities to oversee the military was a decision reflecting the administration's fear of antagonising the Egyptian junta.[16] While this reticence could change when the outlines of a new political order are clarified, what remains significant is that at the critical moment when the United States might have signalled its interest in supporting civilians against officers, hence democracy over continued military rule, it chose not to do so.[17] In sum,

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[15] Yaroslov Trofimov, "Egypt Opposes US's Democracy Funding," *The Wall Street Journal* 14 June 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB10001424052702304665904576383123301579668-lMyQjAxMTAxMDEwNTExNDUyWj.html; Abddel-Rahman Hussein, "Foreign Funding of Egyptian Rights Groups Causes Stir in Political Debate," *al Masry al Youm* 22 July 2011, http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/479422.

[16] Tamara Cofman Wittes, recently appointed deputy assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, is a long standing opponent of efforts to reduce US assistance to the Egyptian military or to try to use that assistance to upgrade civilian control over it. In a 2008 publication, for example, she defended continued support for the military and opposed conditionality on assistance to it on the grounds that assistance underpinned "high-value cooperation with American strategic goals." See Tamara Cofman Wittes, *Feedom's Unsteady March: America's Role in Building Arab Democracy.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008, p. 119.

[17] In June 2011, two prominent US senators weighed into the growing dispute between the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and the popular protest movement. They sided with the former. Senators John Kerry and John McCain, on a visit to Cairo, stated that they were confident that the military rulers wanted to transfer powers to an elected government "as soon as possible," and that they were going to recommend back in Washington that there should be "further assistance to Egypt's military." Dina Salah Amer, "Egyptian Leaders Assures McCain and Kerry on Transition," *The New York Times*, 27 June 2011, p. A7.

the United States sought to make its USAID governance and democracy programmes more robust, but backed away when it met resistance. It studiously avoided addressing the most critical issue, which is that of civil-military relations. The Obama administration, unlike its predecessor, chose not to highlight rebuffs of its efforts to promote democracy, preferring instead to delay USAID disbursements to non-governmental organisations and then to grant the SCAF more control over them than the Bush administration had to Mubarak's government.

The carrot has been used as sparingly as the stick. The paltry addition to US financial assistance to Tunisia and Egypt has already been noted. The so-called "Middle East Marshall Plan," long called for by those worried by the parlous economic condition of the region, received not a mention from the administration.[18] Washington further distanced itself from efforts to come to the aid of struggling Tunisia and Egypt by not hosting a donors' conference. In the event, it was convened in Paris, where it necessarily received less attention. Its physical distance from Washington implied the Obama administration's reticence to assume the role of principal banker of the Arab Spring. And without its direct, benevolent engagement, terms offered by the international financial institutions were likely to be much less favourable than newly energised Arab populations anticipated, or their fragile governments could thus easily accept.[19]

Conspicuous efforts to utilise Arab upheavals to gain leverage for the United States within the region or in its broader foreign relations constituted a third notable absence from the Obama administration's res-

[18] Glenn Hubbard and Bill Duggan, "A Marshall Plan for the Middle East?" *Huffington Post,* 28 February 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/glenn-hubbard/marshall_plan_mid_east_b_829411.html.

[19] Finance minister Samir Radwan announced on 25 June that Egypt "had dropped plans to seek loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank." He explained this move on the basis that the fiscal deficit would be only 8.6 percent of GDP in the coming year, not over 11 percent as originally thought. Commentators suggested the real reason for not taking up the loans at this stage was due to popular reaction against the international financial institutions and the limited conditionality they attached to the loan offers. See "Egypt Drops Plans for IMF Loan Amid Popular Distrust," *BBC News*, 25 June 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13914410.

ponses. The president's speech on 19 May, in which he referred to a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict based on the 1967 border, appeared to suggest that he was hoping to use the momentum of Arab democratisation to engage Israel in a more serious peace process. But two days later, after a storm of protest from pro-Israeli circles directed at this utterance, President Obama in a speech to the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) backtracked, saying apologetically, "There was nothing particularly original in my proposal." The trial balloon, if indeed it was that, was thus quickly deflated by he who had launched it. Any hope that whatever democracy the Arab Spring was able to bring might provide a new base upon which the US administration could reinvigorate the peace process, was dashed.

Just as the US administration showed little interest in trying to mediate between its friends in the region, including the Palestine Authority and the government of Binyamin Netanyahu, so too did it abjure efforts to punish its enemies. As the Tehran-Damascus-Hezbollah axis came under ever greater pressure as a result of the upheaval in Syria, the increasingly bitter conflict between President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in Iran, and the reaction by the 14 March movement against the new Miqati government in Beirut backed by the 8 March political alliance, so did the Obama administration appear to become ever more cautious. A wait and see attitude was adopted toward the Hezbollah influenced Miqati government. Allegations of Iranian meddling in Syria, originally made not by the president or secretary of state, but by UN ambassador Susan Rice in late April, although in the absence of any details, were reiterated some weeks later by Secretary of State Clinton, but again without specific information.[20] In the meantime Syrians fleeing into Turkey provided eyewitness accounts of what appeared to be direct Iranian involvement, including its distinctive securi-

[20] Bill Varner, "Iran Actively Aiding Syrian Repression of Protests, US Says," *Bloomberg*, 26 April 2011, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-04-26/iran-actively-aiding-syria-s-repression-of-protests-u-s-says.html; and *Secretary Clinton on Repression in Iran and Syria*, US Policy, Embassy of the US, Brussels, Belgium, 14 June 2011, http://www.uspolicy.be/headline/secretary-clinton-repression-iran-and-syria.

ty personnel allegedly firing on protesters.[21] Obviously the Obama administration was leery of ratcheting up the pressure on Damascus and Tehran and on their satellite in Lebanon, Hezbollah.[22]

At the strategic level, the US administration apparently decided not to use opportunities the Arab Spring provided to enhance transatlantic relations and reinforce the US position at the heart of the NATO alliance. Washington preferred to sit back and let Paris and London take the lead, not only vis-à-vis Libya, but also in trying to cobble together a Security Council resolution on the Syrian situation. When the air campaign faltered over Libya, Secretary of Defence Robert Gates chastised America's European allies for insufficient spending on defence. The impression conveyed was that the United States would look after its own key interests in Egypt and Bahrain, while allowing the Europeans to try to pick up the pieces in less strategic Tunisia and Libya and also to try to organise some sort of international pressure on Damascus. Whether this was leading from the rear, or deserting the field, must have seemed ambiguous in European capitals.

Finally and most importantly, the Arab Spring elicited no overall statement of strategy by the president. The last presidential "doctrine" for the region was declared by President Jimmy Carter in 1980 in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It was a classic statement of US Cold War strategy, drawing a line in the sand beyond which the Soviets could not go without an American military response. The Soviet Union is no more, the Cold War is thankfully over, and drawing lines in sand has little effect on the elusive enemies and asymmetric threats currently faced by the United States and the West in general in the Middle East. The range of current challenges and opportunities is entirely different, while the US capacity to "contain" the region single-handedly, which it more or less accomplished in the first two decades after the So-

[21] "Iran Accused of Role in Syrian Repression," *The Peninsula*, 10 June 2011, http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/middle-east/155220-iran-accused-of-role-in-syrian-repression.html.

[22] A common belief in the Arab world is that the United States is seeking to weaken the Assad regime, not to remove it, so that it can be pressured into reaching a peace agreement with Israel. See for example Ali Younes, "Obama's Winning Formula for Syria," *al Ahram Weekly*, 7-13 July 2011, http://weekly.Ahram.org.eg/print/2011/1055/ rel142.htm.

viet collapse, is much diminished. The Arab Spring exploded the existing Arab order, based as it was primarily on authoritarian regimes propped up by the United States.

So from every perspective a new Middle East has to be built. Since the United States is the primary external actor for the foreseeable future, but one with reduced capacities and confronted now with regimes that may not be so easily managed, it would seem logical and necessary for the United States to take the lead in articulating a vision of the Middle East and specifying what the United States will contribute to assist its realisation. By not declaring a new doctrine for the region, President Obama has foregone an agenda setting opportunity and left all stakeholders wondering where this vital region is headed and how the United States will respond. At the more prosaic level of the day to day management of US interests in and toward the region, whether by CENTCOM, the Department of State, or by USAID, it has become clear over the past few months that the lack of policy directives is rendering the task of such management difficult. Absent explicit policy set against clear objectives, bureaucrats hunker down, fearful of taking initiatives that might prove to run counter to Washington's tactical manoeuvring. Being the weakest actor, USAID is particularly impacted by policy ambiguity, just at the time when US assistance for democratisation could have the greatest effect.[23]

So what Washington has not done in response to upheavals in the Arab world has at least opportunity costs. This begs the question of why the Obama administration has been willing to bear them.

WHY HAS IT DONE SO LITTLE?

The Middle East is a region where fools rush in, but wise men fear to tread, as Leon Carl Brown noted so elegantly almost thirty years ago.[24]

[23] That the Cairo USAID mission director either resigned in protest against the Department of State caving into demands from the SCAF for control over democratisation funding, or was removed from his post so as to serve as the scapegoat for the US administration, would in either case send a clear and chilling message to his USAID colleagues.

[24] Leon Carl Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East: Old Rules, Dangerous Game*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1984.

And it is a region where the United States is already overextended. Even after the withdrawal from Iraq, troops in the region account to more than 100,000. It has erected a security umbrella over the Arab states of the Gulf, as part of which it maintains military facilities in five of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. It is the primary military partner of numerous other Arab countries, including Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan, not to mention Israel. The Middle East has for some thirty years consumed about half of all US foreign assistance. The returns from these US investments have been mixed, for the Middle East continues to breed terrorism and political violence like no other, while its publics are markedly less pro-American than those in other emerging regions.[25] In addition to provoking yet more terrorism, new US intervention could have other negative, unforeseen consequences. Sudan is the first, but maybe not the last Arab state to fragment, giving rise to new rounds of inter-state warfare. Fears of Libya and Syria splitting are not entirely fanciful, and Iraq's future as a unitary state is not yet secured. Palestine has already virtually split in half, or in fact into three parts if we include Israel as part of the historic mandate area. So while the Middle East has an unenviable record of turmoil and violence, there is nothing to prevent the situation from further deteriorating, including states dissolving into warring fragments. The Arab upheavals of 2011 are themselves signs of chronic and dangerous political and economic malaise. In no country have they yet led to a resolution of the underlying problem of authoritarianism, a pre-requisite for the good governance required for rapid, sustainable economic growth.

Only a fool would anticipate roses being strewn at the feet of a new interventionist force. President Obama is assuredly no such fool. He has learned from the missteps of his predecessor who rushed almost blindly into this difficult region. But is the lesson of caution still the correct one

[25] A Zogby poll released in July 2011, for example, revealed that a sample of respondents in six Arab countries viewed the US even less favourably than a similar sample had at the end of the Bush administration. Farah Stockman, "Obama, US Viewed less Favourably in Arab World," *The Boston Globe*, 13 July 2011 http://www.boston.com/Boston/politicalintelligence/2011/07/obama-viewed-less-favorably-arab-world-poll-shows/yIVn6f6PueWbdhZutglhoJ/index.html.

for the new circumstances created by the Arab Spring? Under President Bush the United States sought to impose itself on the region. Now the people of the region are themselves initiating changes to established political orders. Many are hoping that the United States will revise its approach to their particular country and to the region as a whole. So might the United States now be out of step with these new realities, standing back, hesitating to engage, when it is being urged and indeed invited to do so? Surely the Obama administration must have been tempted to place itself more unequivocally on "the right side of history" by providing more tangible support for those protesting against and, in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt, at least partially removing authoritarian governments. What then has held President Obama back?

The factors just mentioned of potential terrorist backlashes and state fragmentation, are but two of several concerns with this volatile region that probably serve as deterrents to bold, innovative US action. Possibly at the top of the list of worries is that Islamism could ride to power on the back of protest movements. The effervescence of that movement in the wake of departures by Presidents Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak is clearly of concern, despite signs of its increasing division into multiple organisations and political parties, particularly in Egypt, hence its weakening in the face of competitive secular political movements. Of still greater concern is radical Islamism in Yemen, in some cases linked to al-Qaeda, which appears to have gained control in Abyan and other southern areas more or less abandoned by Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime under siege in Sana. Suspicions that the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood provides much of the stiffening for ongoing protests in that country probably constitute a deterrent to the more open embrace of that upheaval by the Obama administration. Worries about Islamism shade into thoughts of Iranian fifth column activities, especially in Bahrain. In a region deemed to be polarised – rightly or wrongly – between Shi'a and Sunni, with US strategic weight exclusively on the latter, any gains by the former would be deemed to be major setbacks. The primordial strategic interest in Israel also gives rise to apprehension about Arab upheavals. While protesters have focused on domestic issues, the potential for them to begin to challenge existing accommodations with Israel brokered by the United States and enforced by Arab authoritarian

regimes, is worrisome. Finally, the price of oil is seen as the single greatest impact on the pace and extent of US economic recovery, as witnessed by the Obama administration's support in late June for tapping into the International Energy Agency's strategic petroleum reserve. Any disruptions to supply that would further aggravate the loss of most of Libya's normal exports of some 1.6 million barrels per day would be most unwelcome. If the upheavals were to spread to the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, the consequences could be globally catastrophic. Any one of these many threats is sufficient to give pause to a US administration already inclined to a cautious posture toward the Middle East.

Were the downside risks less threatening, domestic constraints might still be sufficient to cause the American president to forswear dramatic reactions to Arab upheavals. Mention has already been made of the overstretched US military. According to then Secretary of Defence Gates, speaking to the Military Academy at West Point, any US president seeking to send an army to Asia, the Middle East or Africa "should have his head examined."[26] Four months later President Obama announced the beginning of troop withdrawals from Afghanistan, with many leading Republican politicians not only supporting the draw-down, but urging that it be hastened. The announced withdrawal from Iraq was finalised by the end 2011. So there is next to no US political appetite for new military actions in the Middle East. America's uncharacteristic gun shyness results from straightened economic circumstance. Meeting in June, the Conference of Mayors passed a resolution calling on Congress to hasten the end of US involvement in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, arguing that building bridges in Baghdad and Kandahar made little sense when there were no funds to build them in Baltimore or Kansas City.[27] Possibly the only points of consensus in contemporary American politics are that the US economy is woefully weak and that the United States

[26] Cited in Richard McGregor, "US Loses its Appetite for Job as the World's Policeman," *Financial Times*, 3 March 2011, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b0e2de0c-45d7-11e0-acd8-00144feab49a.html#axzz1QUtx5Byv

[27] "US Mayors Gather in Baltimore," *The Washington Post*, 17 June 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/us-mayors-gather-in-baltimore-topics-include-redirecting-military-spending-to-home-front/2011/06/17/AGTm94YH_story.html.

cannot afford further military expeditions. Any president who ignored the shared awareness of limits on US capacities and need for them to be redirected to the home front would do so at enormous political peril.

Intrusions from the Middle East into US domestic politics must also give pause to those in the administration when considering the range of possible alternative responses to Arab upheavals. Israel's apprehensions about the consequences of the upheavals for its own security translate directly into political pressure in Washington. It does not want to see all vestiges of the security states in Egypt and, until the late summer of 2011, even in Syria, with which it has maintained peace for almost forty years, swept away and be replaced by unknown political actors, some or possibly many being Islamists. While democratic Arab states, including Palestine, may ultimately be more willing and able to make peace and conduct normal relations with Israel, that proposition will remain theoretical in the eyes of most Israelis until the character and intentions of any new Arab orders that emerge become clear and irrevocable. In the meantime, the pro-Israel lobby in the United States will continue to urge caution and preservation of the status quo of overwhelming Israeli supremacy, which thereby places limits on US reactions to the Arab Spring.

Saudi influence, less visible in the corridors of power in Washington, is nonetheless substantial and, like Israel's, pushing back against open embrace of the Arab Spring. Saudi displeasure with the turn of events in 2011 was evidenced by its acceptance in exile of Tunisia's Ben Ali, by its criticism of the United States "abandoning" Mubarak in his time of need, by its dispatching of troops to Bahrain, by its invitation to Jordan and Morocco to join the GCC, and by its own crackdown at home. Strain in the US-Saudi relationship, clearly manifest as Ben Ali and Mubarak were chased from power and President Obama spoke about the need for other Arab leaders to take note and be "on the right side of history," caused Washington to become more solicitous of a Riyadh whose importance was steadily magnified by rising oil prices and the deteriorating US economy. By June the administration had foresworn statements that could be deemed even indirectly critical of the Saudis. It was rewarded by the Saudi position in OPEC, which endorsed an increase in produc-

tion at the fractious meeting in early June, although it was uncharacteristically outmaneuvered by Iran, Venezuela and Libya.[28] The Saudis then cooperated behind the scenes with the United States to maximise the price impact of the release of oil from the International Energy Agency's (IEA) strategic reserve, signaling that the negative impact of the Arab Spring on US-Saudi relations had been contained. But it was contained as a result of the United States reassuring the Saudis that American support for the Arab Spring had limits and that the Saudis and their monarchical allies were beyond those limits.

Intrusions from the Middle East into Washington's considerations of policies for the region are thus supportive of the status quo. So, too, is the bureaucratic political process by which those policies are made. The persisting securitisation of US relations with the region even after the end of the Cold War results in part from the continuing, indeed growing relative importance of the Department of Defence (DOD). Defence spending underpins and reflects the DOD's power. From a high in the mid 1980s, it declined until the end of the millennium, at which time it commenced a rapid and continuing ascent. For 2011 the military was appropriated 671 billion dollars, as compared to 47 billion dollars for the Department of State and USAID combined. This profound and growing disproportion in support for the military as opposed to that for diplomacy and foreign assistance caused secretary of Defence Gates himself to note "the creeping militarisation" of American foreign policy and to plead that, "Diplomatic leaders – be they in ambassadors' suites or on the seventh floor of the State Department – must have the resources and political support needed to fully exercise their statutory responsibilities in leading American foreign policy."[29] Gates has been far and away the most important cabinet secretary in the Obama administration, as he was when he served under President Bush. Possibly because power is

[28] Terry Macalister and Heather Stewart, "Oil Prices Rise Sharply after OPEC Meeting Ends in Disarray," *The Guardian*, 8 June 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/jun/08/oil-price-rises-after-opec-meeting-collapses-in-disarray.

[29] Kate Brannen, "Budget Woes Poised to hit State Department Hard," *Federal Times*, 2 June 2011, http://www.federaltimes.com/article/20110602/DEPARTMENTS08/106020302.

concentrated in his person and his Department, Secretary of State Clinton has allied herself and her department with Gates and the DOD, thereby foreswearing the traditional competition between these two roles and agencies. Since USAID has been incorporated into State, its one time independent voice has been all but snuffed out. Its director, who played a visible, independent role in foreign policy as recently as the Clinton administration, is now all but unknown even in Washington. So it is the view and voice of the secretary of defence and his department that predominate. Their business is security, so it should not be surprising if they see the insecure Middle East as a primary threat, hence shape policy to counter threats, i.e., to securitise the US approach to the region.

There are no other significant counterbalances to this concentration of power in the military establishment. The intelligence community has been vastly expanded since 9/11, but like State, it allies with and thereby reinforces the centrality of Defence and its security concerns, rather than compete institutionally or conceptually. Moreover, the proliferation of intelligence agencies and bodies has had the impact of reducing the prominence and power of any particular one, including the CIA. The National Security Council (NSC) and its director have similarly lost power during the Obama administration. As regards the Middle East, the last NSC directors who were major architects of US Middle East policies were probably Henry Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft, the former having served under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford and the latter as his successor under Ford and then George Bush Sr. A key function of the NSC traditionally was strategy formulation, so both have declined in tandem. No other agency has the specific responsibility or capacity to engage in long term policy planning, other than the DOD. Strategic thinkers in policy roles are thus now conspicuous in their absence. Figures such as John Foster Dulles, Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and James Baker were products of WWII and then the Cold War, contexts that by their nature required strategic thinking. The combination of an expanding bureaucracy that requires and rewards specialists; a nominally peace-time setting that requires management rather than bold initiatives; and the increasing politicisation of the foreign policy establishment such that foreign policy expertise is subordinated to political calculations – especially those deemed by his advisors to impact presi-

dential power – has undermined the strategic dimension in foreign policy decision making. Neither institutionally, personally, nor conceptually then are there any significant counterbalances to the dominance of the DOD, its secretary and the security perspective they necessarily adopt in the making of US policy toward the Middle East. In the bureaucratic political world in Washington relevant to this vital region, soft power gives way to hard, strategic thinking to tactical, and national interest falls victim to the political calculations of incumbents, shaped in turn by powerful countries and forces from the region itself. It should not come as any surprise, therefore, that even though the Arab World has witnessed what may be the most cataclysmic event since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the United States has, in policy terms, hardly noticed.[30]

WHAT COULD THE US RESPONSE BE?

President Bush tarnished the silver of the magic bullet of democracy. The invasion of Iraq and overblown claims for US democracy promotion discredited these means of achieving democracy and, until the Arab Spring, it appeared that even the concept itself had limited appeal among Arabs. The uprisings that swept across North Africa, into the Levant and on to the Arabian Peninsula should have removed such doubts. Indeed, they seem to have in the Arab world, where remaining autocrats are clearly frightened of being inundated by the democratic wave. Paradoxically, it is in Washington where most doubts seem to remain. As mentioned above, the negative learning experience of the Bush administration contributed to its successor's wariness of both democracy promotion and embrace of upheavals that appear to be the beginnings of democratic transitions. The Obama administration has thus been unwil-

[30] Daniel W. Drezner identifies two "kinds of events" which call for articulation of grand strategies: a major disruption such as a war, revolution or depression that "rejiggers countries' interests across the globe;" or a power transition from a "fading hegemonic power" to a "rising challenger." The Arab Spring, and the decline of US power which it has brought into stark relief, would seem to qualify then as circumstances calling out for formulation of grand strategy. Drezner, *cit.*

ling to try to fire the silver bullet of democracy at the region's two major enemies—economic stagnation and inadequate security.

This reluctance ignores two fundamental propositions of development long embraced by scholars and practitioners. As regards economic growth in the Middle East, a near universal consensus has been reached that the primary cause of its weakness is poor governance, which in turn reflects the lack of "voice and accountability," as the World Bank labels democracy. So now, for the first time in their modern history, Arab states can at least envision the prospect of dramatic improvements in governance, hence of economic growth. The other relevant, fundamental proposition of development is that democracy militates against both intra and inter-state violence, hence promotes the security necessary for stability, peace and development. The Middle East, suffering more from such violence than any other region, thus would reap huge ancillary benefits from an improvement in the security context. While the hypothesised links between democracy and these two components of development are oversimplified and overstated, they are about as well established as most such propositions in social science and the development industry. As guides to policy they could serve as self-fulfilling prophecies.

The opportunity costs of US hesitancy in supporting Arab democratic transitions are especially high at this particular juncture. The United States is overextended militarily and economically. The Middle East is the region to which it has committed proportionately the greatest share of resources. Securitisation of the region is increasingly counterproductive, not only for the development of the region itself, but for the primary provider of that security, whose capacities to do so are wearing ever thinner. So the region's need for securitisation should and maybe now can be reduced, while the provision of what security remains necessary is shared among more stakeholders. Were democracy to spread and take root in much of the region, relations between states within it and between those states and the outside world could become much more normal, focused on trade and development as they are in most other emerging world contexts.[31] As for spreading the security load more

[31] Or, as Dalia Dassa Kaye and Frederic Wehrey describe it, "a strategy of relying solely on security relationships with the region's elites will lead the United States to

broadly and evenly, the Middle East is the most vital region for the United States to pursue that objective. It is not only the one in which it is most needed, but the one in which success would have the most profound, beneficial consequences for US security burdens globally.

Appropriate US policies in support of Arab democratisation have already been alluded to. Founded on the open embrace of the Arab Spring, US initiatives should seek to mobilise global political and economic support for democratic transitions. Such initiatives can only be convincing though if they are coupled with indications of US willingness to forswear its previous, security based approach to the region. One measure of that is more balance in US support between military and security institutions, on the one hand, and civilian ones on the other. Unless and until the United States is seen to value civilian control of armed forces more than it values its privileged security relationships with those armed forces, its democracy promotion will appear hypocritical. Closely related to the need to de-securitise its approach and relationships with "friendly" Arab countries, is the requirement for it to do everything possible to secure a solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Its continuation reinforces securitisation in the region, undermines US credibility in the Arab world, and provides leverage for hostile actors, including Iran, Hezbollah and various *jihadi* factions.

The economic dimension is also vitally important. Africa and the Middle East are the two global regions most endangered by poor economic performance coupled with rapid population growth. Nascent Arab democracies will fail if their economies do not grow more rapidly. Such failure would intensify migration pressure, which in turn would stimulate yet louder calls in Europe and elsewhere for relations with sending countries and possibly the entire region, to be even more heavily securitised. Democracy alone is not a sufficient condition for rapid economic growth. The Arab states desperately need to expand and diversify their miniscule industrial bases, which they can only do with foreign investment coupled with technology provided by multi-national corporations.

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miss out on important opportunities to develop broader relationships with Arab societies." "Arab Spring, Persian Winter: Will Iran Emerge the Winner from the Arab Revolt?" *Foreign Policy*, 90, 4 (July/August 2011), pp. 183-186.

Democracy and improved governance will go some of the way to attracting more such investment, but free trade agreements, concessional financing, and other mechanisms will need to be provided by governments if private capital is to be induced to make major commitments to industrial growth in the region. The East Asian experience of Japan as the so-called "lead goose" in the "flying goose model," whereby Japanese investment and technology drove development elsewhere in the region, cannot be replicated exactly, but something like it might be possible. Turkey is already playing a mini-Japanese role in many Arab countries. If Israel were brought in from the cold as a result of settling its conflicts with the Palestinians and Syrians, it could become a yet higher flying goose attracting a formation behind it.

But democracy and rapid economic development, even if they are ultimately established, are not going to obviate the need for security, especially in the precarious transition stage. The Obama administration's approach of "leading from behind" in response to the Arab Spring has been too subtle an effort to lay foundations for multilateral security provision. To be effective, multilateralism will have to be a clearly stated objective, not the side effect of the United States choosing the issues which it wants to handle, leaving others to be dealt with by allies. Moreover, if multilateralism is to replace unilateralism as the standard American approach, the change will have to be justified to an American public imbued of their own country's exceptionalism, its burden of moral leadership, etc.[32] The public would have to be told bluntly that the United States simply cannot afford such unilateralism, and that it is in the United States's and the world's interest for the transition to multilateral responsibilities for regional and global security to be facilitated. International organisations, including the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, pushed beyond the pale for many domestic audiences by

[32] The political magnitude of that task is suggested by former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty's remarks to the New York Council on Foreign Relations. Campaigning for the Republican nomination for the presidency, he said: "America already has one political party devoted to decline, retrenchment, and withdrawal. It does not need a second one." Presumably the "second one" is a reference to his own Republicans. Daniel Dombey and Anna Fifield, "Senators Back Obama over Libya," *Financial Times*, 29 June 2011, p. 3.

chauvinist, right-wing US politicians and commentators, need to be rehabilitated in the eyes of Americans. The International Criminal Court's indictment of the then Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi is a good example of the useful role it can play. It brings credit to the Obama administration that it lauded that step. With active US support such indictments can serve as major deterrents to the rulers of other Arab countries, thereby broadening the scope for peaceful oppositions.[33] Secretary Gates' blunt message to Europe on the need for burden sharing, especially in their vital Mediterranean neighbourhood, needs to be reiterated and connected with both planned reductions in US defence spending and efforts to cut expenses through greater cooperation, particularly in procurement. NATO's role in general, but especially vis-à-vis the Mediterranean littoral states, needs to be made the focus of such efforts. The inevitable review of the Libyan engagement may provide an opportunity to assess shortcomings and lay out ways forward.[34]

CONCLUSION

In sum, leading from behind will not produce the shared leadership that is required to succeed America's "moment in the Middle East." The Arab Spring has provided unique opportunities for the transformation of the region's polities, economies, and security architecture, hence to reduce America's unilateral security approach to the region. To realise these po-

[33] A former US secretary of state, writing with a retired Jordanian diplomat, has called for Bashar al Assad to be indicted by the ICC, noting that "the international criminal justice system is the best available way of confronting Syria." The writers further argue that "the ICC has already shown the ability to influence official behaviour… Initiating an ICC investigation in Syria now would create a powerful incentive for Mr Assad to choose reform over further repression." See Madeleine Albright and Marwan Muasher, "Assad deserves a swift trip to The Hague," *Financial Times*, 29 June 2011, p. 9, cited by Carnegie Endowment Middle East Programme, http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/06/28/assad-deserves-swift-trip-to-hague/b53.

[34] NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen in fact sought to do just this, calling for a "smart defence" approach in "NATO After Libya: The Atlantic Alliance in Austere Times," *Foreign Affairs* 90, 4 (July/August 2011), pp. 2-6.

tential gains presidential leadership must be visible, so from the front, not from the rear. The world is not yet accustomed to such American modesty and continues to look to Washington for cues, so they must be given clearly, even if the message is that ultimately they will not be forthcoming. President Obama should employ his eloquence in making the case that the United States endorses reforms in the polities of the region and US relations with them because the status quo in the Middle East is unsustainable and dangerous, both to those living there and to others. The Arab Spring should be welcomed as providing the first and possibly the last real opportunity for that region to escape the tragic history of its post-independence period. Rejecting old formulae and taking new risks should be defended as being a wiser course than conducting business as usual in defence of an unsustainable status quo. And it should be explained that de-securitisation of the Middle East would provide opportunity for the de-emphasis of security in the United States itself, both in the form of reducing its oversized share of the federal budget and by diminishing the institutional power of those who speak and act in its name. Finally, explicit recognition of the "end of empire," akin to Prime Minister Wilson's 1968 declaration of intent to withdraw from "East of Suez," but differing from it in that it would lay out new coordinating, balancing roles for US forces, would prod the United States and others to move with haste to internationalise security responsibilities.

3.
The US Response to the Arab Uprising: Part of the Problem?

Issandr El Amrani

In attempting to address US policies after the Arab uprisings, this chapter considers what interests have driven these policies in the Middle East, how successful the policies of the last two decades of American dominance in the region have been, and how they might have contributed to the Arab uprisings. Finally, it examines the lessons to be learned from the era of American involvement in the region that has ended, and, arguing that there will be a continuity of interests, how future policies might adapt to the changing Arab political landscape. The case of Egypt, a cornerstone of US regional policy, is used to illustrate this argument.

WHAT ARE THE US INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

US strategic interests in the Middle East have remained unchanged since the Arab uprisings, continuing to reflect a constant of the last two decades that is unlikely to change. At their broadest, US strategic goals in the Middle East can be summed up to four priorities. The first is energy security, most notably control over the flow of oil reserves in Persian Gulf, whose production at moderate prices is crucial to the global economy and in maintaining the United States' global power vis-à-vis existing and emerging powers. The second is the security of Israel, a normative aim derived for the most part from domestic political realities – including a highly effective pro-Israel lobby, the resurgence of Christian fundamentalism in conservative politics, and more generally broad sympathy for Israel among the American public – as well as the fact that

Israel is the region's most technologically sophisticated and dominant military power. Since the al-Qaeda attacks of 11 September 2001 in particular, counter-terrorism and combating radical Islamism and its perceived causes have also driven US policy in the region, as well as mounting (if selective) concern about nuclear proliferation. Finally, a long-standing normative aim of successive American governments has been the promotion of American values, including market-friendly economic policy, accountable governance, the respect of human rights – even if, again, this is applied selectively.

There is no reason to believe that these four broad strategic interests will change as a result of the Arab uprisings, in part because of the wide consensus that exists on the matter among the American foreign policy elite and, where relevant, public opinion. Where debate exists, it is not about whether these are worthwhile goals, but how best to implement them. There is, for instance, an ongoing debate as to whether there should be less reliance on foreign oil (a term usually meaning Middle Eastern, rather than Venezuelan or Nigerian, oil) or whether the US bears an unfair portion of the cost of securing sea lanes. On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the debate is generally within the narrow confines of whether pressuring Israel to accept a two-state solution or freeze settlements is better for its own security. On counter-terrorism and the related theme of counter-radicalisation, the debate has largely focused on the methods used. On the promotion of democracy and protection of human rights, the experience of the last decade has created a vibrant debate on the advisability of policies such as state-building, humanitarian interventionism, the conditionality of aid to non-democratic allies, and how best to encourage democratic reform.

Virtually every major policy in the region since the end of the Cold War has been a subsidiary of these four broad strategic aims, but at the same time the fourth component – concern about spreading "American values" – has often been at odds with the first three. The Arab uprisings, initially taking place against, rather than because of, US or broader Western support, have shone light on this question more than ever before. As the Middle East undergoes a turbulent and unpredictable transformation, it is this principle of American foreign policy, and how it integrates with other elements of foreign policymaking, that needs to be re-conceived.

THE AMERICAN RECORD

On a superficial level, the record of the last twenty years suggests that American foreign policy has been successful in achieving the first three broad strategic aims. Although energy prices have fluctuated, the West-friendly regimes of Saudi Arabia and other key oil-producing Arab Gulf states have not been overthrown, thus avoiding a repeat of the traumatic (for the American foreign policy elite) loss of the Shah of Iran's regime and its replacement by a radically anti-American Islamic republic. The single biggest factor in the increase of oil prices, indeed, has been external to the region: rising demand from rapidly industrialising states such as China and India.

The state of Israel, while enduring periodic small-scale attacks, is not only safe but has been able to continue its presence in all of historic Palestine, expand Jewish settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and delegate much of the management of the West Bank to friendly Palestinians with the backing of the international community. Finally, despite the failure to prevent the 9/11 attacks, no further attack has taken place on US soil. From this superficial point of view, US regional policy has been a success.

Yet, the question remains: why, in most analysts' opinions, is the United States perceived to have lost standing and influence in the Middle East, engaged in ruinous wars, lost credibility among most local actors, and been unable to carry the policies it sets out for itself? And why, considering its military, intelligence, diplomatic and economic footprint in the region, was it unable to predict the Arab uprisings, or better still address their causes long before it became too late?

As in any country's foreign policy, there were frequently tensions and contradictions between normative goals and actual practice. These were largely manageable during the first decade of uncontested US hegemony in the region – even if, in the Arab world at least, both the reality of that hegemony and the contradictions in tacit and explicit policy were increasing denounced by public opinion. The result was, and continues to be, a pervasive form of anti-Americanism that while sometimes exaggerated, is rarely without some foundation.

The problem has been said, in American policy circles, to be one of perception, unrealistic Arab demands, xenophobia-inducing propaganda by Islamists, nationalists and the far left, and manipulation by the regimes that were supported by Washington. Some of this is undoubtedly true, but much of the blame resides in the policies that were carried out in the name of these interests, opportunities missed because of ideological blindness, and an unwillingness to acknowledge past mistakes. A look at some of the key policies of the last two decades of American supremacy in the Middle East points to that.

In the 1990s, the "dual containment" strategy towards Iran and Iraq was aimed at restricting the ability of those two countries (with the most powerful militaries in the Persian Gulf) from threatening their neighbours, specifically Saudi Arabia and the smaller oil and gas-exporting Arab kingdoms of the Persian Gulf. Its result had some success: as we now know, the Baath regime did give up its nuclear weapons programme in 1992, and no longer was more than a mild irritant in regional politics. The price for this, though, was a policy of brutal sanctions that may have claimed the lives of at least 500,000 Iraqis and devastated what had been one of the Arab world's largest middle class. Later (the policy debate began in the latter years of the Bill Clinton administration), dual containment gave way to a policy of regime change, applied in Iraq and envisaged in Iran and Syria. Although regime change policy was successful in removing Saddam Hussein, its aftermath strengthened Iran's regional standing, allowing it to extend influence in the politics of Iraq and Lebanon, strengthened its alliance with Syria and commensurately increase its threat projection towards other Gulf states.

Likewise, the 1990s drive to secure a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ended with the collapse of the Oslo peace process and a record increase in the number of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, further complicating the eventual resolution of the conflict. Subsequent efforts to keep the peace process on life support in the 2000s – or rather force a one-sided resolution of the conflict – were similarly ill-conceived. Hedging between unilateral backing for Israel, and later, a nod towards the preference of allied regional actors such as Egypt and Jordan for at least a token process to be seen as taking place, may have led to the demise of the two-state solution to the conflict. It also brought

the United States and its allies into the direct management of Palestinian political affairs by turning the Palestinian Authority into a client while systematically undermining its leaders, effectively making the United States a working partner of Israel in the management of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Subsequently, US pressure to hold elections in order to legitimise the party it backed, Fatah (combined with failed attempts at securing a favourable result through covert financing of Fatah's electoral campaign), despite the reluctance of both Israel and other regional actors, yielded a victory for Hamas. After this, the United States denied recognition to this new configuration of Palestinian politics despite its democratic nature, and instead endeavoured to divide Palestinian political actors, precipitating the crisis of June 2007 and the subsequent division of the Occupied Palestinian Territories under two different authorities.

The United States then obstructed efforts at Palestinian reconciliation by Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey (among others), preferring to give a monopoly to Egypt to broker both Israeli-Hamas and inter-Palestinian talks, ensuring that neither set of talks would succeed. Finally, it tacitly endorsed policies to unseat Hamas from power in Gaza, eventually giving tacit backing to Israel's Operation Cast Lead in late 2008, which claimed the lives of over 1,500 civilians in the territory, and then drove the Middle East Quartet policy to place Gaza under siege in order to prevent its post-war reconstruction.

The result of the last decade of post-Oslo policies towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, indeed, is that the Barack H. Obama administration is now determined to veto the Palestinian Authority's bid for the UN's recognition of a Palestinian state, further damaging the prospects and legitimacy of a two-state solution. Perhaps more than any of its actions in the region, including the invasion of Iraq, Washington's handling of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis has shattered its credibility, humiliated and weakened its autocratic allies, and made the possibility of peace more remote.

The point here is not to suggest that US foreign policy-making has been unusually incompetent or malicious, or that the United States bears responsibility for the failure of its policies and the region's multiple unresolved conflicts alone. Local actors, weak and strong, have their share of responsibility. The European Union, by its lack of resolve,

has failed to provide the corrective nudge an American president might need due to domestic political constraints. Emerging powers such as China and Russia have remained aloof from the issue, preferring to concentrate their energies elsewhere. The purpose is merely to point out that while US policy in the region has secured basic strategic interests, it has failed to successfully carry out stated policy goals regarding the resolution of conflicts, promoting political stability and economic prosperity in allied states, reducing anti-American sentiment, and generally promoting a harmonious, US-led regional order. And in doing so, it has undermined the long-term ability to maintain these interests.

THE ADVENTURE OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

From a Middle Eastern perspective, the gap between US policy in the region and US discourse about the same policy has been one of the most jarring aspects of the last two decades. But perhaps more striking is the general failure of the United States to achieve its objectives, as well as the wider goal of "managing" and eventually "remodelling" a troubled region, as the George W. Bush administration intended to do through its Broader Middle East Initiative.

American exceptionalism, a powerful part of the US' political mythology, has made it accepted that Washington should spread "American values" abroad. In many cases, this has been driven by domestically influential constituencies able to muster public opinion in favour of the human rights of a particular group – in the Arab world, usually women, Christians, specific ethnic or religious minorities such as Kurds or Bahais. Beyond specific constituencies, it is a principle that enjoys wide support among the American public, the elite media, and the two major political parties. Although some "realist" or even "isolationist" policy thinkers have rejected the concept as a result of the Bush administration ill-fated "Freedom Agenda", it remains at the core of the US National Security Strategy document unveiled by the Obama administration in 2010, and when applied specifically in the Middle East, was reiterated by President Obama in his 19 May 2011 speech on the Arab uprisings – although selectively so.

Gradually evolving in the 1990s from the growing public role of human rights organisations in domestic American politics and their supporters in Congress and various administrations, the question of democratic governance began to take a more important place in American discourse. Borrowing from concepts of moral suasion developed during the Ronald Reagan administration and seen as a successful tools in Eastern Europe (from the Helsinki Accords to support of the Solidarity movement in Poland), the US foreign policy elite and successive administrations pit themselves as champions of democracy in a region where they lent material and political support to absolute monarchs, presidents-for-life and mafia states. It tried to resolve – at least live with – this contradiction by advocating an increasingly robust policy to expand civil society in these allied states, and eventually more outright calls for reform if not democratisation.

The Middle East, perhaps more than other parts of the world, was the focus of such reprimands, in part because of the repressive nature of many of the regimes in place, but also because, as the region's hegemonic power, it was easy and relative cost-free to make them. The question of democracy was often associated in the American foreign policy lexicon with pro-market policies and a neutral, if not positive, posture towards Israel. Criticism of human rights abuses seldom extended to the political group that was most frequently targeted by security services — Islamists as well as other opponents of American policy in the region. In other words, the outcome that democracy-promotion policies aimed at was frequently at odds with the reality of popular sentiment and political forces.

Now that some of the undemocratic regimes in the region are gone (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya), others have survived waves of protests through compromise or repression (Morocco, Algeria, Bahrain) and others teeter on the brink (Syria, Yemen), democracy promotion is in need of an overhaul. As President Obama's 19 May speech makes clear, not every country will receive the same approach. The United States will contend with countries where a relatively successful transition is within grasp (Tunisia), others where it will be much more difficult and messy (Egypt, Libya), as well as allies where repression has been deployed successfully (Bahrain) and yet others who not only remain as undemocratic as ev-

er, but have an interest in preventing a further wave of unrest in general and the democratisation of similar political systems more generally (Saudi Arabia and other GCC members). Navigating this stream of shifting interests and tendencies will not be easy.

Beyond this, there are two important corollaries of the democratisation represented by the Arab uprisings that will require a US reaction. The first is that, after a brief and tantalizing outpouring of public sentiment and the disorganised freedom that followed the collapse of police states, a wave of reaction will close the opportunity for permanent change. With few interlocutors to deal with, and a preference for military-military relations, there will be a temptation to once again back the devil you know. The other is that democratisation may bring forces hostile to US interests to power, and ones whose concept of democracy will be different to that long promoted by Washington.

THE CASE OF EGYPT

The case of Egypt is illustrative of many of the policy conundrums the US faced and the growing contradictions in policy-making of the last two decades, as well as challenges to come.

Since 1975, when President Anwar al-Sadat cemented a new alliance with the United States, abandoning a previous one with the Soviet Union, Egypt has been a key underpinning of Washington's regional posture. The alliance with Egypt secured the largest, and historically most influential, Arab state on the Western side of the Cold War and won over a key member of the Non-Aligned Movement. In doing so, it anchored US policy in the region, notably with regards to Israel and Gulf security by taking Egypt out of the Arab-Israeli equation and ending the inter-Arab rivalry between Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

The 1979 Camp David Accords, negotiating the return of the Sinai Peninsula Israel had captured from Egypt in 1967, took Egypt out of the Israeli-Arab equation. The Camp David agreement framed the new relationship with Egypt according to a formula by which, in exchange for continued peace with Israel, the United States has distributed over 60 billion dollars in economic and military aid, turning the Egyptian mili-

tary into a strategic ally (although never quite a fully-fledged partner on a level with the Israeli military or NATO member states) and, by helping the reconstruction of Egypt's war-ravaged economy, steered the socio-economic development of the country towards market principles after over two decades of a socialist-inspired command economy.

The strong military cooperation aspect of the relationship, notably with the Egyptian armed forces engaging in a long-term switch from Soviet to American armament, also helped tie the two countries and ensure long-term dependence on American military procurement, making impossible the kind of foreign policy adventurism that characterised the era of President Gamal Abdel Nasser. The United States also secured multiple other advantages, from overflight rights that facilitated deployment in the Gulf region, to favourable diplomatic mediation by Cairo, as well as enhanced security and influence over the Suez Canal, one of the world's most important waterways.

In exchange, Egypt obtained – along with the foreign aid it needed to maintain the stature of its armed forces and finance infrastructure and public welfare investments – additional financial support during the cash-strapped 1980s, recognition and diplomatic backing from the dominant power in the region. After the 1991 Gulf War, which Egypt backed in exchange for the expunging of half of its debt to the Paris Club, the relationship grew closer as the US' status as the world's sole superpower made it a key driver of regional diplomacy. For the next twenty years, American presidents praised their Egyptian counterpart, Hosni Mubarak, for his mediating role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and other regional issues, and notably his influence over Palestinian Liberation Organisation Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Throughout the 1990s, this helped shield Mubarak from criticism of his worsening human rights record, the de-liberalisation of Egyptian politics he undertook in the early 1990s (reversing the trend set by his predecessor and continued early in his rule), and the consolidation of his own power vis-à-vis domestic rivals with a view to remaining president for life.

This also encouraged a specific type of behaviour from the Egyptian regime: having conducted a separate peace with Israel (unlike the comprehensive peace originally envisaged at Camp David by Anwar al-Sadat),

the regime had to face discontent from a public opinion that continued to feel solidarity towards Palestinians and other victims of Israeli aggression. This resulted in a foreign policy, and attitude towards the United States in particular, that prized stability above all else, since regional instability put the regime at risk vis-a-vis its own public opinion (it also explained the contradictory nature of Egyptian official incitement against Israel even while it continued to back a peace process that became increasingly lopsided after 1996).

The regime's claim to be a regional power – important to nurturing domestic opinion – found itself continually undermined by the reality that Camp David represented a strategic straight-jacket for Cairo. If this could be hidden by international reassurance that Egypt was a key mediator in regional affairs in the 1990s, it became a transparently false claim by the end of the Mubarak era, when the same role was assigned to a largely impotent Egypt paralysed by intra-regime rivalries over presidential succession.

When the Egyptian uprising began, Washington was not entirely taken by surprise: the State Department and the policy community had grown increasingly worried about the lack of clarity over presidential succession and the morose state of Egypt's internal affairs. Yet – partly because over thirty years of Egyptian stability under Mubarak had never taught them otherwise, but also because addressing Egypt's problems had largely been postponed to the post-Mubarak era – Washington did little to prepare for the eventuality of the collapse of the Mubarak regime, or even mass protests. In many respects, the conditions had been there, with recent grievances of human rights abuses, the country's sectarian situation, fraudulent parliamentary elections held in late November, and a poor economic situation for many Egyptians. But US policy towards Egypt had been stuck in a rut for several years, unable to convince or pressure Hosni Mubarak or the wider Egyptian elite of the need for change. Conservatively, Washington preferred to sacrifice its policy objective – ensuring a stable presidential transition in Egypt that would minimise the risk of the country taking a radically different direction – rather than risk the Mubarak regime's alienation.

The early days of the Egyptian uprising illustrated the limits of Washington's reach to key decision-makers in the Egyptian elite, despite Cairo hosting the largest US embassy in the world after Baghdad. Within

days, conduits to key political, government, diplomatic, economic, and security personalities became useless. Only the military-to-military relationship, long the core of bilateral relations, remained available – with the key intermediary not a US government official, but a former one who worked for defence firms that procured the Egyptian military weapons and its generals plush commissions. The United States had no contact with the leadership of the uprising. Formal political actors were largely irrelevant. Having decided a decade beforehand not to maintain relations with the most influential political movement in the country, the Muslim Brotherhood, it could not influence its decisions. While ultimately the military may have yielded to the Obama administration's decision to drop its support for the continuing presidency of Hosni Mubarak, it remains unclear whether this was a key factor in the military's seizing of power on 10 February 2011.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Arab public opinion matters. The idea, circulating in the last decade, that Arab public opinion is largely irrelevant to policy consideration has been proven to be wrong. The lack of immediate impact of demonstrations in support of the Second Palestinian Intifada and the invasion of Iraq were considered by US policymakers to be evidence of the weakness of opposition forces and the "Arab street" generally. The longstanding practices of governments of appeasing their domestic opinion with fiery rhetoric while collaborating with Western policy objectives did work for a while, but could never be sustainable. Sooner or later, particularly as conflict grew and persisted in the region, this could not hold: the regimes had to move to increasingly repressive measures to contain public opinion, while opposition movements used foreign policy issues to embarrass the regimes and gain traction with the public.

The consequences of previous policies will be with us for some time. Consequences of public resentment towards Western support for the fallen regimes, double-standards on Israeli-Arab affairs or the foreign policy adventurism of the Bush administration are here to remain. The much-trumpeted focus on "public diplomacy" – better explaining Ameri-

can foreign policy to an Arab audience by engaging that audience on Arabic-language media – is a good idea that was desultorily implemented over the past decade. Public relations initiatives are part of a foreign policy arsenal, but should neither replace nor obscure core policies themselves. American foreign policy should be exercised with greater humility. An acknowledgment of past mistakes, and an understanding of grievances is necessary. A reset can be rapid in the relationship between states, but demands more nurturing in the relationship between peoples.

Don't try to appoint the next regime. Fears about an impending takeover of Islamists are premature, and ones of the inevitable restitution of former regimes (notably through the militaries now in charge) are exaggerated. Complex processes are underway that will redefine the political landscapes of Egypt and Tunisia, but in neither country do we have an accurate political map or a clear sense of the balance of power between politicians, protestors, public bureaucracies, and the generals in control. Fantasies of cutting deals with Islamists because they appear on the ascendant are not only likely to fail or backfire, but would be a repetition of past mistakes.

No free lunches. The US policy debate over problematic allies like Egypt, or even less problematic ones such as Morocco or Jordan, has stumbled on the question of aid conditionality. Standards for the qualification for Millennium Challenge funding were lowered for Morocco. Aid to Egypt was occasionally threatened by Congress because of its human rights records, but salvaged by successive administrations who preferred not to upset the Mubarak regime. What the United States stood to gain from this remains dubious. The same mistake should not be repeated for countries undergoing a transition: disbursement of the financial assistance pledged to Arab countries after uprisings should be made conditional on progress made according to clear transition roadmaps set by these countries' political forces.

Camp David is over, but not Egyptian-Israeli peace. The Camp David Accords of 1979 have been a basic underpinning of the American order in the Middle East for three decades. What initially began as a foray into a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, including the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian questions, has withered into a cold

separate peace. As recent events in Egypt show, there is a deep-seated rejection of Israeli policies among Egyptians and ambivalence, if not outright rejection, of the treaty among most political forces and potential presidential candidates. The Camp David framework for Egyptian-Israeli peace is unlikely to survive the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak. Rather than resist this change, the United States should seek to guide it to ensure that the post-Camp David Egyptian-Israeli relationship does not mean a return to war.

A first necessary step is to disentangle aid to both countries from the peace treaty, and make the aid relationship conditional on bilateral rather than trilateral relations. A second is to accept that the treaty's limitations on Egyptian sovereignty in the easternmost part of the Sinai Peninsula are counterproductive to the interests and security of all involved. A last step is to accept that the idea of a separate peace is unsustainable for Egypt, because it divorces the government from both its domestic opinion and from Egypt's aspirations to be a regional power. While Camp David, as a peace treaty maintaining peaceful relations between Egypt and Israel, may remain in place, it cannot continue to be the same strategic framework in which Egypt is rewarded for a peace that it has no realistic alternative to and Israel is shielded from the consequences of its actions. There must be Egyptian buy-in for the peace that exists, as well as the flexibility for Egypt to play the regional role it aspires to. Insisting on the status-quo rather than adapting to the new regional realities only increases the risks of tensions.

Partners, not clients. A related issue is how the United States has tried to manage regional crises, particularly slow-moving ones such as the Israeli-Arab conflict or the Iranian nuclear question. The Arab uprisings are likely to lead to new regimes that, whether democratic or not, will be more assertive than previous client states – if only because they will be more sensitive to domestic constituencies. The foreign policy elites of these countries (for whom the current model to follow is Turkey) will expect their foreign policy proposals to be taken seriously.

Arab states have for instance proposed a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction since the 1960s, and revived the proposal as a grand bargain in the nuclear standoff with Iran. This has barely been acknowledged. Likewise, the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 – the first acknowledgement of Israel's security concerns by the "radical" and conservative

Arab states and Iran – was brushed aside by both successive Israeli leaders and Washington. Turkey's humanitarian concerns over Gaza, as well as that of many Arab states, were likewise ignored, as was its initiative to mediate (along with Brazil) in the Iranian nuclear dispute. Qatari, Saudi, Turkish and other attempts to mediate between Palestinians were also brushed aside, in favour of an Egyptian monopoly on this mediation whose purpose was clearly to go nowhere (significantly, post-uprising Egypt's first foreign policy success was in this field.)

America is not the solution. The United States should not make the mistake – as the Bush administration did with its Freedom Agenda and the Obama administration did in its early Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives – to make promises it cannot deliver, thereby raising expectations and, subsequently, creating disappointment and frustration. The low credit in which the United States is held by both status-quo regimes (notably Saudi Arabia) and Arab public opinion in post-uprising countries in transition (notably in Egypt) is in part due to such inability to deliver.

The United States cannot solve the region's problems, and should not continue to act as if it alone can address its crises. The United States should encourage both the region's states and its global allies to provide their own solutions to the region's troubles, and refrain from obstructing those who bring these solutions. The Libyan intervention, whatever its merits, is a good example of how to "lead from behind": rather than create an American-led process that would easily fit into the tropes of neo-imperialism common to the region, a true coalition of the willing emerged. Partners were both rebel leaders with a real following in Libya (as opposed to exiled dissidents of Iraq's Ahmad Chalabi mould), Arab states such as Qatar and United Arab Emirates (UAE) that provided a degree of Arab consensus on the issue as well as much funding, and NATO partners who were asked, if not pushed, to bear the consequences of the policies they advocated. This, combined with the international legality of the intervention and its backing by the United Nations and Arab League, have created the opposite model to the Iraqi disaster.

CONCLUSION

The Middle East is in the middle of its most significant shift since the 1950s. It is riven with divisions, mistrusts, and festering conflicts. Building an alternative to American micro-management of the region will not be easy. It may have to exclude key players because of political considerations, although these could be represented by third parties. But the uncertainty of today's Middle East makes all the more necessary a diplomatic system to defuse emerging conflicts, address the unfinished uprisings, and smoothen the transitions underway in several countries. Like the concert of Europe that dominated European diplomacy in the nineteenth century, this could be a gathering of rivals. But a mechanism of some sort of interaction between regional actors is becoming increasingly necessary.

Regional actors, as well as global ones, have long been guilty of preferring to let Washington lead the way. But if the recent actions – positive or negative – of states such as Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and others suggest anything, it is that they are becoming more eager to take the lead in their own neighbourhood. Others – perhaps a newly assertive Egypt – may soon join them. This may, eventually, test US policy at its most domestically sensitive point, and the Middle East's most politically disruptive issue: the Arab-Israeli conflict. The region should be prepared for this eventuality, so that where the United States has proven an obstacle to resolving conflict, others can come into the fray.

4.
The EU Response to the Arab Uprising: Old Wine in New Bottles?

Silvia Colombo and Nathalie Tocci

The turmoil that has affected the southern Mediterranean region has taken many observers by surprise. Being accustomed to dealing with an apathetic Mediterranean in which change was just in the direction of increasing securitisation and authoritarian entrenchment, over the past decades the policies of the European Union (EU) and its member states have been predicated upon the need to uphold the status quo in the region in the name of stability. Geographical proximity as well as a number of linkages with the Mediterranean made the European continent highly vulnerable to spill-over effects stemming from trade and energy disruptions, migration and the spread of terrorist networks. Stability and democracy were perceived as incompatible goals and the latter was increasingly sacrificed with a view to securing the former.

All this has been called into question by the uncontrolled spread of popular protests in North Africa and the Middle East, starting with Tunisia, a country once regarded as the most modern and open in the region. While the outcomes of the "Arab Spring" remain uncertain and frustration increasingly prevails among those who participated in the protests that led to the fall of the Ben Ali and Mubarak regimes, the European Union is conducting an evaluation of its medium-to-long term policies towards the Mediterranean region.

This chapter looks at the changing configuration of the European Union's southern neighbourhood. How has the European Union responded to the momentous developments unfolding along its southern borders and how should it respond so as to tailor its policies towards supporting a sustainable southern Mediterranean? The first section illustrates the

situation of apparent stability, but overall unsustainability, that has led to the Arab revolts. The second section sheds light on the European Union's approach towards this region prior to the popular revolts and on its partial responsibility for the situation of unsustainability in the region. Finally, the third part discusses the process of revision of the European Union's policies towards the Mediterranean, and in particular the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), by highlighting its achievements and its limits. This analysis is conducted starting from the conviction, corroborated by the events that have overwhelmed the Arab world since December 2010, regarding the need to close the gap between stability and genuine democracy. These two goals should not be regarded anymore as mutually exclusive but rather as reinforcing in a virtuous circle that the Mediterranean states should be allowed to take part in with the support of external actors.

THE CHALLENGES OF STATE SUSTAINABILITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Too often sustainability has been erroneously confused with the apparent stability prevailing in the countries of the Mediterranean in policy debates in the region and in the West. Not only are these two concepts distinct, with sustainability being broader and deeper than stability. But also, stability, interpreted with regard to the regimes in the region, has often directly contrasted the underlying conditions that underpin state sustainability. Believing in and thus pursuing *regime stability* has ultimately acted to the detriment of a more organic understanding of *state sustainability*.

The situation that has led to the eruption of popular discontent in almost all the countries in the region, albeit with partially different motivations and degrees of intensity, was exactly one of apparent stability masking the continuous deterioration of the living conditions of the population due to the increase of inequality and poverty, high rates of

unemployment, especially among the youth[1], and the entrenchment of the authoritarian regimes which increasingly resorted to means of repression against any form of opposition and to the obliteration of the citizens' basic rights.[2] Unsustainability was, on the one hand, the result of the process of adjustment of authoritarian rule to the exigencies of a twenty-first century globalised world.[3] This entailed the pursuit of phoney political reform and an economic liberalisation process that failed to spur political liberalisation as warranted by modernisation theories[4], entrenching instead regime capture of the economy. On the other hand, external actors, the European Union and the United States *in primis*, bought into the logic of the incumbent regimes and strengthened them through their support for piecemeal reforms and stability in the region as a way to obtain the cooperation of the elites in power while pursuing their security goals and interests.

Before addressing the European Union's policies towards the Mediterranean before and after the Arab Spring, a few words need to be spent on the revolts that are likely to have a long-lasting effect on the southern shore of the Mediterranean and its relations to its external partners.

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[1] In Tunisia, for example, unemployment rate among the youth, particularly those with secondary and higher education, increased dramatically between 1999 and 2007. While official figures put the unemployment rate at around 30.2% in 2007 among those aged 20 to 24 and at 23.9% among those aged 25 to 29, new data has revealed a far more dramatic rise, from 22.1% in 1999 to 44.9% in 2009. See A. Mahjoub, "Labour Markets Performance and Migration Flows in Tunisia", in European Commission Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, *Labour Markets Performance and Migration, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria*, Occasional Papers 60, Vol.2, Brussels, 2010; and Maria Crisitna Paciello, "Tunisia: Changes and Challenges to Political Transition" in Silvia Colombo and Nathalie Tocci (eds.), *The Challenges of State Sustainability in the Mediterranean*, IAI Research Papers, Rome, 2011: Edizioni Nuova Cultura.

[2] For an in-depth analysis of the recent developments brought about by the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Israel and Palestine and Syria and Lebanon, see Colombo and Tocci, *The Challenges of State Sustainability in the Mediterranean*, *cit.*

[3] See Laura Guazzone and Daniela Pioppi (eds.), *The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalisation*, New York, 2009: Ithaca Press.

[4] See, among others, Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Yale, 1968: Yale University Press; and Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 1959, pp. 69-105.

The popular revolts that swept across North Africa and the Middle East at the end of 2010-beginning of 2011 have proved that the stability of the Mediterranean states was a chimera. Before the eyes of the world, watching with a mix of awe and concern, the so-called Arab street, often derided for its apathy and acquiescence, succeeded in just over a month where no one else had (or had perhaps even tried). Through mass protests (and tacit military support), decade-old dictators of the likes of Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak melted away like giants with feet of clay. As their house of cards came tumbling down, the region shook from Morocco to Yemen, making regimes tremble and empowered populations rise in jubilation and despair.

While the situation remains in a profound state of flux and uncertainty, it is possible to identify the specific situation and challenges facing each country. This allows us to point out that the revolts are likely to lead to a far less homogenous and more fragmented region than the one we once (thought we) knew. At the time of writing, some countries are enmeshed in violent conflict between entrenched regimes and a more or less structured opposition movement. Others are in the midst of transition, in which elements of the old power structures cohabit with forces of change and innovation. Others still have embarked on a top-down process of reform, aimed at satisfying popular demands and preventing a radicalisation of counter-regime mobilisation.

More specifically, Tunisia, despite manifold and persisting political, economic and social challenges, holds the promise of moving decidedly away from authoritarianism and towards democracy. Even after the election of the Constituent Assembly with the overwhelming victory of the Islamist party al-Nahda, the problems remain daunting, and relate to the fragile security situation, the mounting socio-economic difficulties, and the absence of a strong and credible external anchor (i.e., the European Union). Yet far more than any other southern Mediterranean country, Tunisia offers the realistic hope that the future, at the very least, will not see a return to Ben Ali-styled authoritarianism and, at best, will move towards a veritable democracy. Sustainable development is no certainty in Tunisia. But neither is it a naïve pipedream.

With all its caveats, the optimism regarding Tunisia seems less warranted in Egypt. Like the Jasmine revolution in Tunisia, the Tahrir equivalent in Egypt succeeded in overthrowing a decades-long dictator. This success should not be underestimated. Similar challenges to the ones faced by Tunisia are in store for post-Mubarak Egypt. Egypt has to grapple with public insecurity, an uncertain evolution of civil and political actors, including the Muslim Brotherhood, and mounting socio-economic problems. But unlike Tunisia, Egypt faces additional challenges since as much as a popular revolution, Egypt underwent a military coup.[5]

Unlike in Tunisia, where the small military[6] enjoyed few organic political links, the Egyptian military is a large and integral element of the regime itself. The armed forces in Egypt have always boasted significant political leverage and considerable economic power. As the Tahrir revolt gathered pace, the Egyptian military recognised that defending the former president was a losing battle not worth fighting for, at the cost of losing popular legitimacy. Following this recognition, it opted to steer the political course of the country away from its set path of succession from Hosni Mubarak to his son Gamal, a path which it had never fully espoused. The military today retains the reins of power, governing Egypt through the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which determines the shape and pace of reforms. Despite having protected the revolution (by not firing on protesters), it is not the driver of a radical overturning of the regime of which it is part. The resumption of youth demonstrations in June and July 2011 and the worrisome clashes between Muslims and Copts in October 2011 have been precisely a reaction to the military's reluctance to proceed with wide-ranging reform. Furthermore, this bastion of the old regime has found a new *modus vivendi* with the remnants of the former ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, a situation inconceivable in Tunisia where al-Nahda's electoral success has been due mainly to its uncompromising distancing itself from the old regime. In the Egyptian

[5] Robert Springborg, "Whither the Arab Spring? 1989 or 1848?", *The International Spectator*, Vol. 46, No. 3, September 2011, pp. 5-12.

[6] With its 48,000 troops, the Tunisian army is the smallest in the Arab world.

case, the military, the Brotherhood and the NDP (and its eventual reincarnations) represent a formidable political and economic force against a radical overturning of the old regime. Alongside this, the foreign policies of Western actors, including the European Union, are likely to remain far more securitised towards Egypt than Tunisia, insofar as the former is far more enmeshed in Middle Eastern dynamics than the latter.[7] Hence, in Egypt the risk is that of a restructuring of authoritarian rule without a veritable turn towards democracy.

While not having experienced a revolution, the same uncertainty holds for Morocco. In Morocco, civil unrest and the fear of a domino effect across North Africa has led King Muhammed VI to appreciate the difference between stability and sustainability. Unlike fellow rulers in the region, the king had made greater efforts to pursue a *bon usage du néo-authoritarisme*, which had projected domestic stability and a positive image of the country in the West. His rule had centred on the promotion of economic modernisation and a few tentative steps towards political liberalisation, with reforms related to the family law and the partial opening of the political space to opposition parties being notable cases in point. This, alongside the status and popular legitimacy of the king himself, had highlighted the stability of the regime while concealing its underlying features of unsustainability. The latter have nonetheless come to the fore in the light of the Arab Spring.

Demonstrations in Morocco, while not of the magnitude seen in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya or Syria, have taken and continue to take place. The king responded in June 2011 proposing a referendum on constitutional reform which would somewhat reduce the monarchy's power. It remains to be seen whether the reform and its implementation will suffice to save Muhammed VI from the fate of his fellow rulers further east. The greatest challenge for the king is to introduce genuine changes in the balance of power, gradually transforming the regime into a constitutional monarchy like the ones in the United Kingdom and Spain, and proceeding with decentralisation, as well as to pursue the reform of the

[7] Particularly worrisome are the waves of violent protests against Israel and its killing of five Egyptian policemen on 18 August 2011. In the case of Tunisia, it is above all European migration policies that are likely to remain security-focused.

justice and education systems, which remain among the most underdeveloped in the Mediterranean region. Alongside these political reforms, economic reforms will be needed to combat unemployment, rising food prices and widespread poverty. If the Moroccan regime engages in these reforms promptly, there are good chances that it will avoid reaching the point of no return that has already been crossed in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen. The end point would thus be a gradual transition from a *bon usage du néo-authoritarisme* towards a more genuine system of sustainable development.

When it comes to Syria, the chances for President Bashar al-Assad to pursue the reforms he claims to be willing to introduce in the country are very poor, and violence is escalating matched by the rather cautious and slow-motion reaction by the international community. President Assad had attempted, far less successfully than Muhammed VI in Morocco, Ben Ali in Tunisia or Mubarak in Egypt, the route of economic modernisation without political liberalisation. Instead, the grave economic situation, coupled with few signs of political opening, attest to the unsustainability of the Syrian state. Yet the Syrian regime had a residue of popular legitimacy not enjoyed by fellow autocrats in the region, which derived from its foreign policy and, in particular, its "resistance" to Israel and the West.

Nevertheless, the revolts in Syria have shown both that the actual value of this source of popular legitimacy was artificially inflated and/or that the regime failed to capitalise on it by proceeding genuinely and speedily on the path of reform before the tipping point of instability was reached. At the time of writing, the future of Syria remains uncertain, but a return to the *status quo ante* seems unlikely. Whether the country will remain enmeshed in political violence, which risks taking on a sectarian character, questioning or perhaps even breaking the fragile equilibrium in Lebanon, or whether it will embark on a new path towards sustainable development, will depend as much on internal dynamics as on the role that regional (e.g., Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia) and international actors (the European Union, United States, Russia and China) will adopt.

The death of Colonnel Muammar Qaddafi has opened a new phase in Libya's development. While it is still uncertain whether the Transitional National Council (TNC) will be able to capitalise on this fundamental

step by avoiding internal divisions and by proceeding steadily with the construction of the new Libyan institutions, a number of analyses and commentaries underscore the extent to which the EU response in Libya was 'too slow, too weak, too divided, and essentially incoherent'[8]. The lack of coherence was particularly striking among some member states, with divisions between Italy and France escalating under the pressure of mounting irregular migration from conflict-torn Libya and neighbouring countries. Perhaps the most striking manifestation of incoherence inside the European Union during the crisis in Libya has regarded the military intervention itself: as opposed to France, the UK and Italy, Germany expressed its scepticism of military involvement by abstaining from participating in the military operations in Libya.[9]

The Libyan case is also a perfect example of the European Union's engagement with the southern Mediterranean authoritarian regimes prior to the outbreak of the Arab Spring. Not long ago, Libya's leader Qaddafi signed friendship treaties and trade deals with major Western leaders and was praised for his active cooperation with European partners in the fight against terrorism and illegal migration. The European Union and Libya were also in the process of negotiating a Framework Agreement aimed at putting an end to years of Libya's international isolation and at launching a fruitful political dialogue on issues of common interest. This attitude by the Western powers and the European Union in particular had also characterised, with much greater success, relations with other Mediterranean countries. The next section will provide some insights into the European Union's policy towards the southern Mediterranean over the last decade.

[8] Nicole Koenig, *The EU and the Libyan Crisis: In Quest of Coherence?,* IAI Working Papers 1119, July 2011, p. 3.

[9] Ibidem.

THE EU'S POLICIES TOWARDS THE MEDITERRANEAN: AN UNBALANCED TRADE-OFF BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY

As far as democracy promotion in the Mediterranean is concerned, the European Union has been active since the establishment of the Barcelona Process/Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) in the mid-1990s. As a matter of fact, the European Union aimed at promoting peace, democracy, human rights, cooperation and development in the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean, as clearly expressed in the Barcelona Declaration.

To pursue this goal, the Union concentrated on three main areas, namely the political/security basket, economic basket, and cultural/social basket. However, high expectations failed to be realised in practice. Indeed, the emphasis was placed on the economic basket, in light of the belief that economic reform and prosperity would spill into political reforms. Security was another major concern behind the establishment of the EMP, so that political reforms (democracy promotion, respect for human rights and the rule of law) were accepted as long as stability in the area was not compromised.[10] Thus, the link between security and democracy has always been present in the European Union's policies towards the Mediterranean.

The EMP was characterized by two kinds of discourse: one on security and another on democracy promotion.[11] The two were rhetorically

[10] See, among others, George Joffé, "The European Union, Democracy and Counter-Terrorism in the Maghreb", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 46 No. 1, 2008, pp. 147-171; Francesco Cavatorta *et al.*, "EU External Policy-Making and the Case of Morocco: "Realistically" Dealing with Authoritarianism?", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 13, 2008, pp. 357-376; and Roberto Aliboni, *The Mediterranean and the Middle East. Narrowing gaps in transatlantic perspective*, Washington 2010: German Marshall Fund of the United States.

[11] Said Haddadi, "Political Securitization and Democratization in the Maghreb: Ambiguous Discourses and Fine-Tuning Practices for a Security Partnership" in E. Adler *et al.*, *The Convergence of Civilizations. Constructing a Mediterranean Region*, Toronto 2006: Toronto University Press, pp. 168-190.

presented as complementary, but they have often diverged or been considered as mutually exclusive in practice. As a matter of fact,

> securitisation in the region, together with the discourse and practices supporting it, tends to undermine the democratisation agenda and ultimately the very security goals it is trying to achieve. This is so largely because of the primacy of security issues in politics but also because of the ambiguity of the discourse on democracy promotion. Democracy promotion has fallen short of its own rhetoric once it has been faced with its own consequences (e.g., the rise of Islamist movements) or conflicts with security interests.[12]

Following 9/11 and in light of the little achievements of the EMP, the European Union shifted from the multilateral approach of the EMP to bilateral relations with neighbouring countries in the South. As Cassarino and Tocci say,

> in that period the dominant mantra, particularly in the United States, was that the West had mistakenly bet on stability over democracy. By sustaining authoritarian regimes and their human rights violating practices, the West had bred frustration and resentment in the region, which had found political expression in exile, repressed social unrests and Islamic fundamentalism.[13]

By emphasising bilateralism and differentiation, the Action Plans negotiated in the framework of the ENP were able to put visibly higher emphasis on democracy and human rights within individual partner countries compared to its predecessor policy.

Overall, the events of 9/11, and the following "war on terror", had strong repercussions on the link between security and democracy. While in principle the European Union stressed the need to eradicate the root causes of terrorism and instability, the new emphasis on hard security issues and the securitisation of terrorism also led to consider

[12] Ibidem, p. 179.

[13] Tocci and Cassarino, *Rethinking the EU's Mediterranean Policies Post-1/11*, *cit.*, p. 3.

authoritarian regimes in the Mediterranean as indispensable partners in the fight against terrorism.[14] Indeed, cooperation on security matters and police increased over the last years. A further consequence of the new international context after 9/11 was the equation between migration and transnational terrorism.[15] As a consequence, the normative components (democracy and human rights) of the EU Mediterranean policy were hindered to the extent that they became a complementary component of the achievement of security, but not priorities per se.

As a result, European policies contributed to perpetuating the features of unsustainability of the Mediterranean states described above. Such perpetuation became even more pronounced after 2005-2006. When, in those years, the marginal increase in political openness in some Middle Eastern countries produced, through electoral processes, unexpected (and undesired by the West) outcomes, the West quickly backtracked on its commitment to political reform. As Cassarino and Tocci recall,

> in 2005, the Muslim Brotherhood won a surprising 88 out of 454 seats in the Egyptian parliament, in what was the most open legislative elections in the country. In Lebanon, after the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, the Lebanese general elections resulted in a strong showing of Hizbollah, the Islam-rooted Shi'a armed group, which successively entered the coalition government. Most resounding of all, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Hamas, again an Islam-rooted armed group, having participated in municipal elections in 2004 and 2005 and indicated its willingness to enter the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and accept the Palestinian Authority (PA), unexpectedly won the January 2006 legislative elections. These Islamist inroads through democratic processes triggered the abandonment of what had been a rather superficial and ill-thought out embrace of democracy by

[14] Richard Gillespie, "A Political Agenda for Region-Building? The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and Democracy Promotion in North Africa" in E. Adler *et al.*, *The Convergence of Civilizations. Constructing a Mediterranean Region*, Toronto 2006: Toronto University Press, pp. 83-108.

[15] Joffé, "The European Union, Democracy and Counter-Terrorism in the Maghreb".

> the West in the post-9/11 world, and a return to the comfortable notion of cooperation with authoritarian (but pro-Western) regimes.[16]

"This abandonment", recall Cassarino and Tocci, "had immediate repercussions on the European Union's policy towards the region. Almost diametrically opposed to the logic underpinning the ENP, which, at least in theory, was committed to the promotion of a "well governed ring of friends" in the European Union's neighbourhood, in 2007, French President Nicolas Sarkozy launched with much fanfare his idea of a Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).[17] The underlying logic of the UfM was that of compartmentalising Euro-Med relations by sidelining political issues, such as conflict resolution in the case of the Arab-Israeli and the Western Sahara conflicts and democracy and human rights promotion, and proceeding unabated with economic cooperation through the promotion of specific projects.

Far from the logic of the ENP, theoretically premised on conditional cooperation determined by the domestic reform credentials of the neighbours, the UfM promoted commercially sponsored cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean, irrespective of political developments. High amongst the UfM's list of priority projects were energy, infrastructure, transport, environment, research and development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This is not the place to review the content, desirability and viability of these projects, many of which have yet to see the light. Suffice it to say here that the logic of these projects and of the UfM as a whole was that of promoting cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean, without questioning the political context in which such cooperation was embedded.

The initiative was initially met with scepticism both within and outside the European Union. Central and northern member states, first and foremost Germany, as well as the Commission, protested against the in-

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[16] Tocci and Cassarino, *Rethinking the EU's Mediterranean Policies Post-1/11*, *cit.*, p. 6.

[17] Federica Bicchi and Richard Gillespie, "The Union for the Mediterranean: Continuity or Change in Euro-Mediterranean Relations?", Special Issue, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2011.

tergovernmentalisation of EU policy that the UfM entailed, shifting EU decision-making to the southern Mediterranean coastal states. Southern member states, notably Spain and Italy, were equally concerned, fearing French designs to supplant their leadership role in the EMP. Outside the European Union, Turkey shunned Sarkozy's attempt to relegate it to the Mediterranean – rather than European – Union. Israel also had little sympathy for what appeared to be a re-multilateralisation of Euro-Med policies. And the Arab world watched with caution an initiative which purportedly aimed at transforming the much-celebrated "joint ownership" of Euro-Med policies from rhetoric into reality, but which in practice smacked of an all-French affair.

Interestingly however, neither within nor outside the European Union was there a strong lobby against the UfM's sidelining of the political reform agenda. Despite all the grumblings, the UfM ultimately came into being in the summer of 2008, oddly merging with the EMP and giving rise to the unwieldy UfM-EMP.[18] Since then, commitment has been low all around and the UfM has struggled to resolve its institutional problems. Above all, securing the private sector funds needed to materialise its ambitious projects has proved an uphill battle. Its six priority projects – de-pollution of the Mediterranean, maritime and land highways, civil protection, alternative energy and the Mediterranean solar plan, higher education and research, and SME support – remain more in the domain of ambition than reality. What the UfM however did succeed in doing was placing on the backburner EU aims to spur the domestic transformation of its southern Mediterranean partners. Epitomising this "success" was the very fact that heralded as co-chair of the UfM, alongside French President Sarkozy, was no less than his Egyptian counterpart Mubarak, certainly not a shining example of a Mediterranean reformer."

[18] Roberto Aliboni and F.M. Ammor, "Under the Shadow of 'Barcelona": From the EMP to the Union for the Mediterranean", *EuroMeSCO paper*, No 77, 2009.

THE EU AND THE ARAB SPRING: A (MISSED?) OPPORTUNITY TO REVAMP THE EU'S MEDITERRANEAN POLICIES

The Rationales Underpinning the ENP Review

Three are the rationales underpinning the ENP review. First, a bureaucratic rationale has pressed EU institutions to proceed, full speed, with a review of the ENP. A review of the ENP has been underway since March 2010. Caught off guard by the Arab Spring, the Union, not known for its rapidity of action, was thus fortunate to have already been engaged in a major mid-term review of its ENP for several months. Indeed, when the revolt broke out in Tunisia in December 2010, the Commission had just finished compiling the contributions of the 27 member states and the neighbouring countries, along with numerous inputs from academia and civil society. On the basis of these contributions, in October 2010 European Commissioner for Enlargement and the ENP Štefan Füle acknowledged that the ENP ought to be revised so as to pay greater attention to political reform, while being ready to commit to deepened political and economic relations with the neighbouring countries. The Arab spring made this fundamental intuition an all-too evident imperative, summed up in what has since then become the slogan: "more for more".[19]

Second, an internal political-institutional rationale has induced the Commission to "use" the Arab Spring to reassert itself on the throne of the European Union's Mediterranean policies. When, under French push, the UfM came into being in 2008, the Commission bemoaned its sidelining. It fought back, alongside Germany and several northern member states, achieving some French backtracking. But the unwieldy UfM-EMP never fully reversed the French drive for the intergovernmentalisation of EuroMed relations. The Arab Spring has provided the Commission with an opportunity to sideline the UfM, which has been delegitimised by its neglect for political reform (epitomised by Mubarak's role as co-chair of

[19] Štefan Füle, "European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy", Speech on the recent events in North Africa, Speech 11/130, 28 February 2011.

the UfM). Through its focus on the ENP (of which it is in charge), the Commission (and the newly established External Action Service) have striven to retake the mantle of the European Union's Med policies.

Third, an external political rationale has induced a focus on the ENP. The revolts in the Arab world have demonstrated the weakness of EU policy towards the region, particularly of what the policy had become in recent years, through its lopsided emphasis on economic cooperation and migration management at the expense of sustainable development. As Cassarino and Tocci write:

> Indeed, the European Union had increasingly turned a blind eye to the underlying fragility of the regimes it cooperated with, mistakenly equating their stability with their deeper and long-term sustainability, while pursuing its interests in the commercial, energy, migratory or anti-terrorism domains. As recognized by Commissioner Füle: 'We must show humility about the past. Europe was not vocal enough in defending human rights and local democratic forces in the region. Too many of us fell prey to the assumption that authoritarian regimes were a guarantee of stability in the region. This was not even *Realpolitik*. It was, at best, short-termism – and the kind of short-termism that makes the long-term ever more difficult to build'[20]. As put by High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton, the European Union ought to promote instead "sustainable stability", i.e., stability achieved through change, rather than immobilism, towards sustainable political, social and economic development.[21]

It is essentially through the theoretically transformative ENP rather than the status quo-oriented UfM that the European Union has debated how to induce sustainable stability in the South. The Arab Spring has highlighted the need for the European Union to press more for domestic reform in the south, a promise that was made but never kept by the ENP (as opposed to the UfM, which never boasted a transformative ambi-

[20] Ibidem.

[21] Tocci and Cassarino, *Rethinking the EU's Mediterranean Policies Post-1/11*, *cit.*, p. 9.

tion). Alongside this and as argued above, the Arab Spring is likely to lead to greater polarisation and heterogeneity in the South. This heterogeneity in the region has strengthened the logic of European Union bilateralism and differentiation, which marks the ENP, while complicating further the search for a workable multilateral framework, be it the UfM or the EMP before it. In other words, in view of the greater emphasis both on domestic reform and on differentiation in a post Arab Spring context, concentrating EU efforts on reviewing the ENP appeared the logical route to take.

The Steps Forward in the Review

The first outcomes of the ENP review were revealed in the Commission's March 2011 "Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity".[22] These were complemented by the Commission's "New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood", disclosed in May 2011.[23] From these two communications, we can outline a number of new or revised positive features of a revamped ENP.

First, the European Union recognises the need to *offer more benefits* to its neighbours. Aid in the current financial cycle (up to 2013) is expected to rise by 1.2 billion euros, to be complemented by an increase of 1 billion euros in European Investment Bank (EIB) loans, as well as by a proposed opening of the operations of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in the Mediterranean for an initial value of 1 billion euros.

Aid is intended to support economic and social development by improving business environments, supporting SMEs and microcredit, tackling economic disparities, and conducting pilot projects on agriculture

[22] European Commission, *Joint Communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Region: A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean*, COM(2011) 200 final.

[23] European Commission, *Joint Communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A new response to a changing Neighbourhood*, Brussels, 25/05/2011, COM(2011) 303.

and rural development. Alongside this, political reform is to represent a guiding light of the European Union's aid policies. Greater resources are to be committed to political reform through the Governance Facility, the Comprehensive Institution Building (CIBs) programme[24], and the new Civil Society Facility within the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). In addition, under pressure from Poland, the European Union will establish an Endowment for Democracy, aimed, *inter alia*, at political party development.

More benefits are not limited to aid. They include the offer to the South (as has already been done for the East) of "Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements" (DCFTAs), which supposedly open the way to delivering on the ENP's unkept promise of a "stake in the single market" for its neighbours.

More benefits also include mobility partnerships and visa liberalisation, both things that have already been contemplated for the East but not, until recently, for the South. As Cassarino and Tocci recall,

> Mobility partnerships, launched in 2007 and so far signed only with Cape Verde, Moldova and Georgia, foresee the circular migration of workers to one or more EU member states, in return for the respect by third countries of EU conditions related both to domestic reform and, above all, to readmission agreements and border controls. In return for similar conditions, the European Union would also offer visa facilitation for students, researchers and business people beginning with Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.[25]

Second, the European Union acknowledges the imperative of engaging in *conditionality*. The "more for more" slogan means precisely this: the European Union is willing to offer more benefits, in return for more progress on reform by the neighbours. Specifically, the Commission refers to the fact that its aid, including both the remaining ENPI funds until 2013 and the new funding cycle in 2014 and beyond, will be conditioned to the reform performance of the neighbours.

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[24] CIBs are aimed at providing technical and financial assistance to support the capacity of administrative bodies in the neighbourhood.

[25] Tocci and Cassarino, *Rethinking the EU's Mediterranean Policies Post-1/11*, *cit.*, p. 16

More reform is interpreted in terms of "deep democracy", meaning, the kind of democracy that lasts because, alongside elections, it foresees the protection of rights and freedoms, functioning institutions, good governance, rule of law, checks and balances, the fight against corruption, effective law enforcement and security sector reform. Reform is also interpreted in economic and social terms: promoting inclusive economic development, tackling inequalities, creating jobs and ensuring higher living standards.

The Commission has not limited itself to positing the need for positive conditionality. It has also accepted that a logical corollary of "more for more" is "less for less": negative conditionality. The European Union's recent use of restrictive measures towards countries such as Syria, Libya and Belarus seem to have induced the Commission to shed its instinctive allergy to negative conditionality towards (some of) its neighbours.

However, as Cassarino and Tocci write,

> effective conditionality requires not only setting rules and conditions, but also putting in place adequate monitoring mechanisms to ensure that such rules and conditions are respected and fulfilled. Such effective monitoring mechanisms are key to buttressing the credibility of the European Union and its financial assistance.[26]

Another problem concerns the fact that once these rules and monitoring mechanisms are in place, they need to be implemented consistently across all the southern Mediterranean region. In other words, it seems appropriate to question the European Union's willingness and capacity to implement positive and negative conditionality in the case of Israel/Palestine, bearing in mind that Western attitudes towards the conflict play an inevitable role in conditioning the impact and perception of policies towards the Arab Spring.

Third and finally, the Commission stresses the need to engage more deeply with the *civil societies* of the neighbourhood supporting their ca-

[26] Ibidem, p. 19.

pacities in advocacy, monitoring and implementing and evaluating EU programmes.

Insofar as the neighbours are not expected to enter the European Union, the Union's demands on them (and thus the degree of conditionality towards them) will continue to be dampened by the imperative of pursuing "partnerships" with these countries. Yet the Commission now recognises that the notion of partnership ought not to be interpreted exclusively in relation to the (authoritarian) regimes, but also to civil societies in third countries. Hence, the European Union proposes to provide both greater financial support for civil society, and to engage in deepened and more structured dialogue with civil society actors, both in Brussels and on the ground through EU delegations in the neighbourhood.

The rationale underpinning the promotion of this engagement with the civil societies, but also with private socio-economic actors, such as entrepreneurs and SMEs, and youth and women's groups, lies in the realisation that in a context of transition from authoritarian rule, engaging with the broadest possible spectrum of societal actors is of the essence. One of the characteristics of authoritarian regimes was precisely the scarcity of a genuine political opposition. Often the political opposition was either banned, harassed and repressed, or, alternatively, it was co-opted by regime, whereby co-option was viewed as the only strategy for political survival.[27] This holds true also for some Islamist parties and movements across the Middle East, such as the Moroccan Justice and Development Party (JDP) or the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, which have been increasingly tempted to pursue the strategy of co-option.

Many problems arise on the horizon as the European Union struggles to engage with civil society in the southern Mediterranean. One such problem is how to identify the relevant civil society organisations that are sufficiently independent and autonomous from their respective governments and that possess the means for true grass-roots mobilisation. With regard to the engagement of the private sector, in view of its po-

[27] Silvia Colombo and Nathalie Tocci, *The Challenges of State Sustainability in the Mediterranean*, *cit.*

tential role as catalyst for sustainable socio-economic development, the most urgent need is the creation of an adequate framework based on the rule of law and the protection of private property.

The Limits of the New ENP

More benefits, more conditionality and more partnership with civil society is good news. It is certainly a step forward in tailoring the European Union's policies towards the southern Mediterranean to the promotion of sustainable development. But alongside these pluses are a number of minuses, which can only be expected to increase as the ENP review translates from paper into practice.

First, the ENP remains trapped in the *logic of enlargement and of security*, hindering the actual value of the benefits on offer. The Commission has proposed DCFTAs to the neighbours. Working towards and then implementing DCFTAs entail the harmonisation of trade standards and practices to those of the European Union. Such harmonisation is a heavy price to pay for the eastern neighbours, with slim chances of EU membership. It is simply not worth the bargain for the southern neighbours, which have neither the prospect nor the desire to enter the European Union. Rather than DCFTAs, premised on the logic of enlargement, the European Union ought to seriously consider liberalising its markets, particularly in the realm of agriculture[28], without demanding compliance with the highly regulated features of the single market, if it truly wants to put more appetising carrots on the table.[29]

Likewise, the European Union has proposed mobility partnerships as a valuable offer to the neighbours. Yet the logic of mobility partnerships remains highly security-driven and its overall value questionable. The neighbours are offered limited mobility[30] only if they comply with a host

[28] Southern Mediterranean countries face tariff quotas on 60 basic agricultural products including fruit and vegetables. See Booth, Scarpetta and Swidlicki, *cit.*

[29] Tocci and Cassarino, *Rethinking the EU's Mediterranean Policies Post-1/11*, *cit.*, p. 16.

[30] It should be noted that the bulk of circular migration takes place spontaneously and not through regulated schemes of mobility partnerships. Remarks by Anna Triandafyllidou, European University Institute, 22 June 2011.

of strict security requirements regarding readmission and border controls. On the one hand, if and when the third countries acquire the capability to enforce such requirements, their level of internal development and stability is often such that their potential for emigration has been largely depleted.[31] On the other hand, the cost of implementing the European Union's requirements is such that the reward of temporary mobility for a limited category of citizens is often simply not worth it. This is all the more true in a country like Tunisia, which may be tentatively moving towards greater sustainability and in which, therefore, as recalled by Cassarino and Tocci,

> authorities will become more accountable to citizens and less willing to play along with the European Union's securitised migration policy tune. Thus, if the European Union is genuinely willing to offer more appealing incentives to the southern neighbours, readmission and reinforced border controls should no longer be the main (and often only) priorities guiding cooperation on temporary labour migration schemes. Rather, it should promote new initiatives based on skills portability schemes[32], vocational training and the reintegration of labour migrants in countries of origins.[33]

Second, the ENP remains trapped in the *logic of vagueness*, hindering the prospects of effective conditionality. While asserting the principles of conditionality and "more for more", very little guidance has been provided regarding how to make these notions operational. True, the Commission has referred to the need for a smaller number of more focussed reform priorities and for more precise benchmarks and a clear sequencing of actions. But little indications are provided as to how this would be done. How precisely is the European Union to benchmark and monitor its conditions? The issue of benchmarking is particularly relevant in light of the fact that the European Union's standards will not necessarily

[31] Remarks by Anna Triandafyllidou, European University Institute, 22 June 2011.

[32] Skills portability means the transferability and recognition of skills acquired by migrants, in the context of the global economy.

[33] Tocci and Cassarino, *Rethinking the EU's Mediterranean Policies Post-1/11*, *cit.*, pp. 16-17. See also the chapter of Muriel Asseburg in this volume.

be in line with the needs and expectations of the new southern Mediterranean governments and publics, for example as far as the speed of reforms is concerned.

Another issue concerns how new instruments such as the Endowment for Democracy will provide added value rather than duplicate existing EU instruments such as the Governance Facility and the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). How will the new Endowment work synergistically with established non-state actors in the field, such as the German political foundations or the American National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute? Little guidance is provided to answer these crucial questions.

Third, the European Union remains trapped in a *logic of insularity*, making its newfound emphasis on civil society welcome but insufficient. Gone are the days of the Barcelona Process, in which the European Union acted in the hope (or illusion) of creating a common Euro-Med home. Not only are both the European Union and the southern Mediterranean countries more divided than in the 1990s, but the region is permeated by the presence of new (and old) external actors, which the European Union cannot ignore. These include both traditional allies, such as the United States, as well as other regional (Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council) and global (China) actors, which are increasingly active in the Mediterranean.

The European Union, in its ENP review, continues to think it acts in a vacuum, failing to seize the synergies and contrast the eventual countermoves of the multiple actors involved in the region. In particular, the United States and Turkey are key partners in this respect. Although the United States' response to the Arab Spring has been primarily cautious and indirect, showing a certain anxiety not to become sucked into the tumultuous events triggered by the Arab streets and shunning a visible leadership role, most evidently in the case of Libya, it "remains the dominant actor in the Middle East and a fundamental partner for the European Union particularly in Egypt and in the Gulf."[34] Suffice it to say here that, particularly in Egypt, where the military remains firmly in

[34] See the chapter by Robert Springborg in this volume.

charge, an effective ENP strategy towards supporting genuine transition must account for the intimate American-Egyptian dynamics at play. What the transatlantic partners should agree upon in this phase is a division of labour along country or thematic lines or at least some bases for coordination even in the absence of clearly-defined cooperation initiatives to support the Arab transitions.[35]

Turning to Turkey, this country has been heralded as a model for the transition of the Arab world. This idea has become part of the lexicon, not only in the West and in Turkey, but also in the Arab world, following the Arab Spring. However, this idea needs to be substantiated by concrete actions. A stronger cooperation between the European Union and Turkey in the Mediterranean in light of the Arab Spring could be beneficial for both partners, and for the Mediterranean itself, in many respects, first of all in terms of making good use of the renewed Turkish foreign policy dynamism in the Mediterranean.[36]

Finally, the review of the European Union's Mediterranean policies focuses predominantly on the *bilateral ENP rather than the multilateral UfM*. As argued above, the internal bureaucratic and institutional/political logic why this is the case is clear. Equally clear is the strong external logic underpinning the ENP's review, which points to our premises: a) that the European Union ought to focus more on the sustainable development of Mediterranean countries and b) that the region is likely to be marked by greater polarisation.

The bilateral and transformative nature of the ENP responds to both these realities. This, however, leaves unresolved what to do about the multilateral dimension of the European Union's Mediterranean policies. Whereas the bulk of the EU's transformative agenda can and should be tackled through the European Union's bilateral relations with individual countries, there remains a number of key policy questions, ranging from infrastructure and communications to non-proliferation, combating organised crime and maritime security which continue to warrant multila-

[35] Tocci and Cassarino, *Rethinking the EU's Mediterranean Policies Post-1/11*, *cit*, p. 21. See also the chapter by Muriel Asseburg in this volume.

[36] Nathalie Tocci, Meliha Benli Altunışık and Kemal Kirişci, *Turkey: Reluctant Mediterranean Power*, GMF-IAI Mediterranean Papers, February 2011.

teral solutions. The question that is still pending, therefore, is what the appropriate multilateral framework is to tackle such questions?

The increased degree of heterogeneity of the region suggests that a working multilateral framework should probably not be as rigid and institutionalised as the EMP or the UfM. Rigidity and institutionalisation have been a recipe for deadlock in Mediterranean multilateralism and are likely to be so even more in the future. A pragmatic, *ad hoc* and probably more sub-regional approach (e.g., building on existing sub-regional groupings such as the 5 + 5[37] and the Arab League) to EU multilateral policies would thus seem a more appropriate approach to dealing with regional problems in a post-Arab Spring Mediterranean.[38] A grand multilateral strategy for the Mediterranean might hinder rather than help the search for solutions to the region's multilateral problems.

CONCLUSIONS

The Arab Spring has completely tilted the balance in the Mediterranean in favour of increased sustainability and democracy. While the way ahead to attain these goals appears to be long and the challenges facing the countries in the region make it difficult to anticipate the outcomes of this process, the European Union seems to have eventually realised that its policies towards the region, putting a premium on stability and sacrificing democracy, have been detrimental to its own security and, above all, to the overall development of the Mediterranean region. As aptly underscored by a leading Mediterranean expert, "from a number of vantage points any government but the ones still in power now, although major changes are introduced, would be more effective also in providing security for the European Union".[39]

This chapter has attempted to highlight the advancement and the pit-

[37] The 5+5 Dialogue of Western Mediterranean Countries encompasses Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Morocco, Libya and France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Malta.

[38] Remarks made by Eduard Soler y Lecha and Jordi Vaquer y Fanés at an EU4Seas seminar held in Turin 6-7 June 2011.

[39] Remarks made by Olivier Roy, European University Institute, 25 February 2011.

falls in the current process of revision of the European Union's policies towards the Mediterranean. Such a revision, albeit not complete, presents more shadows than lights.

First, the emphasis on (limited) money, market access and mobility testifies to the extent to which the European Union has neither fully grasped the magnitude of change on course in the region nor embraced the challenges emerging from the Arab Spring.[40] The European Union's response, based on a revision of the existing ENP does not offer a radically new answer to the region. Even the emphasis on conditionality obscures the actual lack of a country-by-country approach that would be most welcome given the situation of fragmentation described in the first section of this chapter.

Second, the European Union's insufficient response to the Arab Spring is due to a combination of lack of legitimacy and financial means plaguing EU institutions and member states. It is time for the European Union to take on board the new and still changing strategic conditions in the southern Mediterranean and to respond to a twofold challenge. On the one hand, the Arab revolts call for European Union's policies that can sustain a veritable process of change in the southern Mediterranean. On the other hand, assuming that such change is set in motion and that future regimes will be more democratic (or less authoritarian) than those of the past, the European Union's policies must also be adjusted to account for these new realities. Specifically, assuming future regimes will be at least marginally more accountable to their populations, the content and packaging of several EU policies, including the hierarchy of priorities based on the control of irregular migration, energy and trade, will inevitably have to be reviewed.[41]

The European Union has acknowledged the imperative of reviewing its offers to the South, envisaging liberalisation measures in the domains of trade and the movement of persons.[42] Yet far more should be done to

[40] See the chapter by Steve Heydemann in this volume.

[41] Tocci and Cassarino, *Rethinking the EU's Mediterranean Policies Post-1/11*, *cit.*, p. 10.

[42] European Commission (2011), *Joint Communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the*

put valuable new incentives on the table with a view to ensuring more sustainability in the distribution of wealth, in the job markets and in the development of an independent and performing private sector.

Committee of the Region: A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean.

5.
The EU Response to the Arab Uprising: a Show of Ambivalence

Ahmed Driss

The Arab world is experiencing historic moments. It is still too early to judge whether the changes will lead to sustainable democratic development, but the dynamics of the movement point in that direction. The peoples of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and also other countries such as Yemen, Bahrain and Syria are revolting against entrenched structures. What direction the movement will take is still an open question, but one thing has become clear during the last few weeks: neither the European Union nor its member states can claim that the current transition process in Tunisia or Egypt is a direct result of the European democratisation policy. This, despite the fact that for more than fifteen years the European Union used various policy instruments and approaches – such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) – to pursue economic cooperation, but also democratisation. The success of the Arab revolutions up to now – the overthrow of the despots – is due above all to the courage of the people. Now, the European Union must ask itself why it has continued to cooperate with these rulers for so long, and why it has not been more consistent in demanding democratic reforms.

Did Europe Have a Role in Fostering the Arab Uprisings?

Europe's promotion of democracy and respect for human rights did not find its way to the Mediterranean region – neither through the EMP, nor

the ENP, nor the UfM. The reasons range from ambiguity in the promotion of democracy, to severe misjudgements of the Arab populations' desire for freedom and the over-securitisation of EU relations with the Arab world.

The Ambiguity of Democracy Promotion

The promotion of democracy and respect for human rights and human dignity represented one of the major common objectives of the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 which established the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The legal instruments set up to implement this partnership, namely the Association Agreements concluded by the European Union with each partner country, foresaw a "democratic clause" as a kind of political conditionality. This clause stipulated that 'The respect of the democratic principles and fundamental rights, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, inspire the internal and international policies of the parties and constitute an essential element of the Agreement'. Despite this agreement on terms, it has always been difficult to find a common ground on this subject. The values that Europe defends as universal values were not considered as such by the southern Mediterranean parties, which often called them a "neo-colonialist" argument allowing for interference in the internal affairs of states. In addition, the Arab Mediterranean states, especially when confronted with European pressure, accused the European Union of practising a policy of "double standards" with regard to its position towards Israel's activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), which are in total opposition to democratic principles and human rights and which, nevertheless, have not led to a suspension of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Israel.

This tension contributed to throwing doubt upon the European Union's sincerity in implementing its democracy promotion strategy. The Union, which certainly does not miss a chance to issue declarations and condemnations every time it notices violations of human rights, is disappointing when it comes to taking firm action against these violations. This double standard attitude strongly handicapped its action towards the Mediterranean Arab countries, whose leaders took advantage of this

ambiguity to entrench their authoritarian and anti-democratic regimes. In fact, by sticking to this double standard, the European Union almost became the accomplice of these regimes; through its silence and sometimes even direct support, it contributed to consolidating the rule of the leaders of these countries. Paradoxically, the Arab leaders, who tried to perpetuate their reign, found their best allies in the European Union.

This paradox can be explained in practice by the scale of priorities established at the EU level. Indeed, in the choice between (seriously) promoting democracy and ensuring security, the priority went to the latter. This tendency towards securitisation of regional issues, in spite of the contrast with respect for human rights, may have contributed to meeting Europe's most pressing security concerns such as irregular migration and terrorism, but above all it contributed to strengthening the authoritarian regimes themselves.

Misjudging the Arab Thirst for Freedom

There is no doubt that the uprisings threw into question the dominant European perception of the Arab populations, often considered little inclined to change, favouring tyranny and accepting injustice. The debates on this question were indeed very *culturalistes*. It has nevertheless turned out that these Arab societies are as thirsty for freedom, justice and democracy as any other society in the world. Besides, the Arab Spring, as the wave of revolts that has been sweeping through the Arab world since December 2010 is commonly referred to, has proved that a change from inside and from the bottom is possible. It has also proved that the democratisation efforts proposed from the outside remained weak and without significant incidence.

As a consequence of this misjudging, the European policy of democratisation performed below all expectations. In a sense, the European Union favoured stability, economic development and the status quo over the requirements of democratisation and (uncertain) political changes. But if the prosperity of the region is among the main objectives of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, it is not enough to focus on the question of how authoritarian regimes can assure economic growth able to generate that prosperity. Some in the European Union closed an eye to the lack of

receptivity of these regimes to the necessities of change and political reform.

Securitisation of EU Relations with Arab Countries

Exclusive priority was granted to securitisation efforts. The European Union opted to barricade itself against possible "plagues" coming from the South (uncontrolled migration flows, terrorism, disruptions in its energy imports). In fact, the eternal debate between securitisation and democratisation could go on, as the wave of change in certain Arab Mediterranean countries has been accompanied – regrettably – by a wave of illegal migration and with an increased risk of terrorist actions against Western interests. The fragility of the post-revolutionary security situation and the sudden permeability of borders has increased European anxieties that the advent of democracy among the southern neighbours is just an additional source of insecurity.

Indeed, concerns for European security have been advanced to explain the initial hesitation of the European Union and its members towards the changes that are taking place in its southern neighbourhood. Welcomed all over the world, these events were greeted in Europe with less euphoria, and only embraced gradually as the facts on the ground evolved. The fear of seeing destabilisation spreading in the region pressed on the European position. The European Union was also afraid that instability would affect more countries, thereby pushing a larger number of refugees and illegal migrants to look for safety in European territory. Finally, the European Union was worried about its energy security. Fears that are certainly exaggerated in the eyes of the people inhabiting the southern shores of the Mediterranean, but very real for European leaders.

In addition, the European position was neither uniform nor concerted: several members of the Union had their own positions, contributing to making Europe's foreign policy more vague and therefore less readable for the Southern Mediterranean. A vagueness that certainly did not help to improve the European Union's image. Its initially moderate reaction to the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions was interpreted as an attachment to the autocrats of the region. It is true that until their fall, Presidents Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Moubarak in

Egypt were considered by the European Union and several European countries as "friends" working for the interests of Europe and its security. These autocrats were considered guarantors against the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, seen as a major threat for the security and stability of the region. Also considered an internal factor of political destabilisation, fundamentalism was fought by the Southern Mediterranean regimes with the encouragement of the West.

THE EU'S IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE ARAB UPRISINGS: SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS

Before addressing the European Union's response to the new reality on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, it is necessary to recall how much the position of the European Union was initially marked by a wavering course, uncertainty and even blunt contradictions as a result of the EU member states' different points of view on the question.

Indeed, with the start of the first wave of protest in Tunisia, the European Union was confronted with a dilemma: support the protesters calling for the freedoms that the European Union boasts to be promoting around the world, or back the well known and reliable dictatorship in power? The position of the European Union in this respect was very disappointing – the Union was notably absent. Some of its members, France for example, pushed to avoid a condemnation of the violence towards the demonstrators in the initial stages of the revolt. Contrary to the United States which gave its frank and immediate support, the European Union delayed its backing for the popular movement. Having been severely criticised for that, the Union tried to be more reactive in the Egyptian case.

Immediately after the fall of the Tunisian dictatorship, EU moves again lacked real substance, as it still had to demonstrate tangible support for the changes that had taken place on the southern bank of the Mediterranean. It is true that EU officials such as the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, and the Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, expressed their congratulations to the Tunisian people on 14 January

(after President Ben Ali had left the country), and some weeks later to the Egyptian people, but these words were not followed quickly by acts.

It took a few long weeks for the European Union to show the first interesting signals: first, signs of political support, with the ballet of visits to Tunis by the top EU representatives (the High Representative in February, the President of the European Parliament in March, and the President of the Commission in April), who all reiterated the European Union's firm will to contribute to the success of the transition towards democracy; then came the offers of help and financial support to the economy. Unfortunately, the offer of financial aid did not match the expression of political support. In fact, in the eyes of Tunisia's new rulers the European Union's offer appeared as totally derisory, insufficient and not responding to the real needs and challenges facing the country.

On top of this came the crisis of the illegal migrants, particularly during the first half of 2011. Taking advantage of the general slackening of border controls, thousands of Tunisians were able to reach the Italian island of Lampedusa. The matter revealed convergences between European states concerning the limits to external immigration imposed by the Schengen Agreement. France, which was expecting an increase in the arrival of migrants deemed "illegal" even though they carried a residence permit issued by Italy, reacted very badly, from the Tunisian point of view. An increase in emigration flows is a natural process when authoritarian regimes fall. And yet, instead of receiving solidarity, these immigrants have been the object of strict anti-immigration measures by the Italian and French authorities.

Some in Tunisia maintain that the European Union should react differently with regard to immigration issues, and pursue a more humane border policy. They maintain that with regard to immigration, the EU should set new benchmarks and improve its credibility by showing solidarity, accepting refugees, and offering help. Instead, sensationalist media and populist politicians in Europe are fomenting the menacing image of millions of "boat people" floating across the Mediterranean to Europe. In reality, the majority of migrants, including thousands of workers coming from Libya, were and are heading for Tunisia and Egypt, and are in all probability going to stay there. But Tunisia and Egypt find themselves in the midst of radical political change, and do not have the ability to deal with the migratory influxes by themselves. The European Union

should therefore change its approach and offer aid and assistance to both countries to manage the refugee crisis.

The European Union should also offer support to those who were already living below the poverty line before the regime change, and are now left with nothing. Finally, the European Union should stand up for comprehensive freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of information, free and fair elections under the presence of international observers, and for a complete investigation of the crimes committed by the repressive regimes. But it must refrain from any direct interference. European policy towards North Africa must always be a balancing act: it must find new instruments and pick out a path between non-interference, clear political positioning, consistent demands, and solidarity.

THE NEED FOR REVISITING THE EU REGIONAL POLICY

The political changes that occurred in the southern Mediterranean weigh heavily on Euro-Mediterranean relations. They make it essential that the European Union revisits its policy towards the region. Indeed, the level of cooperation cannot but be influenced by the political turnovers in some of the southern Mediterranean countries. So the various actors, in the north as well as in the south of the Mediterranean basin, should rethink the foundations of their relations and cooperation in keeping with the new picture.

In light of the Arab uprisings, the European Union and its members should give their Mediterranean policy a new foundation. The European Commission has already taken some steps in this direction. At the beginning of March 2011, it presented a communication entitled "A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean", followed, in May 2011, by a revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the communication entitled "A new response to a changing neighbourhood". The communication of the Commission on the European migration policy of May 2011 should also be included in this context.[1]

[1] See European Commission, *A partnership for Democracy and shared prosperity*

First Element of Response: The Partnership for Democracy

With the "Partnership for democracy and shared prosperity", the European Union provided a first response to the Arab Spring. This policy, put forward on 8 March 2011, indicates three essential courses of action, namely: a) the democratic transformation of institutions, with the emphasis put in particular on fundamental liberties, constitutional reforms, reform of the judicial system and the fight against corruption; b) a strengthened partnership with the populations, by insisting especially on support for civil society and increased possibilities for exchanges and interpersonal relations, particularly between the young; and c) economic growth and sustainable development.

As a first step, this partnership seems to include elements that address certain expectations of those southern Mediterranean countries undergoing transition, and set out the guidelines for a new era of cooperation in the region. However, one aspect is problematic: again, security preoccupations seem to predominate over democratic transition. Indeed, the communication evokes joint operations within the framework of FRONTEX, the EU border control agency. Insisting on security issues within a partnership for democracy is, to say the least, ambiguous. One cannot but note that the point on joint cooperation within the framework of FRONTEX has been put above the one on the European Union's support for democratic transition, offering a worrisome idea of the European scale of priorities.

Second Element of Response: the New European Neighbourhood Policy

The recent events in North Africa have shown that the European Union's support for political reforms in the countries of the neighbourhood produced only limited results since the ENP's launch in 2004. A different approach is thus needed to reinforce the partnership between the Euro-

with the Southern Mediterranean, COM (2011) 200 final, Brussels, 8 March 2011; *A new response to a changing neighbourhood,* COM (2011) 303, Brussels, 25 May 2011; *Communication on Migration*, COM (2011) 248 final, Brussels, 4 May 2011.

pean Union and the countries and societies of its southern neighbourhood to establish and strengthen the new democracies, take measures in favour of sustainable economic growth and to manage cross-border relations.

The new ENP sets out a certain number of objectives: a) to provide increased support to the partners that strive to reinforce democracy and guarantee human rights, including freedom of thought, conscience and religion; b) to support inclusive economic development so that EU neighbours can trade, invest and grow in a sustainable way, reduce social and regional inequalities, and create jobs for their workers and higher living standards for their people; c) to strengthen regional cooperation in the Southern Mediterranean. In addition, the new ENP offers an ostensibly significant incentive, as it states that increased access to the EU internal market will be available to those partners who wish to go farther in their efforts to align their rules and policies with those of the Union.

The new ENP seems to have many ambitions. The first is to go beyond the contradictions that European states have shown in their attitude towards the Arab Spring and establish a solid common base for EU policies as well as the bilateral actions of the member states. The second goal is to serve as a catalyst so that the international community in the broader sense can provide support for democratic change and economic and social development in the region. The third goal of the new ENP is to favour a better approach to managing the movement of people. There is no doubt that active cooperation between the European Union and its neighbours, in particular on education, the intensification and modernisation of the social welfare systems, as well as the promotion of women's rights, could contribute appreciably to achieving the common objectives of inclusive growth and job creation.

According to the Commission, the new approach must be defined on the basis of mutual responsibility and a common attachment to the universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This means that the ENP in its new version will, on the one hand, once again insist on the principle of co-ownership and, on the other hand, make better use of conditionality. Therefore, it presupposes a much higher level of differentiation, according to the principle of "more for more", to

allow every partner country to deepen its relations with the European Union according to its own aspirations, specific needs and capacities.

The intensification of EU support to its neighbours will thus be conditional. It will depend on progress achieved as regards the establishment and consolidation of democratic institutions, as well as respect for the rule of law. The European Union promises substantial aid, which is meant to be an important spur for rapid and effective progress on internal reform. And in keeping with this logic, the Commission's communication threatens – though timidly – to reduce the volume of the support and cooperation to those partners that do not achieve any progress on these reforms.

The communication states that the European Union does not intend to impose a model of political reform or rapid solutions to existing problems. It will however insist that the process of reform of each partner country testifies to a clear commitment to the universal values on which its new approach is based.

In principle, we can only welcome the new ENP, while noting however that it is not really new in its objectives and the means chosen to reach them. Formulated in a positive way, it means that the European Union is betting from the beginning that the combination of various policies can actually support the transformation of the southern Mediterranean states. Yet, these objectives were already largely present in the 1995 Mediterranean policy documents, and later in the Neighbourhood policy communication of 2004. The problem, which remains as acute today as it was then, concerns implementation. On this point, the European Union will have to prove that this new start represents a real change with respect to the practices of the past.

Where the new ENP is innovative is in its commitment to direct cooperation with the populations and to establishing partnerships with the civil society, as well as to making EU support more accessible to potential civil society beneficiaries (the creation of a supporting facility is foreseen on this matter). All this seems very important and actually satisfies, at least in theory, the requirements formulated long ago by southern Mediterranean civil society actors.

The new ENP also tries to innovate by proposing a partnership for mobility, providing better access to the circuits of legal immigration and

offering a framework for good management of the circulation of people. Regrettably, this good intention came after the EU Commission's communication on immigration, asylum and the circulation of people of 24 May 2011 which, also in response to the Arab Spring, seems to favour the more restrictive trends that emerged in the European debate on migration policy.

Third Element of Response: Facing the Migration Challenge

The migratory question remains one of the main challenges for the European Union emanating from the Arab Spring. The European debate on the management of the arrival of migrants' from the southern Mediterranean reflects an excessively securitised perspective, a lack of European solidarity and a reflex towards fortressing (at least by certain EU member states).

On 12 April 2011, the Justice and Home Affairs Council adopted the propositions of the Commission's first action plan concerning increased aid to the most concerned member states, via the reinforcement of FRONTEX means, an increase in relevant European funds and a stronger role for teams from the European Asylum Support Office. The adoption of these measures, which will increase the capacities of FRONTEX, was however delayed because member states refused to provide certain guarantees, in particular on fundamental rights, that the European Parliament had requested to oversee the operations of the agency in a more stringent fashion.

Member states also approved strengthened cooperation mechanisms with the Mediterranean countries: accelerated negotiation of operational agreements between FRONTEX and the authorities of Egypt, Morocco and Turkey; a special operational project with Tunisia to strengthen its capacities of border control and facilitate the return of emigrants; and a programme of regional protection for refugees covering Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. In spite of the reservations of certain member states, the Council accepted French President Nicolas Sarkozy's proposal to condition European support for the transition regimes in the southern Mediterranean on the implementation of effective cooperation in the fight

against illegal migration, readmission and border control. The Commission went in the same direction by placing the principle of conditionality at the heart of the "Dialogue for migration, mobility and security with the Southern Mediterranean" proposed in its communication of 24 May 2011. Conditionality is considered indispensable for obtaining results and apparently not in contradiction with the notion of a "well balanced partnership" and "mutually advantageous cooperation". The Commission has nevertheless noted that the conclusion of readmission agreements with several countries is very difficult in the absence of incentives in the visa domain or greater financial assistance. The insistence on readmission agreements as well as on measures against irregular migration will thus weigh heavily on the negotiation of mobility agreements with post-revolution South Mediterranean countries. The availability of the partners to cooperate on this matter will be a condition for more support and greater mobility of their nationals.

Given these conditions, the dialogue on migration with the Mediterranean countries remains under the sign of one-way conditionality. The southern populations' demands for democracy and for a much firmer control of their destiny have therefore not led the European Union to change its approach towards a more balanced partnership.

RE-BALANCING EURO-MED RELATIONS: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

By announcing a "Partnership for Democracy" and a "new Neighbourhood Policy", the European Union has shown a willingness to engage itself on a path of change in its Mediterranean policies. In its response to the Arab Spring, the European Union highlights the role of civil society, granting it an important place both in the communication on the Partnership for Democracy and the communication on the renewed ENP. But in neither case does the European Union give indications as to how this new support for civil society is to be implemented. The communications do not explain how to integrate civil society and non-state actors into the process nor how they can be involved in the decision-making mechanisms or even the orientation of policy choices.

Involving southern Mediterranean civil societies in EU-Mediterranean relations provides an opportunity for civil society to play a mediating role and foster a better understanding of the European Union's action. In this respect, it is recommendable to set up a formal mechanism of consultation with civil society organisations. Such a formal mechanism would also allow for their integration into the decision-making process. To achieve this, the involvement of civil society representatives in the various frameworks and meetings of the Association Agreements' bodies (association council, subcommittees and working groups) is an option worth pursuing.

The European Union has also insisted strongly on the need to condition its support on the pursuit of real and tangible democratisation. Here we find once again the theme of political conditionality, which has perturbed relations between southern Mediterranean rulers and the European Union for such a long time. This return of conditionality generates some criticism towards the European Union, criticism that comes from both the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, the conditionality is worth maintaining. The new authorities of post-revolutionary countries have to show much more commitment to democratic reform, and conditionality can contribute to avoiding a dangerous relapse by increasing the governments' payout for successful reforms.

Finally, as regards the migration problem, the European Union's approach to this issue must be rebalanced. Instead of focusing on intensifying the fight against illegal migration, states should organise regular migration and maximise the mutual advantages for development. To that end, the Europeans should pursue a rights-based migratory approach instead of a security-based approach.

The afore-mentioned debate in the Council of the European Union and its response so far are clear examples of the excessive securitisation of migration that began in the 1980s with the extension of the notion of "security", a concept until then confined to the geopolitical and military sphere, to societal dimensions such as migration flows. This evolution was fed by European citizens' fears of a loss of identity and social benefits and is today fuelled by associating migrants with threats such as terrorism and criminality. The political impact of this harmful tendency is a heavy burden on the European Union. It is becoming more and more dif-

ficult for Europe to be credible in its discourse on human rights precisely because of the grave shortcomings of its migration and asylum policy. It is urgent that the Union returns to a rights-and freedom-based approach in its migration policy. Its demands for regulation will then be more acceptable to its partners. The tendency towards fortressing needs to give way to a logic of opportunity, according to which migration is conceived as a factor of cultural and economic enrichment and not a burden.

6.
Coordinating Transatlantic Responses to the Arab Uprising: Lessons from the Middle East Quartet

Khaled Elgindy

The experience of the Middle East Quartet, a contact group comprised of the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations, provides a useful case study regarding the potential for transatlantic coordination in the context of the Arab Spring.

RATIONALE

The experiences of the Quartet are relevant to transatlantic coordination in the context of the Arab Spring for several reasons. Since its creation around a decade ago, the Quartet has served as the principal means of transatlantic coordination on one of the most central pillars of both US and EU policy in the region: the Middle East peace process (MEPP). Although the two powers technically comprise only half of the group's membership, as the two most influential political actors and the two largest economic donors to the peace process, the United States and the European Union are far and away the most important actors within the Quartet. As a result, the internal dynamics within the Quartet are to great extent dictated by the actions and interactions of these two key players. In fact, former UN Envoy Álvaro de Soto has argued that the Quartet itself is a "side show" in that 'it is as much about managing transatlantic relations as anything else'[1] Furthermore, since transatlantic coordination in the context of the Arab Spring has taken many forms,

[1] Álvaro de Soto, *End of Mission Report*, May 2007, p. 32.

including the emergence of new contact groups, the experiences of the Quartet may be directly relevant to groups like the Libya Contact Group and possibly others in the future.[2]

There is an extremely high degree of consensus between the United States and the European Union (as well as the Quartet's other two members and even internationally) with regard to the desired outcome, namely a negotiated settlement between Israelis and Palestinians based on 'two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side within secure and recognised borders.'[3] This shared support for a two-state solution was codified in the Quartet's signature plan, the 2003 Roadmap in which the United States and the European Union (along with the United Nations and Russia) agreed to work collaboratively toward a comprehensive peace between Israelis and Palestinians based on a negotiated settlement aimed at 'the emergence of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbors.'[4] Theoretically, the convergence in American and European goals vastly increased the possibility of successful collaboration.[5]

Another factor arguing for a closer look at the Quartet is the growing recognition of the association between the MEPP and the Arab Spring more broadly. Indeed, for much of the Arab world, there is an *organic* connection between the Palestine question and the broader struggle for

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[2] Despite being an informal group, the Quartet is nonetheless a more structured form of coordination than were its members to interact on a purely *ad hoc* basis, and in fact tends to be more formal than other groups of its kind.

[3] Quartet Statement, 10 April 2002 (first official communiqué following their formal establishment in Madrid, Spain). See "Remarks with Foreign Minister of Spain Josep Piqué, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, Foreign Minister of Russia Igor Ivanov, and European Union Senior Official Javier Solana" (available at: http://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2002/9232.htm).

[4] For the full text of the plan, known officially as "Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," see http://www.un.org/media/main/roadmap122002.pdf.

[5] The fact there was little or no conflict between perceived US and EU interests and ideals also helped increase the likelihood of success. Unlike, say, in Bahrain or Yemen, where American and European commitments to democratic ideals and human rights conflicted with the need to safeguard more tangible interests like maintaining good relations with the Saudis and other Gulf states, United States and the European Union both view the pursuit of a durable peace based on a two-state solution as both an interest and an ideal.

'freedom, dignity, and opportunity'.[6] This view is particularly strong among the revolutionary youth of the Arab world, most notably in Egypt, where there is a widespread belief that "the road to Jerusalem goes through Cairo." Such sentiments are likely to intensify in light of a moribund peace process and escalating Israeli-Palestinian tensions, as demonstrated by the summer 2011 Israeli raids on Gaza and the killing of five Egyptian border police in August 2011. Although Egypt's interim military rulers did not heed popular demands to expel the Israeli ambassador, they – along with any future civilian government – will undoubtedly be more responsive to popular demands to take a much tougher line with Israel. Even among Western policymakers, there is a growing sense that the upheaval and turmoil of the Arab Spring has lent new urgency to the need to resolve the long-standing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, although in Europe the sense of urgency is considerably greater than in the United States.

BACKGROUND

The Quartet is an informal group comprised of the United States, European Union, United Nations, and Russia. It was created a decade ago in response to the intense violence and turmoil surrounding the Palestinian uprising that began in late 2000 (*Al-Aqsa Intifada*).[7] The emergence of the Quartet was a direct response to two concurrent developments at the time: the rapidly deteriorating security and humanitarian conditions on the ground in the context of the *Intifada* and the political vacuum created by the George W. Bush administration's decision to disengage from the MEPP. Consequently, since its formation, the Quartet has fo-

[6] Interestingly, this view in many ways parallels the thinking of many US and Israeli officials after 9/11 in relation to the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, the response to which was seen an extension of the global "war on terror".

[7] Although not formally announced until April 2002, the group actually came into being on 25 October 2001. See "Statement Read by Mr. Terje Rød-Larsen," United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), 25 October 2001 (available at: http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/9a798adbf322aff38525617b006d88d7/fc33d890b2b968a785256af100662c08?OpenDocument).

cused on three primary objectives: (1) ending (or preventing) violence and improving conditions on the ground (2) laying out a plan for returning the parties to political negotiations aimed at ending the conflict, and (3) ensuring continued American engagement in the process. These aims are embodied in the Quartet's signature peace plan, the Roadmap, first published in April 2003.

Like other contact groups, the Quartet has no official mandate and, apart from holding meetings at two distinct levels, a ministerial ("principals") level and a special envoys level, no formal structure. In relative terms, however, the Quartet tends to be more formal than other informal groups, similar to the Contact Group for the Balkans.[8] Quartet meetings are convened on an *ad hoc* basis, almost always ancillary to other international gatherings, such as the opening of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) or G8 summits, and often by conference call.[9] It has no secretariat or administration of any kind, and meeting agendas are likewise *ad hoc*. Although its formation was in many ways accidental, the Quartet's membership reflected a deliberate desire to bring the four biggest international actors in the MEPP under one diplomatic roof. Former UN envoy Terje Rød-Larsen, who was the driving force behind the Quartet's creation, often described it as the perfect "marriage" of US power, EU money and UN legitimacy.[10]

THE QUARTET AS CASE STUDY: WHY THE QUARTET DOESN'T WORK

Before we can understand what lessons the Quartet may provide with regard to transatlantic coordination, we must first understand the reasons behind its failure. The Quartet's failings stem from three main fac-

[8] Interview with Teresa Whitfield (December 2010).

[9] The 21 March 2010 Quartet meeting in Moscow, called at the behest of the Russians, remains the first and only time the Quartet met in "special session" rather than ancillary to other international gatherings.

[10] Teresa Whitfield, *Friends Indeed? The United Nations, Groups of Friends, and the Resolution of Conflict*, Washington, DC, 2007: United States Institute of Peace, p. 238.

tors: (1) its loose, informal structure; (2) the gross imbalance in its membership; and (3) the lack of genuine consensus among its members. As a result, the Quartet has been effectively transformed in both form and function.

Loose, Informal Structure

While the Quartet's shortcomings are not solely a result of its lack of structure, it has provided an enabling environment for other, more serious problems. The absence of an institutional structure was seen as essential to the Quartet's proper functioning, maximising the collective impact of its members while maintaining their individual freedom of action. As an informal group, Quartet members would come together only when collective action was warranted, and were neither bound by decisions nor restricted from pursuing their own independent policies. Thus, while the United States remains the group's undisputed political leader, the need for consensus forces it to consult with its international partners, allowing other actors like the European Union and United Nations to play a greater political role than they would otherwise. While this may seem reasonable, it is not how the Quartet has operated for most of its history.

Since internal decisions are based on consensus, Quartet positions necessarily reflect the *lowest common denominator*. This has typically led to formulations that are vaguely worded and open to multiple (and often conflicting) interpretations – to say nothing of how or whether such decision may or may not be implemented later on. Moreover, since the value of the Quartet (or any group) lay in the supposition that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts," the collective utterances of the group took on a considerable degree of authority and international legitimacy. As such, a Quartet statement carried more weight than that of any one of its members – including the United States. The group's perceived authority was enhanced further by the Security Council itself, which had formally endorsed both the Quartet's mandate and its official plan, the Roadmap.[11] Ironically, while informal groups are typically

[11] The Security Council conferred official recognition on the Quartet's role in Septem-

more effective when they work in tandem with the UN system,[12] the Quartet has for all intents and purposes become a substitute for the Security Council as the international address for all matters related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This was particularly advantageous for the United States and Israel, both of whom are averse to UN involvement in the MEPP, especially by the Security Council.

This has given rise to a fundamental contradiction within the Quartet. On the one hand, it had sufficient legitimacy to serve as an authoritative reference for the peace process when such authority was useful – as in the case of the "Quartet Principles," which established conditions for international dealings with Hamas. At the same time, it remained informal and flexible enough to allow its members to ignore those aspects considered to be politically inconvenient – as happened with the Roadmap. This contradiction, for all its dysfunction has nevertheless served its members well, by allowing the Quartet to become all things to all people.

Imbalance in Power and Interests

Unsurprisingly, determinations about which aspects of the Quartet's operations were observed and which were ignored were a function of the internal power dynamics within the group. More often than not, this meant that Quartet decisions (or interpretations thereof) reflected those of the United States. This is an inevitable consequence of the Quartet's composition, which is fairly unique among contact groups in both size and membership. The Quartet includes two permanent members of the Security Council (P5), the United States and Russia, and two multi-

ber 2002, with the passage of UNSC Resolution 1435, which expressed 'full support for the efforts of the Quartet…' and called on all parties 'to cooperate with these efforts…' In November 2003, the Security Council formally endorsed the Quartet Roadmap in UNSC Resolution 1515. See UN Security Council Resolution 1435, (S/RES/1435) 24 September 2002 (available at: *http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/601/58/PDF/N0260158.pdf?OpenElement*) and UN Security Council Resolution 1515, (S/ RES/1515) 19 November 2003 (available at: *http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/621/85/PDF/N0362185.pdf?OpenElement*).

[12] See Jochen Prantl, "Informal Groups of States and the UN Security Council," *International Organisation* 59, Summer 2005, p. 585.

state organisations, the European Union and the United Nations, each with its own unique history of involvement in the conflict and distinct relations with the parties.

This rather top-heavy configuration reflects the peculiar demands that existed at the time of its formation. Given the intense violence and turmoil at the time, the focus was on assembling the most powerful actors in the most efficient configuration in the shortest amount of time. That its members were so few in number and yet so great in power would ensure more streamlined decision-making and a more authoritative stature. At the same time, the mechanism was also a means for the European Union, United Nations, and Russia to influence the United States, initially by convincing it to reengage in the process and later by trying to bring US positions in line with their own. In either case, the result was to reaffirm the status of the United States as *the* dominant force within the Quartet.

That the United States should come to dominate the Quartet is not surprising, given its superpower status and its role as the chief mediator, sponsor and guarantor of the MEPP for nearly four decades. America's centrality is also readily acknowledged by the European Union, United Nations and Russia – even as they often bemoan the same. But while this asymmetry within the Quartet may be natural, it is not neutral. American dominance is more than just a function of its raw power, however. It is equally a function of the depth and breadth of US interests with regard to the conflict and in the broader Middle East in general.

Even as the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia were, on the surface, bound by a common desire to end the conflict, they each had their own motivations for joining the effort. For all four actors, the Quartet offered a useful platform on which to play out their respective long-term interests in the region and vis-à-vis one another, as well as their own internal political dynamics and rivalries. For the United States in particular, the Quartet served a number of distinct but overlapping purposes. In addition to allowing for more concerted pressure on the Palestinians and channelling the interventions of what was often considered an unruly group of international actors, the Quartet proved a useful tool by which to pursue other regional objectives, most notably the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. Internal rivalries within the adminis-

tration also helped propel US involvement in the Quartet, particularly in light of Powell's waning influence, which began shortly after 9/11 and culminated with Bush's decisive speech of June 2002 in which he first laid out his vision of 'two states, living side by side in peace and security.'

As the most powerful actor in the Quartet and the one with the greatest stake in the conflict, the United States, unlike the other three, had both the ability and the will to undertake decisive unilateral action. Consequently, the Quartet's role has to a great extent become a function of broader US policy priorities in the region, including its bilateral relations with Israel. The implications of this have not been lost on other Quartet members, many of whom note the high degree of coordination between the United States and Israel before, during and after taking major initiatives, particularly in the early years of the Quartet.[13] Nor was this exclusive to the previous administration. The Barack Obama administration's decision not to invite the other Quartet members to the launching of direct negotiations in September 2010 was as a reminder that it was not entirely free of unilateralist tendencies, which sparked considerable anger among Quartet members, particularly in Europe.[14] Thus, not only were determinations about how (or whether) Quartet decisions were implemented left to the United States, but even when (or if) the group itself would be relevant. This has earned the group the unflattering nickname of the 'Quartet *sans trios*,' first coined by former Arab League Secretary-General Amre Moussa.[15]

Ironically, it is this desire to be "relevant" that has helped consolidate American dominance of the Quartet, particularly since no other single member, or perhaps in their collectivity, has both the power and the will to undertake decisive unilateral action. The European Union, which had

[13] Interview with former Quartet Special Envoy James Wolfensohn (July 2010)

[14] In fact, in her remarks at the Washington launch, US Secretary of State Clinton expressly thanked Egypt and Jordan, along with Quartet Representative Tony Blair, but failed to mention the EU, UN, Russia or the Quartet itself. See Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State, "Remarks With Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu, and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas," 2 September 2010 (Available at: *http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/09/146701.htm*.)

[15] Chris Patten, *Not Quite the Diplomat: Home Truths about World Affairs*, New York, 2005: Penguin, p. 109.

its own external and internal reasons for joining the Quartet, may come closest in terms of its combined influence, but remains a very distant second. As the largest single donor to the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel's second largest trading partner (until recently its largest), the European Union had long sought to translate its substantial economic clout into a meaningful political role. With twenty-seven member states and multiple diplomatic and security institutions, however, its ability to do so has been hampered by a lack of internal cohesion, as exemplified by its tripartite representation within the Quartet itself.[16] The European Union's influence was further impaired by Israel's longstanding mistrust of Europe's perceived bias toward the Palestinians. Thus, in addition to providing it with a forum by which to check US supremacy and improve its standing with Israel,[17] EU involvement in the Quartet was a way to institutionalise its involvement in the peace process and promote internal cohesion 'by compelling EU member states to regularly forge a common position.'[18]

The United Nations was even more marginal and had even less credibility with Israel than the European Union. It had not played a serious political role in Arab-Israeli affairs since the ill-fated Jarring Mission of 1968,[19] and its role was mainly technical, mostly in the humanitarian

[16] Until recently, the European Union had been represented at the "principals" level by as many as three individuals: (1) the high representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, (2) the commissioner for External Relations, and (3) the foreign minister of the country holding the rotating EU Presidency.

[17] Costanza Musu, "The Madrid Quartet: An Effective Instrument of Multilateralism?" Paper presented at "Globalization, Security and the Legitimacy of the G8" (conference sponsored by the Royal Institute for International Relations, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and G8 Research Group, Brussels, 24-25 May 2007, p. 6.

[18] Costanza Musu, *European Union Policy Towards the Arab-Israeli Peace Process: The Quicksands of Politics*, New York, 2010: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 79.

[19] In addition to calling for a withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab lands captured in the war, UNSC Resolution 242 (22 November 1967) also provided for the appointment of a special representative to serve as mediator and facilitate implementation of the resolution's goal of a "just and lasting peace." The post was held by Dr. Gunnar Jarring, Sweden's ambassador to the Soviet Union, who served until November 1968. The Jarring Mission ultimately failed and marked an end to the UN's peacemaking role in the Middle East, a role thereafter assumed by the United States.

realm.[20] Consequently, the creation of the Quartet, which was spearheaded by UN envoy Terje Rød-Larsen, was seen as an opportunity to expand the United Nation's role beyond purely operational matters.[21] Russia's involvement in the group is perhaps the most curious of all. Apart from having inherited the mantle of the former Soviet Union as an original co-sponsor of the peace process, Russia has not played a significant role, either on the ground or at the negotiating table. Its membership in the Quartet, therefore, reflects a desire to enhance its stature in the region while serving as a check on western, particularly American, hegemony over the peace process.[22] Thus, while none of the other members could compete with US power and interests, they had little to lose and much to gain from being part of even an ineffective group.[23]

Moussa's disparaging reference to the 'Quartet *sans trois*' is at once an indictment of the United States and the other members of the group. American dominance would not be possible without the attendant tendency of the European Union, United Nations, and Russia to acquiesce to the United States – even when faced with serious disagreements and inordinately high stakes. This tendency has often taken the form of relenting to US demands and actions directly or, as is more often the case, by their willingness to accept vague or malleable formulations that in effect allow for the same result. This stems partly from a desire on the part of all three to avoid damaging relations with the United States, which could

[20] In the Israeli-Palestinian context, this has centred on providing services to Palestinians, for example through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other UN agencies. In the broader Arab-Israeli context, the United Nations was also involved in various peacekeeping operations in the region such as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), established following the 1949 Armistice Agreement between Israel and its immediate Arab neighbours, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), created after the October War of 1973, as well as the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

[21] Teresa Whitfield, "A Crowded Field: Groups of Friends, the United Nations and the Resolution of Conflict," Center on International Cooperation, *Studies in Security Institutions*, vol. 1, p. 7.

[22] Geoffrey Kemp and Paul Saunders, *America, Russia, and the Greater Middle East: Challenges and Opportunities,* The Nixon Center, November 2003, p. 45.

[23] Teresa Whitfield, "A Crowded Field: Groups of Friends, the United Nations and the Resolution of Conflict", p. 6.

complicate their interests elsewhere, as well their own often muddled or competing interests, ambivalence, or internal divisions. Regardless of the source, it has seriously undercut the Quartet's credibility and individual members like the European Union and United Nations.

This is particularly true of the European Union, as the second most influential actor in the peace process and the one with the most overlapping interests with the United States. Former EU commissioner Chris Patten summed up the critique of the European Union's role as follows:

> It is true that the US has the primary external role in the region, and that any peace settlement will require Israel's willing agreement. But none of this justifies the EU's nervous self-effacement. This removes much of the political price the US should pay when it does nothing or too little. It gives Israel *carte blanche*. It damages Europe's relationship with its alleged partners in the Union for the Mediterranean, and makes Europe complicit in outrageous and illegal acts.[24]

Former UN envoy Álvaro de Soto similarly bemoaned the United Nations' role, which he believes only 'gives the UN the illusion of having seat at the table.'[25]

Among the greatest ironies of the Quartet is that while the United States did not initiate (or initially even welcome) its creation, it is the only actor that could operate wholly outside of it. However, whereas the United States could – and often did – act independently of the other three, the reverse was decidedly not the case. Although the United States saw a clear advantage in having the European Union and the United Nations sign on to its positions, it could afford to act on its own when it felt it needed to. This was particularly true under the Bush administration but has persisted under Obama as well. The other three members by contrast were not in a position to act independently of the United States, partly because they did not have anything close to the

[24] Chris Patten, "Time for real EU courage," *The Guardian*, 11 June 2010.
[25] Álvaro de Soto, *End of Mission Report*, p. 32.

kind of influence the United States wielded with both Israelis and Palestinians and partly because doing so risked freezing them out of the process.

This effectively gave the United States a *double advantage*, first by virtue of its inherent power and disproportionate influence with the parties, and second through the legitimisation of its positions by way of Quartet endorsement. In other words, the power-interests imbalance within the Quartet does more than just reflect the disparity between the United States and the other three members in objective terms; it actually deepens it. The fact that the United States was allowed to act "multilaterally" when it was useful, mainly to gain international buy-in for its policies, and unilaterally when it ran counter to its perceived interests has been the ultimate Achilles' heel of the Quartet. This dynamic led former Quartet special envoy James Wolfensohn to describe the Quartet as little more than a 'fig leaf' for US policies.[26] That characterisation is generally not disputed by US officials, for whom the value of the mechanism rests in the fact that a Quartet action or statement 'was more significant than just an American position.'[27]

Consequently, the "lowest common denominator" applied not just to the nature of the consensus within the Quartet but to its effectiveness as well, which would always be limited by the ability of key actors, whether inside or outside the group, to act independently of it. The two obvious examples in this regard are the United States and Israel, both of which have the capacity, and quite often the inclination, to sidestep the Quartet. By contrast, the three weaker Quartet members have considerably less flexibility to act independently, while the Palestinians have virtually none. Ironically, the two parties that seem to have derived the most benefit from the Quartet are also the ones who were least bound by it.

[26] Interview with former Quartet Special Envoy James Wolfensohn (July 2010). See also James D. Wolfensohn, *A Global Life: My Journey among Rich and Poor, from Sydney to Wall Street to the World Bank*, New York 2010: Public Affairs.

[27] Interview with former Deputy National Security Advisor Elliott Abrams, September 2010.

Lack of Genuine Consensus

The Quartet's greatest strength – and the one most frequently cited by US, EU, UN and Russian officials alike – has always been its ability to speak to the parties with a single, authoritative voice. The most prominent example of this is the publication of its official plan, the 2003 Roadmap. Beyond the superficial vision articulated in the Roadmap, there is very little common understanding among Quartet members regarding its objectives, means of operation, or overall role in the peace process. As with any informal group, a shared commitment to resolving the conflict is an essential prerequisite to its success.[28] As noted earlier, however, Quartet members often place their own interests above those of the common goal. What should have been the Quartet's greatest asset, therefore, has in fact been a serious liability.

The perpetual quest for consensus combined with the need of the European Union, United Nations and Russia to be "at the table" has led to an equally compelling desire to maintain the unity of the Quartet at all costs, even in the face of serious internal divisions and irrespective of its impact or effectiveness. The problem is not that differences in opinion exist among the Quartet's members or that they may have conflicting interpretations over some decision or another – these are to be expected in any group – but that whatever nominal consensus may exist at a given moment, it was then to be used to paper over much deeper and more consequential divisions. There is little value in speaking with "one voice" if the actors themselves do not agree on what that voice is saying, or if their words bear no resemblance to their actions. The tendency of the Quartet to adopt artificial (and often illusory) consensuses in the interest of maintaining group cohesion has been a hallmark of the Quartet for most of its history. But nowhere has this phenomenon been more evident – or more damaging – than in the cases of the Roadmap and the Quartet Principles, the two most important and most consequential actions taken by the Quartet.

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[28] Teresa Whitfield, *Working with Groups of Friends*, Washington, DC 2010: United States Institute of Peace, p. 9.

The Roadmap, the Quartet's most celebrated achievement, began as a European initiative in mid-2002 before being taken over by the United States. The plan, which was painstakingly negotiated over a six-month period, sought to correct several fundamental shortcomings that plagued the Oslo process in the 1990s, namely the need for parallel (rather than conditional) implementation, the centrality of monitoring and accountability, and a clearly defined end game. Thus, while its drafting was primarily US-led, the Roadmap bore the unmistakable imprint of the European Union and the United Nations, particularly in its emphasis on these three normative principles. Whatever potential benefits the Roadmap might have offered, however, were ultimately negated by the fact that it was abandoned almost immediately upon its release. Initially, the Roadmap was held up by disagreements with the United States over how and whether the plan should be implemented, and then later dropped altogether following the announcement of Israel's former premier Ariel Sharon's Gaza "disengagement plan".

The adoption of the Quartet Principles after Hamas's election victory in January 2006 demonstrates even more dramatically the perils of such an illusory "consensus". No sooner had the group affirmed the need for any Palestinian government to conform 'to the principles of nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations'[29] than deep fissures emerged among the Quartet's members. The United States understood the three principles represented clear conditions on the continuation of both aid and contact with the Palestinian Authority. The European Union espoused a similar though ultimately more muddled position, attempting to cast its suspension of aid to the Palestinian Authority as neither a "boycott" nor "sanctions" on the Palestinians.[30] The UN position was equally fluid; although then Secretary General Kofi Annan had tried to avoid aid conditionality on PA compliance with the Principles, his successor, Ban Ki-moon 'accepted it unreservedly'.[31] The Russian position was the least coherent of all, at-

[29] Quartet Statement, 30 January 2006.

[30] See, for example, Javier Solana, "Middle East Peace is a Priority," *Palestine Times*, 30 November 2006.

[31] Interview with Álvaro de Soto (June 2010). According to de Soto, it was Ban's ac-

taching their name to a statement that declared it "inevitable" for future assistance to 'be reviewed by donors against that government's commitment to the principles…'[32] while at the same time rejecting any aid conditionality and maintaining open relations with Hamas itself.[33]

In both cases, a consensus was painstakingly negotiated among all four members and established as official Quartet policy. And yet, in both cases, differences over how its members understood that consensus were substantial enough that they nearly caused the breakup of the Quartet. In the case of the Roadmap, disagreements over the lack of implementation were papered over and eventually overtaken by a new "consensus" – namely the need to get behind Israel's planned withdrawal from Gaza (a plan which not coincidentally was expressly designed to subvert the Roadmap). When it came to the far more formidable divisions over the Quartet Principles, however, the lack of genuine consensus was simply subordinated to the desire to maintain unity at all costs. More striking still is the enormous disparity in how these two documents were treated. Even as the Quartet allowed implementation of the Roadmap to fall by the wayside, it held scrupulously to the letter of the Quartet Principles. Although only the former was officially enshrined in a Security Council resolution (UNSCR 1515), it was the latter that has assumed a quasi-legal status.

As the International Crisis Group's Gareth Evans astutely observed with regard to the European Union's own lack of consensus, 'maybe speaking with a divided voice is better than speaking with one voice and getting it wrong.'[34] This applies equally to the Quartet. Most of the damage inflicted by the abandonment of the Roadmap was to the group's own credibility, both individually and collectively. However, one could

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ceptance of conditionality that prompted the former's resignation as UN Special Coordinator in May 2007.

[32] Quartet Statement, 30 January 2006.

[33] *The Frontrunner*, 1 February 2006.

[34] "Towards Peace in the Middle East: Lessons for European Policymakers," Address by Gareth Evans, President, International Crisis Group, to Closing Session, PSE/Socialist Group in the European Parliament Conference on Moving Toward an International Peace Conference for the Middle East, European Parliament, Brussels, July 3, 2007 (available at: *http://www.gevans.org/speeches/speech229.html*).

also argue that the failure to implement the plan helped prolong the conflict either by causing a further breakdown in trust between the two sides or by fostering a false sense of hope among them. Even so, had it been only a matter of its inability to implement the Roadmap or prevent outbursts in violence, one might have considered the Quartet a diplomatic and political wash. In light of the Quartet Principles and their many negative diplomatic, political, and humanitarian consequences, however, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Quartet has done more harm than good. The direct and indirect impact of the Principles can still be seen today in the ongoing blockade of Gaza, the split between Hamas and Fatah, and the erosion of PA governance and legitimacy.

The combination of the Quartet's highly malleable structure and lopsided membership has led to a tendency of the group to paper over genuine and sometimes far-reaching differences in the interest of maintaining group cohesion. The fact that the Quartet could be all things to all people allowed its most powerful and vested member, the United States, not only to dominate the institution itself but to effectively transform it into something other than what it was originally intended to be. As a result, the Quartet was transformed from a multilateral framework for resolving the conflict into a tool of American foreign policy. This point was acknowledged rather explicitly by a former senior US government official: 'The reality is that it's a vehicle for US policy, to allow us to keep everybody – to herd the cats so we're all heading in the same direction. The Quartet is not really an independent actor.'[35] While European and UN officials might dispute this characterisation, their frequent grumbling about America's propensity for unilateralism and frequent complaints that the Americans have not 'used the Quartet properly' basically amount to the same thing.

At the same time, the original, normative understanding of the Quartet as a vehicle for mediating between *two* conflicting parties has been effectively replaced by a focus on managing (or micromanaging) the affairs of *one* of them – the Palestinians. This type of "microlateralism" stems mainly from a US and Israeli desire to de-emphasise the Quartet's

[35] Interview with Former Senior US Government Official, July 2010.

political mediation role, which necessarily entails parallelism and mutual accountability. This is exemplified *par excellence* by the subversion of the Roadmap, whereby Israeli and Palestinian obligations were, as a matter of policy, applied in a highly selective and unequal manner. In its place, meanwhile, came the inordinate emphasis on Palestinian "reform" and "state-building," as exemplified by the creation of the Office of the Quartet Representative (OQR), which has virtually elevated former British premier Tony Blair to the status of a *de facto* Quartet member. However crucial it may be, any attempt at Palestinian "state-building" that occurs absent a parallel process of de-occupation and de-colonisation remains a highly limited – if not futile – exercise.

The Quartet has undergone a parallel shift from what was initially a strategic, comprehensive and integrated vision aimed at conflict resolution to one that is decidedly reactive and compartmentalised even in its attempts at conflict management. The fragmented, *ad hoc* nature of the US/Quartet approach is evident in the prevailing view that a meaningful political process can be pursued independently of the current Hamas-Fatah split within the Palestinian Authority or that progress toward a two-state solution can be made in the West Bank irrespective of conditions in Gaza. It is also reflected in the compartmentalisation of the process into discrete, though largely artificial spheres of political, security, economic, and humanitarian components.

LESSONS LEARNED

Based on the experience of the Quartet, we can draw several key lessons with regard to the potential for successful EU-US coordination concerning the Arab Spring: the structure and format of coordination matters; and the balance of interests is at least as important (if not more so) as the balance of power. And from these we can extrapolate a third lesson, which is that the potential for coordination will also be hindered by the proximity of the issue/country to the Arab-Israeli arena.

1. *The format and/or structure of coordination matters.* The more structured and formal the coordination (i.e., via a "contact group" or other mechanisms rather than on a purely *ad hoc* or case-by-case

basis), the greater the pressure on the group to present a unified front, even when there may be none.

2. *The "balance of interests" is at least as important as the balance of power.* The greater the power-interests disparity, the more likely coordination efforts will be either ignored or manipulated by its most powerful and/or most staked actor. As corollaries to this principle, we can also say:

   a. *Proximity to the Arab-Israeli arena (in political and not just geographic terms) can hinder the potential for coordination.* The closer a country or issue is to the Arab-Israeli arena, the more likely it is to become (*i*) a domestic US political issue and (*ii*) a potential source of tension between the United States and the European Union.

   b. *Transatlantic coordination may be more effective when undertaken by individual European states rather than the European Union as such.* The lack of cohesion among the EU's diverse membership puts it in a permanent disadvantage vis-à-vis the US while reducing its representation to that of a single actor, when in fact it represents the often varied interests of many.

3. *No consensus is better than a false consensus.* The combination of the above two factors increases the risk of overlooking fundamental differences in favour of some artificial or illusory consensus, which in turn increases the likelihood of veering away from the initial goal(s). Perhaps the most important lesson one can draw from the Quartet is the seemingly paradoxical notion that collective (or joint) action may not necessarily be more effective – and in some cases may even prove more harmful – than were individual actors to operate on their own.

7.
Coordinating the Transatlantic Response to the Arab Uprisings: an Agenda for Sustainable Development

Muriel Asseburg

The Arab Spring marks a historical turning point. Its implications go well beyond the countries in which we have witnessed the fall of decades-old rulers, violent power struggles or mass demonstrations and uprisings. In the end, none of the countries in the region will remain unaffected. This might entail not only regime change and a process of political and economic transformation. In some cases it could lead to mid- or long-term instability, civil war or even secession of territories. It will also have geopolitical implications – affecting regional alliances and power balances as well as the region's "old conflicts," such as the Arab-Israeli one.

As a consequence, Europeans as well as Americans have no choice but to get involved. To date US and European reactions have been rather hesitant, at times contradictory, and at least partially defensive and guided by fear.[1] Indeed, it is of eminent interest for the transatlantic

[1] To give but one example: EU institutions and member states reacted quickly when irregular migration rapidly increased in spring 2011 because local security forces no longer prevented refugees and prospective emigrants from crossing the border. The EU provided short-term funds to extend operations of its border patrol mission FRONTEX. In summer 2011, the EU decided to strengthen the capacities of FRONTEX and devoted additional funds to doing so. See European Council, *Conclusions*, CO EUR 6 CONCL 3, Brussels, 24-25 March 2011, p. 10, (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/ pressdata/en/ec/120296.pdf); Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on the Management of Migration from the Southern Neighbourhood, 3081st Justice and Home Affairs Council Meeting*, Luxembourg, 11-12 April 2011, p. 2 (www.consilium.europa. eu/uedocs/ cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/121479.pdf); Council of the European Union, *Strengthening the European External Borders Agency Frontex – Political Agreement Between Council and Parliament*, PRESSE 192, Brussels, 23 June 2011, (www.consilium.europa.eu/ uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/122983.pdf).

community to grasp the opportunity and support change towards more open, more representative and more just political and economic systems – and thus towards sustainable and dynamic stability. In the end, developments will largely be determined in the region, not in Western capitals. But transatlantic policies will be watched closely and assessed by people in the region and will have an effect on the West's credibility among Arab citizens and on future relations with the region. Indeed, the credibility of Western democracies is at stake here. Hence, the US and European response to developments in the region should correspond not only to the interest of a sustainable stabilisation of the Mediterranean – in the sense of what Europeans have termed a 'ring of well-governed countries.'[2] It needs to do justice to the overwhelming importance of recent developments in the Arab world. Therefore, Europeans and Americans should also be wary of pursuing a "business as usual" approach. It will not be sufficient to continue or extend existing programmes and projects. These need to be critically evaluated and lessons from cooperation within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) need to be taken on board. It is therefore essential that an intensive debate on the aims and means of a future policy towards the region take place – nationally, among Europeans, and at the transatlantic level.

At the same time, the situation differs for the United States and for the Europeans. Above all, because these changes are taking place in Europe's immediate neighbourhood, EU member states are directly affected by spill-over effects of instability and conflict and at the same time have the possibility of more direct involvement and exchange. They also have comprehensive policy frameworks in place, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy, to build upon. Besides, Arab popular perceptions of the United States and the Europeans differ quite substantially. As a general rule, therefore, the European and the US responses should be closely coordinated, but not

[2] Council of the European Union, *A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 12 December 2003, (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf).

united in one cooperative approach. In addition, not too much energy should be spent on constructing new transatlantic (or international) frameworks of coordination. The limited impact and lifespan of the 2004 Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) initiative, championed by the George W. Bush administration, supports this point. Finally, as important as close transatlantic coordination is the inclusion of Turkey in such efforts.

In the short run, US, European and Turkish policies should move to take short-term measures offering support for the remodelling of those countries that have recently embarked on a path of transformation, i.e., Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. Urgent steps are also required to contribute to boosting the national economies there after the upheaval-related breakdown and losses incurred following the collapse, for instance of Egypt's and Tunisia's tourism sector. In addition, transatlantic partners should be on hand with comprehensive and generous offers for mid- to long-term support to help foster political and economic transformation. Such support could and should be symbolically reaffirmed by a high-level meeting. On the European side, that could be a European Council meeting with representatives of all three countries. On such an occasion, a "pact for labour, education and energy" could be adopted.

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES, COUNTRY-SPECIFIC SUPPORT

Rather than trying to devise a new overall approach to the region (similar to the 2004 BMENA initiative), the United States and Europe should develop specific approaches for each of the countries of the Mediterranean, as well as other Arab states. It is evident that the situation differs greatly from country to country, not only in the current phase of upheaval. Future challenges will also be quite different. Moreover, the chances for successful transition to a system of representative, free and just rule are quite different for countries such as Tunisia and Yemen, to give but one example. They depend on a number of factors, including the stage of development, integration into the world economy, availability of resources, societal fragmentation, the degree of institutionalisation, as

well as the method of change (largely non-violent vs. military) from the previous regime. At the same time, the willingness of Arab elites to accept external support will also vary considerably. This means that offers for support need to be tailored to the specific conditions in each of the countries much more than has been the case so far. By contrast, a "one size fits all" approach with complicated grading and classification procedures – as proposed by the European Commission and the High Representative for EU Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in March 2011 with the project of a "Mediterranean Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity"[3] and included in the revision of the ENP[4] – seems to be rather out of place.

Certainly, a framework is needed for regional cooperation. For the Europeans to situate such a framework in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership would seem logical. In practice, however, this framework for cooperation has not proven to be very effective, not least due to the obstacles resulting from the Arab-Israeli conflict.[5] Therefore, the Mediterranean Union's initiatives (de-pollution of the Mediterranean, maritime and land highways, civil protection, Mediterranean solar plan, Euro-Mediterranean University, Mediterranean business development initiative)[6] should be pushed forward with new impetus according to the principle of "variable geometry" – i.e. the approach that a certain

[3] European Commission/ High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean,* COM(2011) 200, Brussels, 8 March 2011 (http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/president/news/speeches-statements/pdf/20110308_de.pdf).

[4] Joint Communication by the High Representative For Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission, *A New Response to a Changing Neighborhood,* COM(2011) 303, Brussels, 25 May 2011 (http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com_11_303_de.pdf).

[5] Muriel Asseburg, "Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and protracted conflicts in the region: The Israeli-Palestinian predicament", in Muriel Asseburg and Paul Salem (eds.) *No Euro-Mediterranean Community without Peace,* Paris and Brussels, September 2009: EU Institute for Security Studies / European Institute for the Mediterranean IEMed, 10 Papers for Barcelona 2010, No. 1, pp.13-27.

[6] Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, *Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean*, Paris, 13 July 2008 (www.ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/ uploads/ 2010/11/ufm_paris_declaration1.pdf).

number of EMP partners can cooperate on projects in which they have a particular interest rather than all having to join in and approve each and every activity. Still, issues of representation and disputes concerning co-operation need to be resolved so that the Union can function effectively. Here, lack of progress with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict will remain an impediment – as it will, in more general terms, continue to reflect negatively on Western-Arab relations. Actually, the Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the policy areas in which Europeans urgently need to reconsider the usefulness of the close transatlantic cooperation that has been taking place in the framework of the so-called Middle East Quartet (United States, European Union, Russia, United Nations).[7]

SETTING PRIORITIES

In reaction to the changes in the region clear policy priorities should be set. In this sense, the United States and Europe should concentrate their cooperation on those states that have already set in motion a process of transformation. If political and economic transition in Tunisia and Egypt succeeds – which is by no means guaranteed – this will surely have a strong impact on other Arab countries and populations and encourage emulation.

Such a role model effect would be a much more effective driving force for reform in the region than policies of positive or negative conditioning, as propagated in the joint communications by the European Commission and the High Representative[8] or in the revision of the ENP[9]

[7] See the contribution by Khaled Elgindy in this volume.

[8] European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *A Partnership with the Southern Mediterranean*, *cit.*.

[9] According to the revised European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU intends to condition its support on the principle "more for more". The amount of financial aid and support for institution building, market access, European Investment Bank loans, and mobility shall not only depend on economic reform but also on political progress. Criteria for the latter are: free and fair elections, guaranteeing political freedoms, rule of law, countering corruption, security sector reform/democratic control of the security apparatus. The allocation of funds should then be based on annual progress reports that take these criteria into account.

– the reason being that it is very unlikely that regimes can be persuaded to undertake reforms that contradict their major aims (most notably their own survival). Certainly, reform projects can have a transformative effect, if to a limited degree, and there should be clear benchmarks for cooperation. However, experience from the last fifteen years of the EMP and the ENP clearly shows that political, economic and administrative reforms only have a tangible effect if they are owned and supported by partner countries' regimes, meaning that they see such reforms as being in their interests. Most reforms aiming at political and economic opening, more inclusive policies, making administrations more effective, etc., have not fallen into this category. In order to make the proposed conditionality effective in such cases, incentives would have to be strong (or sanctions tough) enough to decisively affect the cost-benefit calculations of rulers. Up until now, however, this has not been the case, as the experience with the ENP's governance facility exemplifies.[10] Incentives and sanctions have been negligible – and the implementation of policies rather contradictory. And even if the ENP revision now builds on the concept "more for more", this factor hardly looks like it will change in the future – not least due to geopolitical interests of EU member states, path dependencies of cooperation, unconditional aid from other sources (or aid with different, at times contradictory, conditions attached from other sources), as well as the resource wealth of some of the partner countries.

[10] Within the ENP the governance facility serves as an instrument to promote good governance. Funds are supposed to be allocated according to progress in this field. For the period 2007-2013 300 million euros were originally earmarked for the whole neighbourhood area. On average this amounts to some meagre 2.7 million euros per year and country – which is hardly an incentive. Also, to date, the allocation of the facility's funds has been opaque at the least. A European Commission evaluation for the first five years of the ENP (2004-2009) concludes that only limited progress was made in the field of good governance and recommends to sharpen the instrument and make it more effective. See European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Taking Stock of the European Neighbourhood Policy, COM(2010) 207, Brussels, 12 May 2010, esp. pp. 3ff and p. 14, (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0207:FIN:EN:PDF).

CONSIDERING LESSONS LEARNED IN DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

The Europeans have offered to support transition in Tunisia and Egypt through comprehensive and context-specific "transformation partnerships". G8 members have also pledged support.[11] The announced aid for judicial reforms, support of political parties, media training and the holding of elections is indeed useful. The same is true for plans to increase development cooperation and extend the activities of political foundations (as has been the case in Germany). In the context of democracy promotion though, lessons learned should be taken into due account. In the past, democracy promotion concentrated all too often on formal institutions and processes that had little to do with the political reality of the respective country. In the future, more attention therefore needs to be paid to which measures are suitable not only to transform formal institutions but also to make decision-making more accountable and inclusive.[12]

This is true, for instance, when it comes to election support. In general, too strong a focus on ballots should be avoided. For a transition to succeed, it is more important in the early phase to offer civic education (particularly in rural areas), as well as to foster the development of a consensus on basic values and state-society relations. It is also important to help the political formation and capacity-building of new actors, as well as alliance-building among them in order to compete with status quo forces. Amongst others, German political foundations are particularly well equipped to implement measures that can take effect beyond the capitals. However, this will only succeed if additional funding is made available in the mid-term to ensure sufficient staff for such programmes. Direct election support only makes sense if comprehensive political

[11] The G8 pledged 38 billion dollars for Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco for 2011-2013 in September 2011. "Meetings of G7 and G8 Finance Ministers", Press Release, 14 September 2011, (http://www.g20-g8.com/g8-g20/g8/english/news/news/meetings-of-g7-and-g8-finance-ministers.1451.html).

[12] See also Richard Youngs, *What Not to Do in the Middle East and North Africa*, FRIDE, March 2011, Policy Brief No. 70.

freedoms are guaranteed, the formation of parties is facilitated and equal opportunities exist, i.e., if all social and political forces have the chance to participate in the political process. Moreover, for elections to be of value, the decision-making power should in effect lie with the elected parliament and an accountable government. Only if these conditions are fulfilled is it reasonable to offer support for elections and election monitoring with international observers.[13] In this context, an idea circulated some years ago in the EMP could be revived: rather than having the Europeans and Americans deploy election monitors to give their stamp of approval to elections in the region, election monitoring should be on a mutual basis – as is the case in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Particularly important, but at the same time very delicate, are measures in the field of security sector reform (SSR).[14] In Tunisia and Egypt, for example, civil security forces have largely been discredited. The army, in turn, cannot – and should not – permanently assume the task of providing domestic order and security. Moreover, there is the danger that dismissed employees of, for instance, the state security services are contributing to disorder and chaos. Accordingly, it is sensible to support security sector reform in both countries. However, experience shows that international support in this field is most often limited to training and equipment provision, while the reform aspect is neglected.[15] SSR has to be unequivocally geared towards establishing security bodies that are democratically controlled, work on the basis of the rule of law and are aimed at the protection of human rights. This also means that SSR needs to be accompanied by a process that deals with former re-

[13] Otherwise the support of elections can, if anything, only contribute to a certain effect in the sense of civic education. It does not, though, lead to greater participation. In contrast, it bears the danger of legitimising the authoritarian system.

[14] For a helpful analysis see Yezid Sayigh, *Security Sector Reform in the Arab Region. Challenges to Developing an Indigenous Agenda*, The Arab Reform Initiative, December 2007, (http://arab-reform.net/IMG/pdf/Thematic_ Study_SSR_Yezid_Sayigh.pdf).

[15] See the respective contributions in Muriel Asseburg and Ronja Kempin (eds.), *The EU as a Strategic Actor in the Realm of Security and Defence?*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, December 2009 (SWP-Research Paper 14/2009), (http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2009_RP14_ass_kmp_ks.pdf).

gime injustices, through comprehensive constitutional and judicial reform as well as through a profound restructuring of the security apparatus, in particular of the secret services. Therefore, in countries in which authoritarian regimes continue to rule – or where the direction and path of reform remain unclear – the international community should refrain from SSR cooperation and from training measures for security forces. In such cases, there is a considerable danger that external help would stabilise repressive structures instead of opening them up to democratic reform. Human rights training for security forces does nothing to alter this, as long as hierarchies, competencies and responsibilities in the security sector remain ambiguous and as long as the security apparatus is not subject to democratic control. Rather, it would be consistent and rational for EU states to agree upon an EU code of conduct which would prohibit providing authoritarian regimes with weaponry (small arms in particular) and equipment for counter-insurgency or corresponding training. If such a code of conduct were adhered to by other players in the international community as well, that would, of course, be even better.

PRIORITY FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REFORM

The measures undertaken by many regimes in the region to calm down protests – such as wage increases and job guarantees in the public sector, more subsidies for basic commodities and even large-scale cash handouts – cannot be financed in the long run, in particular by resource-poor states. Comprehensive economic and social reforms are of decisive importance for the success of transformations. In many countries of the region, far reaching reforms are needed to establish the mechanisms of a social market economy geared towards improving the quality of life of the population, rather than being focused on privatisation and harmonisation with EU standards and regulations. Reform steps should thus be aimed in particular at employment-oriented growth, country-wide balanced development and sustainable social security systems.

This also implies restructuring subsidy and support systems while cushioning its social effects and only gradually reducing the public sec-

tor to avoid mass dismissals and de-industrialisation. For donor countries, this could imply temporarily funding subsidies and social services on the condition that local governments present corresponding reform programmes. This is especially pressing against the backdrop of a continuing trend of globally increasing food prices[16] which threaten to further impoverish lower income classes. Moreover, Europeans should offer a contribution to modernise labour law and assist in the formation of collective bargaining parties in the countries undergoing transformation. The importance of independent employee and employer unions and associations with democratic structures and corresponding competencies is paramount here. The private sector, in turn, can play an important role regarding the promotion of new standards of good corporate governance. US and European companies should set an example by speaking out against corruption in business life, adhering to transparency in their dealings with host states and applying social norms in an exemplary manner.

Aside from this, support for human development should be at the forefront of transatlantic support. Special consideration should lie with support for women, education and development in the countries' peripheries. Among other things, it is necessary to support the public education sector which has been neglected for decades. The fashionable notion of the "Facebook Generation" should not belie the high degree of illiteracy in many states in the region, the low share of women with secondary education, and the extent of poverty, especially in rural areas. Moreover, the European Union should intensify the Erasmus Mundus student exchange programme with Tunisia and Egypt and extend it to Libya in order to support higher education in these countries. This would also contribute to an intensification of exchange between European and Arab populations. Corresponding programmes should also be enhanced by the United States.

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[16] The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) expected food prices to increase significantly in the course of the year 2011. *FAO Makes New Warnings against Food Price Increases*, FAO Regional Office for the Near East, 10 May 2011, (http://neareast.fao.org/pages/NewsDetails.aspx?lang=EN&Cat=0&I=0&DId=0&CId=0&CMSId=21&id=2400257).

A PACT FOR LABOUR, EDUCATION AND ENERGY

The High Representative for EU Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, announced that Europeans would react to the changes in the region with three 'Ms': 'money, market access and mobility.'[17] In the papers presented since then, these three elements have, however, been lost in the detail. In the fields of mobility and market access, in particular, the concrete measures pledged by EU member states have been more than hesitant.[18] So far, Europe has neither made generous offers nor set strong incentives. Rather, it has focused on expanding its capabilities in fighting irregular migration by reinforcing FRONTEX, the Union's agency responsible for border control. It would be an important symbolic signal if the European Union were to facilitate market access, especially for agricultural and processed agricultural products from transformation countries, by reducing non-tariff trade barriers as well as subsidies for competing European products. Still, the immediate employment effects in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt would actually be minimal. More important would be a "pact for labour, education and energy", aimed at cooperation based on mutual interests between the European Union, Tunisia, Egypt and Libya (and in the future possibly additional transformation countries).[19] Such a pact should be at the forefront of future EU policy.

The pact should, first, contribute to the creation of vocational training positions and jobs on the ground. Second, graduates and new jobseekers in particular should have the chance to acquire practical expe-

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[17] Catherine Ashton, "What Next in North Africa?", *International Herald Tribune*, 18 March 2011, (www.nytimes.com/2011/03/19/opinion/19iht-edashton19.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=ashton+money+market+access+mobility&st=nyt).

[18] European Commission/ High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *A Partnership with the Southern Mediterranean*, *cit*; European Council, *Extraordinary European Council, Declaration*, CO EUR 5 CONCL 2, Brussels, 11 March 2011, (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/119780.pdf); European Council, *Conclusions*, CO EUR 6 CONCL 3, Brussels, 24-25 March 2011, (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/120296.pdf).

[19] See Volker Perthes, *A European Opening for the Arab World*, Project Syndicate, 2 May 2011, (http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/perthes8/English).

rience through traineeships and work residencies of several years in Europe. As part of this, mid-term 'mobility-partnerships' should be set up as proposed by the EU Commission.[20] Mobility should thereby be not only *regulated* but actively *promoted*. In the short run, this should be done by visa relaxations for trainees, students and business people. Moreover, measures are required that support the host and origin countries in facilitating the conditions for circular migration – in the sense of a development-oriented promotion of international mobility. This includes temporary tax exemption for entrepreneurs returning to their countries of origin, a facilitated portability and recognition of qualifications and skills, and investments in education of migrant children.[21] All this, however, cannot replace a long-term strategically oriented immigration policy deserving of this title. Both national and Europe-wide debate is urgently needed on a future-oriented policy to create a win-win situation for migration between the European Union and the Mediterranean.[22] Third, energy cooperation – or, more specifically, cooperation on renewable energy – between Europe and those countries undergoing transformation should be expanded as a priority issue. In this field, again, cooperation is of mutual interest. A basis has already been established in the context of the solar plan of the Mediterranean Union and with the so-called "Desertec Initiative".[23] Departing from the original

[20] European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, On circular migration and mobility partnerships between the European Union and third countries,* COM (2007) 248, Brussels, 16 May 2007, (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0248:FIN:EN:PDF).

[21] See Nathalie Tocci and Jean-Pierre Cassarino, *Rethinking the EU's Mediterranean Policies Post-1/11*, Istituto Affari Internazionali, March 2011 (IAI Working Papers, 11/06), p. 16, (www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iaiwp1106.pdf).

[22] For proposals on migration policy see also European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Council of Regions – Communication on Migration,* COM(2011) 248, Brussels, 4 May 2011, (http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/intro/docs/1_EN_ACT_part1_v11.pdf).

[23] See Isabelle Werenfels and Kerstin Westphal, *Solar Power from North Africa. Frameworks and Prospects*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, May 2010 (SWP-Research Paper 3/2010).

concept, however, the expansion of renewable energy supplies in the countries south of the Mediterranean should also benefit the power supply of southern partner countries themselves on a larger scale than previously planned. And in order to make the private sector involvement pay off, it needs to be supported politically much more than to date. After its nuclear phase-out, Germany seems to be particularly well positioned to assume a leadership role in this regard.

DEALING WITH STATES NOT YET ON A PATH OF TRANSFORMATION

The possibilities of inducing comprehensive change from outside are limited. For the time being, transatlantic partners should thus opt for two approaches towards those countries in which the old regimes remain in power. First, they should continue or rather expand their efforts to promote exchange and cooperation on the societal level. The Civil Society Facility and the European Endowment for Democracy, both to be established in the framework of the revised ENP, could contribute to this objective. Still, their concrete value-added needs to be clarified. Also, it is important that Europeans and Americans cooperate not only with organised civil society or those actors who are clearly pro-Western. They should be as inclusive as possible and involve representatives of all relevant political and societal forces in their activities. Second, the United States and EU member states should take a firm stand against human rights violations. Moreover, the human rights dialogue that is part of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership should not be delegated to subcommittees, but held on the highest political level. This is a policy area where coordination is of the utmost importance. Above all one can achieve the greatest effect if identical signals come from Washington, Brussels, EU capitals and Ankara. By contrast, military interventions, as in Libya, have to remain the exception.

To sum up, the Europeans and Americans should coordinate their efforts to support political and economic transformation in Arab countries rather than set up new and potentially inflexible and ineffective frameworks of transatlantic cooperation for this endeavour. They should adopt

country-specific approaches that focus, above all, on supporting economic and social reform and employment-oriented economic growth. A pact for labour, education and energy is one element that the Europeans could employ in such an approach.

The United States and the European Union should also take on board lessons learned from earlier efforts at democracy promotion, in particular with regard to election support and security sector reform. In doing so, they should strongly prioritise supporting those countries that have already embarked on a path of transformation rather than trying to induce comprehensive change from outside in countries where authoritarian regimes remain in place. Successful transformation in states such as Tunisia and Egypt will have a role model effect that could be a much more effective driving force for reform in the region than policies of positive or negative conditionality. With regard to those countries in which authoritarian regimes continue to govern, principled and coordinated stances on human rights should become the rule rather than the exception, the provision of weaponry and equipment for counter-insurgency and corresponding training should be prohibited and serious efforts at expanding exchange and cooperation on the societal level between America, Europe and Arab countries should be made.

Appendix
Report of the Transatlantic Security Symposium 2011

Miguel Haubrich-Seco

The upheavals in many states of the Arab world have shaken the grounds that long upheld regimes that have either lost power, have been pushed into reforms or are still fortressing against change. The uprisings have also laid bare the unsustainability of the West's approach to the region. With stability at the very top of their agendas, the transatlantic partners too often gave preference to authoritarian regimes and neglected opposition and civil society. The result is that they placed their bets on the wrong actors for many years. Now confronted with unexpected revolutionary changes in both North Africa and the Middle East, the United States and the European Union urgently need to reformulate their approaches to the Arab world.

The 2011 edition of the Transatlantic Security Symposium aimed at discussing the potential for cooperation between the Western partners when dealing with the region. The Symposium gathered experts and policy-makers from both the United States and the European Union, as well as from Southern Mediterranean countries, allowing for a fruitful exchange between separate communities of experts and policy-makers.

The meeting was made possible by the generous contributions of the Compagnia di San Paolo, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Robert-Bosch-Stiftung and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The event took place at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 12 September 2011.

THE WEST AND THE ARAB SPRING: ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE, EMBRACING THE CHANGE

Symposium participants stressed that Western governments have understood that the changes taking place across the Arab world are not just an ephemeral appearance but are of epochal importance for the region. Although the West did not see the changes coming – partly because of its strong emphasis on securing stability and its subsequent involvement in supporting the *anciens régimes*, the authoritarian regimes that ruled the region for decades – it has now realised that the uprisings have dramatically reshuffled the conditions on the ground and that the era of stability-oriented support for authoritarian rulers is over.

It was emphasised that the West is at risk of applying worn out and unfitting transition concepts in its new approach to the Arab states. Caught by surprise by the developments in Tunisia and Egypt, and not knowing in what direction developments are heading, Western governments are inclined to try to fit the Arab Spring into the mould of past experiences. Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan, Latin America and Eastern Europe have all been singled out as possible models for the post-revolutionary development of Arab countries. Most participants agreed that applying such models, well known to experts from the United States and the European Union, could result in the misreading of the differences in the context and political dynamics on the ground.

Most participants agreed on the crucial importance of economic recovery and reform in order to provide a stable basis on which democracy can flourish. Lack of opportunities, high social disparities and the economic distress suffered especially by the young generations were all mentioned as key factors triggering the revolutions. It was contended that, as in the case of political reforms, the West should avoid applying familiar but not always correct templates when offering help and advice on economic reform. Examples from Eastern European transformations are already doing the rounds among the Western policy community. Yet many participants pointed out that liberalisation of markets is not necessarily the best policy to choose. Many of the countries involved in the Arab Spring already underwent free market-oriented reforms under their tyrannical rulers. These reforms ended up putting formerly state-

led economies under the domination of small elites connected to the ruling regimes. Therefore, some participants argued that promoting social policies and redistribution would be a more effective way of meeting the protesters' demands. Economic reform was deemed as one policy area in which Europe could contribute with its experience and its tradition of state-provided welfare. However, several participants doubted that the European Union would be able to actively engage in this area due to its lack of resources. At any rate, participants agreed that overlooking the economic side of transformation would put the whole political process at grave risk of backlash.

In a time in which the United States seems more cautious about engaging in international affairs and the United States and the European Union are facing severe financial constraints, the discussion of both the will and the means of Western governments to engage with the Arab world played a prominent role at the Symposium. First brought up for discussion was whether the West even has the will to engage more actively. As one participant argued, the resolve of Western governments might indeed be less firm than in previous times, as strong external engagement is generally more difficult to sell at home in times of crises. Other participants further argued that there are a number of reasons that could make engaging in reforms in the Arab world more and more difficult for the West. Local actors might reject Western attempts at assisting change, as this could be perceived as interference. Adding to this, a participant from the region noted that the uprisings were not directed only against despotic governments but also against their backing by Western actors. According to several participants, the same risks could apply to stronger involvement of Western civil societies, for which a cautious approach was suggested. This "soft-hand" approach is also valued because it would diminish the risk of dispute with the new governments in office, which are generally expected to take policy positions in the economic as well as the political and security fields not fully in sync with the West's. Opposition to free markets on the economic side, and hostility towards Israel on the political side, were singled out as the main cases in point. In addition to this, some participants noted that the room for deep reforms in the countries of the Arab Spring should not be expected to be particularly big, as new governance solutions will often

have to be agreed upon between new actors and those of the *anciens régimes*. One participant noted that these complicated conditions might, in the worst case, even lead Western governments to restrain from engaging in the region at all.

The concern was raised that the peacefulness of regime changes in Egypt and Tunisia should not be seen as a pattern for the rest of the Arab world. Rather than models, Egypt and Tunisia have been outliers because the regimes there failed to secure support from the military and/or security services. When they were able to do so, as in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, the uprisings have turned violent. Some experts, therefore, raised the concern that the West should be prepared to engage in full-fledged post-conflict reconstruction in violent contexts.

US RESPONSES TO THE ARAB UPHEAVALS: CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

While the United States has provided an important push in specific moments – such as during the toppling of President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt – according to most participants it is adopting a rather cautious approach in embracing the Arab uprisings. As noted by one participant, the United States had come up with neither a new diagnosis nor a new long-term strategy. One participant expressed the opinion that US President Barack Obama's profile with regard to the matter has been modest, and drew attention to the fact that most statements on the Arab uprisings have been made by lower-level spokespersons of the administration. In this context, it was argued that the United States runs the risk of falling into adopting a doctrine of restraint. By sticking to such a timid approach, a participant argued, the United States is losing the opportunity to invest in the de-securitisation of its relations with the Arab world. Washington, so the argument went, will incur severe opportunity costs because investing in long-term development and democratisation would allow it to reduce military costs precisely in that region of the world that has accounted for most of the United States' military expenditure.

On the other hand, many participants adhered to the idea that an overly active United States could, at best, have no positive effect and, at

worst, exacerbate the situation. It was argued that the United States should reformulate its approach towards the region pursuing the *leit-motiv* that the new governments and their populations wanted to be treated as partners and not clients. The uprisings have shown that Arab public opinion does matter and that US influence is limited – at least in the short run. In this context, it was further argued that the United States should refrain from the temptation of selecting its favourite candidates for government in the elections in Egypt and Tunisia in advance, assuming it could even do so (which many doubted). A participant from the region added that US restraint was also necessary because of the prevailing perception in the Arab public opinion that the United States is mainly interested in securing energy supplies and in protecting Israel. Any local actor backed by the United States would therefore lose support, while visible US engagement could give anti-Western political forces the upper hand in the forthcoming political debates in the countries of the region.

The reasons behind the US stance on the Arab Spring were widely discussed during the conference. Discussion crystallised around two different views. Some participants stressed that US restraint derives from the acknowledgement that its leverage in the region – especially after the fall of the Egyptian government – is limited. Others, instead, insisted on domestic constraints. It was argued that US foreign policy towards the region is increasingly influenced by the Department of Defence rather than the Department of State. Policy, therefore, suffers from an over-reliance on military means or at least from a narrow security-driven perspective. Other constraints were also mentioned, in particular the concern that Islamism might come out as the winner of the uprising, but also the powerful lobbying by Israel and Saudi Arabia, two countries that for different reasons do not look favourably upon changes in their geopolitical context. Some participants contended that US policy towards the region would remain indecisive as long as the influence of Israeli positions on US policy-making remains as strong as it is today.

Several participants contended that the United States should not necessarily reduce its engagement in the region, but definitely change its approach. They argued that, after decades of security-oriented cooperation and engagement, the time has come for a broader, de-securitised

agenda. Such a broader agenda should include increased support for democratisation and a strong financial engagement mirroring the experience of the Marshall Plan. Two main arguments were advanced to back this strategy. The first was that without a strong economic boost to alleviate the severe social and economic shortcomings that contributed to triggering the uprisings, the nascent Arab democracies will be at risk of failure. The second argument was that de-securitisation would in the long-term reduce the considerable burden of the United States' security-related financial and military involvement in the region. This proposal did not however find unanimous backing among the participants. It was contended that such a strategy still reflected a logic of treating the region as a set of US clients. If the United States really wants to play a supportive role in the democratisation of the region, it should listen instead to local political initiatives. Another participant pointed to a narrower but still ambitious agenda for the United States in the region: by guaranteeing free communication and engaging in institution-building, the United States could provide help in building the social-political fabric necessary for developing democracy.

Most participants – both from the West and from the Southern Mediterranean – agreed that the United States has committed too many mistakes in its approach to the region. The United States has too often failed to deliver what it has promised, most notably in supporting democratic reform and contributing to ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, thereby worsening its stand among the Arab public. In order to improve its public perception, it was argued that the United States should treat the countries that have undergone a revolution as partners and not clients. In this regard, it was noted that Qatar and Turkey had been able to play a rather constructive and effective role precisely because they have engaged these countries on an equal footing, making plain the advantages of pursuing regional ownership of the most critical issues.

Participants agreed that the Arab Spring would certainly have a lasting impact on the regional picture. One participant argued that the US strategy of isolating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the rest of the region is now going to be challenged more than ever. The new governments, especially if accountable to their peoples, will certainly claim a more active role in the peace process. This probable striving for a great-

er role, in particular by Egypt, can nevertheless be seen as an opportunity. Some participants maintained that it would deprive the Arab governments of a pretext for instrumentalising the situation in Palestine to their own advantage. Instead of just criticising the status quo (while not doing anything to solve it), post-revolutionary governments were going to be called on to bring forward some feasible ideas, and to deliver on their promises of supporting the Palestinians. It was nevertheless noted that such a development can not be expected during times of transition, but only in the longer term. In this context, a participant encouraged the United States to foster Arab self-responsibility and drew parallels to Latin America, where most states now refrain from blaming the United States for their problems.

Participants discussed with special emphasis Israel's role in its changed neighbourhood and the effects of the Arab Spring on its foreign policy. Several participants questioned that the 1978 Camp David peace accords between Israel and Egypt can remain the framework through which the United States acts as a guardian of relations between its two allies. While peace between Egypt and Israel was not seen as being in danger, several participants stressed that a new strategic framework will have to be found to give Egypt the room it will most probably claim to pursue its aspirations as a regional power. In this regard, it was noted that the assault on the Israeli embassy in Cairo in September 2011 was condemned by Egyptian mainstream commentators as well as by the Muslim Brotherhood. A participant further underlined that the Arab Spring provides a window of opportunity for Israel to adopt a more constructive role towards some of its Arab neighbours. Participants also discussed how far the US administration can exert influence on the management of the conflict, and concluded that the prospects are rather modest as Israel's influence on US foreign policy is currently higher than the other way round. It was nevertheless also contended that there have already been some changes in Israel's approach to its neighbours, for example in its relationship with Qatar, with which it has established a more constructive relationship since the upheavals.

EU RESPONSE TO THE ARAB UPHEAVALS: CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Consensus was reached among participants that the European approach towards the Arab world has suffered from an obstinate pursuit of stability rather than other objectives. The will to back the stable incumbent regimes as the "lesser evil" in order to secure energy supplies, reduce migration to Europe, contain Islamist political forces and prevent terrorism has apparently rendered other EU policy objectives, most prominently democratisation and good governance, unattainable. Participants from the region agreed that the European Union's focus on security has severely harmed the perception of the European Union as a trustworthy partner and will continue to harm it if security remains as high on the European agenda as before. It was therefore suggested that both the European Union and other Western partners should in the future pursue a policy oriented towards long-term sustainability rather than short-term stability. Such an agenda for state sustainability has to start from the reasoning that stability and democracy are two mutually reinforcing elements.

The heterogeneous and more fragmented character of the region was identified as one of the main challenges for future European engagement in the region. While the European Union has so far pursued a relatively homogenous approach in its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), it will now have to tailor its action to at least three likely developments in the region. Some states, most probably Egypt and Tunisia, will embark on a transition towards more open regimes while probably including parts of the *anciens régimes.* In other cases, such as Morocco, the scenario of top-down reform is the most likely, while in cases such as Libya a complete overturn with a strong need for institution-building is the likeliest development. The situation in Syria, where the uprisings are being violently suppressed, does not qualify at the moment for a long-term EU engagement, but warrants a more focused response to isolate the Syrian regime while empowering the protesters.

A lively debate emerged on the effectiveness of conditionality, by which the European Union offers improvements in its bilateral relationship with ENP countries in exchange for political and economic reforms

or, alternatively, threatens to withhold or withdraw such benefits if the recipient country backtracks on reform. Discussion involved both positive and negative assessments of conditionality, and emphasised three main points. It was first argued that conditionality has not been effective because of its design. Proponents of this reading stressed that the conditionality upheld by the European Union often lacks clear benchmarks and has not been sufficiently brought to bear by the European Union during implementation. Regarding these shortcomings, several participants argued that conditionality would be more successful if it were tied to widely accepted norms such as human rights. Benchmarks going beyond international law always risk being perceived as illegitimate interference and therefore subject to politicisation. A second strand of the discussion highlighted that the shortcomings of conditionality are a matter not only of design but also of a lack of political will on the part of the European Union. Since the leverage of accession is not available to countries in the Southern Mediterranean, the European Union has to offer other meaningful incentives to exert influence in the region. Opening up to migration was considered a powerful incentive the European Union could offer. The focus on enhanced mobility for certain groups of persons (students, businessmen, women, etc.) in the new ENP proposal therefore aims in the right direction, but participants generally shared the view that this is still only a small improvement. Finally, a participant from the Southern Mediterranean maintained that conditionality was an important instrument in the context of transition. While the participant acknowledged that conditionality has failed to promote democracy and effective reforms in the last years and has also provided a recurring point of criticism regarding the European Union's apparent "neo-colonialism", he was confident that conditionality could in the new context avoid a fallback to authoritarianism by increasing the payout for successful reforms.

During the discussion, three main shortcomings of the revamped ENP were identified: its still strong emphasis on security, its vagueness especially as to conditionality and a certain logic of insularity by which the European Union does not take account of the importance of both old and new foreign actors in the region (such as the United States, Turkey, the Gulf Cooperation Council member states and resurging and emerging powers like Russia and China). Despite these shortcomings, several par-

ticipants welcomed the fact that the upgraded ENP also stresses the need to include incentives for the Southern Mediterranean states, mainly in the areas of trade and migration. Still, it was argued that both incentives would require adjustment to the realities on the ground. Offering trade agreements that involve the adoption of parts of the cumbersome EU *acquis* in trade matters or limiting migratory access for restricted groups of citizens to circular migration, while requiring stronger border controls and readmission agreements, was seen as an imbalanced offer.

Most participants noted positively though that the European Union has put an emphasis on strengthening civil society in the Southern Mediterranean countries. If the European Union continues to attach strict limits to its most attractive incentives such as market access and migration, engaging with civil society can at least provide more room for positively influencing democratisation processes in the region, it was argued. One participant said that a strengthened civil society could increase the European Union's leverage by creating a context that supports and controls the adherence to EU conditionality. It nevertheless remained disputed how, precisely, relations with local civil society should be conducted. While one participant suggested that civil society should have an institutionalised role in the bodies overseeing association agreements between the European Union and Mediterranean states, others warned that an institutionalised approach could backfire. They expressed the concern that such an approach could favour those parts of civil society that had been co-opted by the former regimes, as they were often the only sufficiently institutionalised actors. These participants warned about underestimating the heterogeneity of Arab civil society and added that an overly active approach could do more harm than good if perceived or portrayed as interference in favour of certain factions of society.

As a result of the ongoing fighting and violent repression by the state in Syria, some of the discussion time was devoted to analysis of the events in Syria and the way the European Union has reacted to them. Despite calls for stronger engagement directed at both the European Union and the United States, it was argued that the West's reaction has not been so bad after all, given the circumstances. Since the protesters were

debating whether or not to carry arms, stronger external engagement might both encourage the demonstrators to arm themselves and give the government an excuse to react with still more violence. Given these conditions and Syria's relationship with Iran and Hezbollah, EU sanctions as well as political pressure aimed at pushing the Syrian government into accepting the Arab League's peace initiative for the Middle East conflict were said to be positive steps. It was recalled that the Syrian government did not accept the Arab League plan because it still felt that it was in a strong position. One participant contended that only if and when the regime fell, should the European Union pursue a more assertive stance and push for democratisation. Otherwise it would do more harm than good.

COORDINATING TRANSATLANTIC RESPONSE TO THE ARAB UPRISING

The Quartet for the Middle East Peace Process, involving the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and Russia, was discussed as a prominent example of transatlantic coordination in the region. It was argued that, since the United States and the European Union are by far the Quartet's most important actors, assessing its performance makes it possible to draw some conclusions about transatlantic coordination in the region. One participant held three main factors accountable for the Quartet's lack of impact on the Middle East Peace Process. First, its informal and loose structure allowed individual Quartet members to ignore the decisions of the group if they were inconvenient. Second, the imbalance in power inherent in the Quartet also meant that US-backed policies were often the ones the Quartet adhered to as a whole. Finally, the lack of overall consensus among the Quartet members led to its work being limited to areas in which consensus existed (e.g. the strengthening of Palestinian institutions), thereby leaving aside the most complicated and intractable issues (e.g. mediation between Israel and Palestine). Drawing from these observations, it was argued that a cooperation group like the Quartet, in which one member is much more important than the other(s), always runs the risk of being

either ignored or manipulated by the strongest party. The bottom line was that, since the Quartet could not express itself but on the issues to which the United States agreed, it actually served as little more than an amplifier of the US voice. Several participants drew a rather pragmatic lesson from this: no consensus at all among the Quartet partners was a better outcome than an artificial consensus not backed by action.

Cooperation based on a division of tasks between the United States and the European Union was considered by some participants as the right approach for combining their respective policy strengths. It was argued that such an approach would make it possible to profit from the European Union's still more positive public perception in the region. By pursuing flexible cooperation, the European Union and the United States would leave room for engaging regional partners, especially Turkey, in their effort. Adapting to the specific needs of the individual countries and local realities would also reduce the danger of transatlantic coordination being portrayed in terms of an "imperialist" or "neo-colonialist" grand strategy for the region and increase the ownership of the reforms and policies promoted.

The question of whether the European Union should play a more autonomous role in certain instances was debated extensively. The issue was most prominently discussed in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Most participants agreed that the European Union should carve out some room for action independent of the United States, in particular concerning the demand on Israel to take some concrete steps facilitating the resumption of talks – a demand that the Obama administration first made but then failed to uphold. Several participants argued, however, that it is more probable that a break would occur within the European Union than between the European Union and the United States. They recalled that the stance of several European countries on the Middle East conflict hinges on their wish to keep up good relations with the United States, a more important strategic goal for them than devising potential solutions to the Middle East conflict upon which the United States would not look favourably.

The growing role of Turkey in the region was repeatedly recalled throughout the discussions. This was generally acknowledged as a chal-

lenge for the transatlantic partners, as part of Turkey's renewed protagonism stems from its position on several critical issues in the area, ranging from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to relations with Iran, which are not in sync with the West's. Several participants maintained that ignoring Turkey is not an option, as it will not only lead to tensions, but also limit, perhaps severely, the leverage of the transatlantic partners in the region. Another participant argued that the more assertive foreign policy of Gulf Cooperation Council countries, notably Saudi Arabia and Qatar, should also be factored into the transatlantic strategic re-thinking on the Mediterranean and Middle East region.

Several participants argued that in countries in which the military played a leading role, it was now of the utmost importance to engage in security sector reforms, gradually putting the armed forces under civilian control. This was identified as an area for coordination between the transatlantic partners and countries in the region, including in the framework of NATO's initiatives of cooperation with the Mediterranean and Gulf countries (the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, respectively).

During the discussion it was argued that, despite the virtues of pursuing a division of labour between the European Union and the United States, the upholding of human rights was an area in which the transatlantic partners could achieve the most if they conveyed the same messages to the region, ideally not only from the European Union and the United States together, but also from Turkey. Otherwise, and taking into account the transatlantic partners' poor record on the matter in the last years, an ambiguous or vague message in this sensitive area could easily be perceived by governments in the region as a matter open to bargaining.

CONCLUSIONS

Although dealing with a still evolving issue of immediate topicality, the *Transatlantic Security Symposium 2011* provided analysis and specific strategic proposals drawn from the experience and intellectual proficiency of experts from three areas of the world: the United States, Europe and the Southern Mediterranean.

Conclusions of the discussion can be summed up along three broad lines:

1. Several gaps in the Western view and approach towards the Arab uprisings were uncovered:
   a. It was questioned whether Egypt and Tunisia can be seen as models for the rest of the Arab world because of the peaceful character of their revolutions. Uprisings in other states of the region have run a much higher risk of drifting into violence or have already done so, as shown by the case of Bahrain, Libya, Syria and Yemen.
   b. Western-like democracies were not deemed to be the most probable outcomes of the ongoing transition processes in Egypt, Tunisia or Libya (or elsewhere). In fact, doubts were raised as to whether this should be seen as a problem, as safeguarding the endogenous nature of Arab democratisation, with all its specificities and diverging standards compared to those of the West, is considered a key element in ensuring the Arab Spring's success. In most cases, transition will have to involve arrangements between the new political actors of the uprisings and elements of the old regimes. In order to allow these processes to yield sustainable results, the West should avoid promoting certain models of transition, supporting instead the creation of the conditions for competition between diverse political proposals. Specific support to certain actors because of their ideas on foreign policy or political and social values might be perceived as interference and could do those very actors more harm than good.
   c. Economic support to the region is of paramount importance, as is not adopting pre-fixed economic schemes as a one-size-fits-all recipe. In particular, free-market solutions, such as privatisation of state assets, should be applied with prudence, with a view to avoiding economic shocks and the excessive concentration of wealth in the hands of a few people. The lack of opportunities and the social disparities that contributed to triggering the uprisings in countries such as Tunisia or Egypt needed to be addressed first.
2. It became clear that the United States' approach to the region needs to be reformulated.

a. While it remained a disputed question whether the United States should adopt a more active stance on the region or, on the contrary, stick to its lower-profile approach, most participants agreed that the United States has to reformulate its regional strategy factoring in all implications of the Arab Spring. Proponents of more active engagement maintained that this provides an opportunity for de-securitising US relations with the region in the medium term by investing in democratisation and stepping up non-military financial support. Proponents of a more prudent approach stressed that political sustainability can only be reached by leaving enough room for local ownership.
b. The United States should avoid the temptation of "picking" or influencing specific political groups during the transition processes. In order to avoid radicalisation, US (and EU) support should concentrate on creating the enabling conditions for a peaceful political competition. Stressing ownership with long-term political sustainability in mind was deemed more important than achieving short-term political objectives, if this puts the sustainability of the democratic transitions at risk.
c. The United States would should accept increased activity not only by the European Union, but also by local governments, in regional matters. In the coming months, and especially if accountable to their peoples, governments in the region will claim a more active role in dealing with local conflicts, most notably the Israeli-Palestinian one. The United States should try to orient regional ownership towards proposing balanced solutions. It should also look more favourably upon instances in which the European Union holds views different from its own, in particular when artificial transatlantic unity risks turning into diplomatic paralysis (again, the main case in point is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and more specifically the attitude towards Israel). Other regional powers, such as Turkey and the Gulf states, will also have to be involved if long-term sustainability in the region is to be achieved.

3. The short-term and stability-driven strategy of the European Union towards the region has to evolve into an EU agenda for long-term sustainability.

a. The European Union's focus on secure energy supplies, stricter migration controls, and cooperation in the fight against Islamist militants – in other words, the rationale behind its support for the authoritarian regimes – has proved to be short-sighted. In the future, the European Union should pursue a less securitised agenda and offer incentives, especially in the areas of migration and agriculture trade, in order to boost the momentum for political reform in countries undergoing political transition.
b. Conditionality was generally regarded as much less effective than planned, undermined as it was by the scarce appeal of the incentives put on the table and by the greater urgency EU countries attached to other issues. Participants agreed that conditionality can only work if tied to appealing offers, including significant trade and migration incentives, and if its benchmarks are spelled out more clearly. Negative conditionality – that is, withholding or withdrawing benefits – was also considered a policy option on which the European Union should show greater resolve.
c. Supporting civil society could prove a promising initiative to avoid the pitfalls of the past and contribute to the development of political cultures with a long-term effect on political sustainability in the region.

Finally, some lessons can be drawn on transatlantic coordination in response to the Arab uprisings:

- Coordination in the future should be decided on the basis of appropriateness, rather than as an end in itself. The NATO operation in Libya was identified as the only really coordinated transatlantic action in the region. All participants agreed that the potential for transatlantic coordination was wider, for instance in upholding human rights or in jointly dealing with Turkey. It was also argued that there are many areas in which the transatlantic partners should engage separately in order to make use of their respective strengths and reputations.

As the Middle East conflict cannot be insulated from the fate of the region, transatlantic coordination in this area is essential in ensuring a sustainable solution to the conflict and contributing to the long-term

stabilisation of the whole region. But also here, a broad understanding of coordination was upheld allowing for different but complementary approaches by the transatlantic partners.

Conference Agenda

Welcome address:	Stefano Silvestri, President, IAI, Rome Pierfrancesco Sacco, Head, Analysis and Programming Unit, MFA, Rome
Introduction:	Riccardo Alcaro, Researcher, Transatlantic Programme, IAI, Rome

Keynote Speech

The West and the Arab Spring: Accepting the Challenge, Embracing the Change

Chair:	Ettore Greco, Director, IAI, Rome
Speaker:	Steve Heydemann, Senior Vice President, Grants Programme, USIP, Washington, DC

Q&A session

First roundtable

US Response to the Arab Upheavals: Challenges and Priorities

Chair:	Richard Youngs, Director General, FRIDE, Madrid
Paper-givers:	Robert Springborg, Professor, Department of National Security Affairs, Naval Postgraduate

School, Monterey (CA)
Issandr El Amrani, freelance journalist (former Crisis Group staff member), Cairo

Discussants: Hassan Nafaa, Professor of Political Science, Cairo University
Raffaella Del Sarto, Pears Fellow in Israel and Mediterranean Studies Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford University, and Adjunct Professor, SAIS Bologna Center, Johns Hopkins University.

OPEN DEBATE

Keynote speech by NATO representative

Rolf Schwarz, Political Officer, MD & ICI countries section, Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, NATO

14.15-16:00 Second Roundtable

EU Response to the Arab Upheavals: Challenges and Priorities

Chair: Michael Wahid Hanna, Fellow and Program Officer, The Century Foundation, New York

Paper-givers: Silvia Colombo, Researcher, Mediterranean and Middle East Programme, IAI, Rome
Ahmed Driss, Director, CEMI, Tunis

Discussants: Daniel Levy, Senior Research Fellow, American Strategy Program, Co-Director, Middle East Task Force, New America Foundation, Washington, DC

OPEN DEBATE

Third Roundtable

Coordinating Transatlantic Response to the Arab Uprising

Chair:	Roberto Aliboni, Scientific Advisor, IAI, Rome
Paper-givers:	Khaled Elgindy, Visiting Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution, Washington, DC Muriel Asseburg, Head, Research Division Middle East and Africa, SWP, Berlin Ashraf Kishk, Head, Diplomatic Center for Strategic Studies, Cairo Branch
Discussants:	Soli Özel, Lecturer of International Relations, Kadir Has University, Istanbul Yossi Alpher, Co-editor, Bitter Lemons, Tel Aviv

OPEN DEBATE

Final remarks	Fabrizio Colaceci, Head, NATO Unit, MFA, Rome

Finito di stampare nel mese di febbraio 2012
con tecnologia *print on demand*
presso il Centro Stampa "*Nuova Cultura*"
p.le Aldo Moro n. 5, 00185 Roma
www.nuovacultura.it

per ordini: ordini@nuovacultura.it

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The final outcome of the wave of anti-authoritarian protests in several countries of North Africa and the Middle East, which have come to be known as the Arab Spring, remains uncertain. The Arab Spring might turn into summer if popular demonstrations succeed in establishing democracy; or it can backtrack to winter, if counter-revolutionary forces resist change. Nonetheless, the Arab world will look quite different from what it was prior to the revolts. Accordingly, external actors, and particularly the US and the EU, have had, and will continue to have, to adjust. So far the West's response to the Arab Spring has been ambivalent. On the one hand, the West finds it hard not to sympathise with the demands of the 'Arab street': an end to authoritarian and arbitrary rule, popular representation, rule of law, social justice, an end to corruption. On the other hand, Western countries are wary of the potential outcome of revolutionary change in the Arab world, since it might evolve into a system of regional relations less compatible with its preferences than it used to be in the past. Collecting the differing views of experts from the US, the EU and Arab countries, this volume intends to contribute to the international debate concerning the West's approach to the epochal change occurring across the Mediterranean.

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ISBN 978-88-6134-778-6