



MEDITERRANEAN PAPER SERIES 2012

**A TRANSATLANTIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE EUROPEAN  
UNION AND THE UNITED STATES IN NORTH AFRICA  
STRATEGIC TRANSITIONS, PERCEPTIONS, AND POLICY RESPONSES**

Roberto Aliboni

**G | M | F** The German Marshall Fund  
of the United States  
STRENGTHENING TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION

 **IAI**  
*Istituto Affari Internazionali*

© 2012 The German Marshall Fund of the United States. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF). Please direct inquiries to:

The German Marshall Fund of the United States  
1744 R Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
T 1 202 683 2650  
F 1 202 265 1662  
E [info@gmfus.org](mailto:info@gmfus.org)

#### **GMF Paper Series**

The GMF Paper Series presents research on a variety of transatlantic topics by staff, fellows, and partners of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of GMF. Comments from readers are welcome; reply to the mailing address above or by e-mail to [info@gmfus.org](mailto:info@gmfus.org).

#### **About GMF**

The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) strengthens transatlantic cooperation on regional, national, and global challenges and opportunities in the spirit of the Marshall Plan. GMF does this by supporting individuals and institutions working in the transatlantic sphere, by convening leaders and members of the policy and business communities, by contributing research and analysis on transatlantic topics, and by providing exchange opportunities to foster renewed commitment to the transatlantic relationship. In addition, GMF supports a number of initiatives to strengthen democracies. Founded in 1972 as a non-partisan, non-profit organization through a gift from Germany as a permanent memorial to Marshall Plan assistance, GMF maintains a strong presence on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition to its headquarters in Washington, DC, GMF has offices in Berlin, Paris, Brussels, Belgrade, Ankara, Bucharest, Warsaw, and Tunis. GMF also has smaller representations in Bratislava, Turin, and Stockholm.

#### **About the Mediterranean Policy Program**

The Mediterranean Policy Program promotes transatlantic analysis and dialogue on issues affecting Southern Europe, North Africa, the Levant, and the Mediterranean basin. Priority areas include: understanding trends in Mediterranean societies; exploring opportunities for south-south cooperation and integration; research on key functional issues affecting Mediterranean security and development; and strengthening the North American policy debate on the region and transatlantic cooperation on Mediterranean strategy.

#### **About Istituto Affari Internazionali**

The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), founded by Altiero Spinelli in 1965, does research in the fields of foreign policy, political economics, and international security. A non-profit organization, the IAI aims to disseminate knowledge through research studies, conferences, and publications. To that end, it cooperates with other research institutes, universities, and foundations in Italy and abroad and is a member of various international networks. More specifically, the main research sectors are European institutions and policies, Italian foreign policy, trends in the global economy and internationalization processes in Italy, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, defense economy and policy, and transatlantic relations. The IAI puts out an English-language quarterly (*The International Spectator*), an online webzine (*Affari Internazionali*), a series of research papers (Quaderni IAI) and an Italian foreign policy yearbook (*La Politica Estera dell'Italia*).

Cover photo: The flags of Tunisia, Libya, and (in the background, right side) Egypt fly at a crowded demonstration in Tahrir Square on February 25, 2011. © Joel Carillet

A TRANSATLANTIC PERSPECTIVE  
ON THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED STATES  
IN NORTH AFRICA

STRATEGIC TRANSITIONS, PERCEPTIONS,  
AND POLICY RESPONSES

MEDITERRANEAN PAPER SERIES

DECEMBER 2012

Roberto Aliboni<sup>1</sup>

Executive Summary . . . . .	iii
Introduction . . . . .	1
The Euro-U.S. Allies and Arab Change in North Africa . . . . .	3
U.S. and European Policy Responses to the Arab Spring . . . . .	13
Perceptions and Objectives . . . . .	19
Policy Recommendations . . . . .	42

---

<sup>1</sup> Scientific advisor, Mediterranean and Middle East Programme, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper examines the transatlantic allies' perceptions, interests, and policy responses with respect to the democratic transitions in North Africa in the context of the changes taking place in the wider Middle East and North Africa area. The aim is to analyze their ability and willingness to help turn the transition countries into democracies and establish constructive international relations with them.

The paper starts with a general section illustrating findings and conclusions. It then presents a series of issues that provide an analytical background to the first general section. U.S. and European policy responses to the Arab Spring are surveyed, before being analyzed as to how their perceptions, objectives, and interests are shaping their responses. Several security challenges in the post-Arab Spring region are explored. A final section sets out some policy recommendations.

The main conclusion of the paper is that, while the Islamist majority parties initially displayed a clear propensity toward pluralism and centrism, after a year and a half they seem to have dropped this consociational path and are tending to govern alone, partly because secularists are increasingly rejecting any Islamist governance (and even pursuing reactionary paths, as in Egypt), and partly because the centrists are trying to appease the more conservative Islamist wings, which, prompted by the secularists' polarization, have strengthened. In this framework, the recommendation to the transatlantic allies is to avoid the temptation to disengage. Instead, they should gear up their engagement and make it more visible and credible by reconsidering the policies pursued so far and adjusting them to the evolving realities.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

After almost two years, revolutionary transitions to democracy are observable only in the three North African countries in which long-standing regimes were toppled, and even there, there are difficult and unpredictable results.<sup>1</sup> It is unlikely that this area of democratic revolutionary change can expand further in the short or medium term.

While a kind of apathy seems to be dominating both the regime and the people in Algeria, putting real change off until the future,<sup>2</sup> Morocco looks content with the mild reformist transition introduced by the King.<sup>3</sup> The Palestinians seem to be less active in bringing about change and basically waiting for what change may bring them (and the others),<sup>4</sup> while nothing is going to change in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Iraq in the near future. Because the country's regional and international entanglement and its deep fault lines have not allowed for any international diplomacy, the uprising against the regime in Syria has turned into a civil war, whose outcome is uncharted.<sup>5</sup> Yemen is going through a manipulated and hopeless transition as well as a variety of internal conflicts;<sup>6</sup> Lebanon may well

follow Syria and, in any case, remains exposed to that country's uncertain future.<sup>7</sup> And in Jordan, the Hashemite King's attempts to walk the path of reform in order to defuse the current unrest, which has succeeded so often in the past, could fail today because the country's fault lines have enlarged.<sup>8</sup> In sum, the regional tide of democratic transitions is apparently ebbing. With the conclusion of the Libyan revolution, it seems that any further ferment is less likely to start new transitions than to trigger suppression and civil wars.<sup>9</sup>

It looks like a first stage of the process of change launched by the Arab Spring has come to an end and, for the time being, will remain limited to North Africa. Further steps and a second stage may emerge later on, in a longer-term cycle of change similar to the 19<sup>th</sup> century national/democratic revolutions in Europe against the *ancien régimes*, with victories and defeats, revolutions and counter-revolutions, one step forward and one step back.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, fundamentalist domestic opposition to mainstream democratic Islamism is strengthening and, if democratic Islamists were to yield to pressure and give up their centrist position,

<sup>1</sup> P. Morillas, "The Mediterranean's 3 Cs and Implications for the West," *Op-Med*, July 12, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Y.H. Zoubir and A. Aghrout, "Algeria's Path to Reform: Authentic Change?," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Summer 2012, pp. 66-83; A. Dessi, "Algeria: Cosmetic Change or Actual Reform?," *Actuelles de l'IFRI*, July 9, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> M. Ottaway, "Morocco: Can the Third Way Succeed?," *Carnegie Commentary*, July 31, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> International Crisis Group, "The Emperor Has No Clothes: Palestinians and the End of the Peace Process," *ICG Middle East Report*, No. 122, May 7, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> International Crisis Group, "Syria's Mutating Conflict," *ICG Middle East Report*, No. 128, August 1, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Y. Guzansky, "Yemen Between Iran, al-Qaeda, and the West," *INSS Insight*, No. 350, July 2, 2012; I. Glosemeyer, "Yemen Without Ali Abdallah Saleh?," in M. Asseburg (ed.), "Protest, Revolt and Regime Change in the Arab World. Actors, Challenges, Implications and Policy Actors," *SWP Research Paper*, No. 6/2012, February 2012, pp. 27-30.

<sup>7</sup> P. Salem, "Syrian Crisis Spills into Lebanon," *Carnegie Q&A*, May 21, 2012; F. Lamb, "The Lebanon-Syria lines have been erased," *Bitterlemons-international*, Vol. 10, No. 19, May 31, 2012; R. Kahwaji, "Syria Regime Ties with Beirut Shaken after Implicated in Plot to Reignite Lebanese Civil War," *INEGMA Reports*, August 13, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> International Crisis Group, "Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (IX): Dallying with Reform in a Divided Jordan," *ICG Middle East Report*, No. 118, March 12, 2012; H.A. Barari, "Tribes and the monarchy in Jordan," *Bitterlemons-international*, Vol. 10, No. 7, February 16, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> F. Wehrey, "The Brave New World of Libya's Elections," *Carnegie Commentary*, June 26, 2012; Y.H. Zoubir and E.N. Rózsa, "The End of the Libyan Dictatorship: The Uncertain Transition," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 7, August 2012, pp. 1267-1283; R.B. St John, "A Transatlantic Perspective on the Future of Libya," *Mediterranean Paper Series*, May 29, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> S. Avineri, "1989? Not really. 1848? Perhaps," *Bitterlemons-international*, Vol. 9, No. 25, August 11, 2011; R. Springborg, "Whither the Arab Spring? 1989 or 1848?," *The International Spectator*, Vol. 46, No. 3, September 2011, pp. 5-12.

the current democratic dynamics could lose steam, putting an end to expectations or putting them off indefinitely.

The United States and Europe are among the external powers bound to influence (and be influenced by) the long-term dynamics of the Arab world. This paper examines the transatlantic allies' policy responses, perceptions, and interests with respect to the democratic transitions in North Africa in the context of the wider developments affecting the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries. It analyzes their ability and willingness to help turn the transition countries into democracies and to establish constructive international relations with them. The paper also

looks at change in North Africa as an opportunity for assessing transatlantic cooperation, which will be needed if the policies directed at supporting Arab transitions and international cooperation in the region are to succeed.

The paper starts with a general section illustrating the paper's findings and conclusions. It then presents a series of issues that make up the analytical background of the first general section, namely: 1) the U.S. and European policy responses to the Arab Spring; 2) the U.S. and European perceptions, objectives, and interests shaping their responses; 3) a set of security challenges in the post-Arab Spring region. A final section sets out some policy recommendations.

# 2 THE EURO-U.S. ALLIES AND ARAB CHANGE IN NORTH AFRICA

## Weakening of Islamist Centrists

As of September 2012, change in North Africa has brought to power Islamist parties in Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco. Change is absent in Algeria. In Libya, where territorial, ethnic, and tribal factors are more important than religious ones, change has shed light on a rather weak political Islamism. All in all, while political Islamism is not overwhelming, it is definitely a central political development in North Africa and the MENA area as a whole.

The transatlantic allies have responded to this central development by providing support, but they have received uncertain feedback. Where do we go from here? Since Tunisia and especially Egypt are central for the political future of the region, their evolution is briefly taken into consideration.

Almost two years on, developments in Tunisia and Egypt are different, but nonetheless seem to share a tendency towards a “lonely Islamism,” which is less open to contributions from and collaboration with other non-Islamist political actors than Western countries were expecting or looking forward to in their openings to Islamism in 2011. In other words, while the Islamist majority parties had displayed a clear initial propensity for pluralism and centrism, today they look like they are about to give up this consociational path and go it alone. This is partly because secularists are increasingly rejecting any Islamist governance and even, at times, pursuing reactionary paths, as in Egypt, and partly because the centrists are trying to appease the most conservative Islamist wings, which, prompted by this polarization, have strengthened.

Thus, the Islamist parties now in government are tending to abandon the centrist positions they pursued at the beginning and are drifting toward egocentricity. This means not only that the Islamist center is giving up or even opposing cooperation with non-Islamist forces, but also that

its course of action tends to be less mainstream, in particular with respect to Islamist trends on the left and the right — not so much with respect to the former, that is jihadism, as to the latter, the fundamentalist and Salafi magmatic trends. There can be no doubt that it is difficult for democratizing and modernizing Islamists to maintain a central position with respect to other Islamist tendencies, as the democratic path they have undertaken (and possibly cooperation with the West) exposes them to criticism from both the left and the right side of the Islamist spectrum, and weakens their internal compactness as well as their sway. It is only by succeeding that mainstream Islamism can keep fundamentalism at bay and cope with jihadism (as well as allowing fundamentalist segments to integrate into democratic politics). Yet, it is precisely this centrist Islamist path that has weakened in the course of the transitions.

For the time being, this is a tendency, but the risk that democratic Islamism might degenerate into an undemocratic, if not authoritarian one is there. Transatlantic allies should take note of this and rethink their policies to avoid Tunisian fragmentation and rising Egyptian assertiveness. They need to reconsider the policies pursued so far and review their objectives to make them fit with evolving realities.

## Transatlantic Allies' Policies

What policies have the transatlantic allies worked out to cope with the Arab Spring? When it emerged, change in North Africa was not easily accepted by the transatlantic allies. U.S. President Barack Obama was the first to understand that the West had no alternative but to bet on change if it did not want to be left out of the game. Thus, Western countries recognized and accepted the transitions in Tunisia and then Egypt, and intervened in Libya with the aim of influencing transitions and assisting the emergence of constitutional, well-balanced, and inclusive regimes

focused on guaranteeing freedom to individuals and minorities domestically, as well as ensuring the most important Western interests in the region.

This policy was pursued by the United States and the Europeans in different places and in different ways. The United States focused on Egypt, the Europeans on the Maghreb more generally. Furthermore, while the United States recognized ongoing change openly and substantively, the Europeans were more hesitant and reserved. When it comes to the substance of the policies, the United States' diplomacy privileged the emergence of a democratic game and respect for the rules without giving priority to any particular political force. Europe's lack of political cohesion caused political action by the various European actors to be fragmented: while a strongly depoliticized EU has provided even-handed economic and financial support to transitions, EU nations (governments, media, and civil societies) have, more often than not, taken partisan approaches in extending their support, criticizing Islamists and supporting secularists and other long-standing local friends. This has been particularly evident with regard to Tunisia and mostly France, as well as their respective civil societies, leading a French journalist to write in *Le Monde* that the "[2012] Summer has been murderous with respect to Tunisia in French media."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, EU member states' policies have been less concerned with long-term, strategic objectives than with short-term national interests in the changing context.

Regardless of the way in which these policies have been conducted, neither the Americans nor the Europeans have succeeded in their intention to help the earlier centrist and moderate Islamist trend to consolidate and prevail. As we have seen, this trend has in fact weakened. It would, however, be too early to talk about the defeat of Western policies.

<sup>11</sup> I. Mandraud, "Sur la Tunisie, halte au feu!" *Le Monde Géo et politique*, September 9, 2012, p. 1.

They need to be corrected, but the direction must be maintained. In response to Islamists' difficulties in keeping a central course, the need for introducing forms of conditionality is now being voiced, for example by retaining or withdrawing the yearly U.S. grant to the Egyptian military.<sup>12</sup> Instead, this is just the time to turn the broad support extended so far to transitions into a more specific engagement with elected governments. Western governments need to adopt more tailor-made approaches and enhance their stakes in supporting transition. In other words, while firmly sticking to their objectives of pluralism and regional stability, they should go beyond just supporting transitional processes and also engage Islamists more explicitly.

As this may prove difficult now, support should be provided, first of all, by significantly enhancing economic and financial cooperation, on both bilateral and international grounds. In this sense, the U.S. administration did the right thing in confirming the cancellation of US\$1 billion of Egypt's debt, despite tensions with President Mohamed Morsi.<sup>13</sup> Confidence between Western and Islamist governments has to be built up, since this confidence has failed to materialize in the first stage of transition. The autonomy the new regimes intend to acquire and assert vis-à-vis the West must also be respected.

While this is needed in the shorter term, in the longer term, Western governments can hardly escape the two issues that are at the top of their concerns and policies, that is the democratic guarantees the new constitutions are expected to provide to citizens and minorities, and the maintenance of conditions of peace and

<sup>12</sup> S. Chayes, "Cut Aid to Egypt's Generals," *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 2012; S. Hamid, "A Democratic Transition in Trouble: The Need for Aid Conditionality in Egypt," *EU ISS Opinion*, July 20, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> S. Lee Myers, "In Move That Favors American Industry, U.S. Grants Waiver to Restore Aid to Egypt," *The New York Times*, March 24, 2012, p. A6.



cooperation in the region in line with Western interests. If these expectations are not met, the reasons that prompt Western countries to support Islamists regimes in North Africa today would cease to exist. It is obvious, though, that Western expectations have to take account of Islamists' autonomy and objectives in addition to Western ones and work out concessions to Islamists to balance what they are requesting from them. These two points should shape Western policies between the end of 2012 and 2013, when constitutions will be completed and enforced and new elections will take place. Both points need timely thorough consideration by governments and policymakers.

#### **Islamist Foreign Policy and Transatlantic Interests in the Region**

When it comes to foreign policies in the region and Western-Arab relations, both Islamists and non-Islamists in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya have made it clear that they do not intend to revise the state of play with regard to Israel. In other words, they intend to respect the Camp David Accords, albeit with modifications to be duly negotiated. They have also clarified, though, that they are broadly unsatisfied with that state of play, in particular with regard to Palestinians. Furthermore, especially in the documents of the Salafist parties (even moderate ones such as *al-Nour* in Egypt and *Jabhat al-Islah* in Tunisia),<sup>14</sup> the acceptance of the status quo is accompanied by statements rejecting the "Zionist entity," that is Israel. At the end of the day, that means that the distinction between revisionism and reformism with respect to the Camp David Accords may prove a gray area. This will not allow for an easy process. Notably, Tunisia's draft constitution bans normalized relations with Israel. The Muslim Brothers in Egypt have also made it

clear that relations with Israel will not be warm, not only — as was the case during the Hosni Mubarak era — regarding people-to-people relations, but also regarding government-to government relations.

While everybody in North Africa is currently so occupied with domestic developments that foreign policy has been left on the back burner, as soon as the dust settles, international relations will gain prominence. In fact, in Egypt, as soon as the Muslim Brothers took over the reins of command, President Morsi intervened in the Sinai in respect of the Treaty with Israel, but also to signal to Israel that Egypt wants to renegotiate the Treaty's military annex and redefine Egyptian-Israeli relations to some extent. As for the Palestinians, it is very unlikely that Egypt will limit itself to continuing the overall mediation role of the Mubarak regime and accept either the Israeli government's indifference or its wrath with respect to the Palestinians. As soon as things in Egypt allow them to fully turn their attention to foreign policy, the Egyptian Muslim Brothers will certainly have more ambitious objectives in mind. While supporting Palestinian unity, they will also pay more attention to Hamas' complex role in upcoming political processes.<sup>15</sup>

In his August 30, 2012, speech in Tehran on the occasion of Egypt's handing over the presidency of the Non-Aligned Countries to Iran, President Morsi confirmed that the Muslim Brothers intend to pick up the country's nationalist legacy and play a leading role in the region.<sup>16</sup> The open and harshly critical remarks on Syria in the very house of its leading ally, Iran, cannot leave any doubt about the direction of the Muslim Brothers' foreign policy in the region. At the same time, the proposal to set up a group made up of Egypt, Iran,

<sup>14</sup> J. Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt," *The Carnegie Papers*. Middle East, December 2011; S. Lacroix, "Sheikh and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism," *Brookings Doha Center Policy Briefing*, June 2012; O. Abdel-Latif, "Salafists and Politics in Egypt," *Case Analysis* (Doha Institute), January 9, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> O. Shaban, " Hamas and Morsi: Not So Easy Between Brothers," *Carnegie Article*, October 1, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> "Selected Excerpts of Morsi's Speech," *The New York Times*, August 30, 2012.

Saudi Arabia, and Turkey — although unlikely to materialize — constitutes a savvy alternative to the regional conflict that Syria is fuelling, and indicates an interesting inclination toward diplomatic engagement.

Thus, the rise of Islamists in Egypt, while not dramatic for the West's interests in regional stability and in some respects even favorable to such interests, is going to bring about many changes — and the West cannot take a positive result for granted. While Morsi's proposal in Tehran was convergent with Western interests, as a regional power, Egypt might also deliver some surprises. It could make Turkey face some painful trade-offs in the Atlantic Alliance and cause problems in the Alliance itself. The most sensitive issue regards the Palestinians and Israelis, however, where Turkey and Egypt are on the same side. Although Egypt's Muslim Brothers are presenting themselves as non-revisionist, they will ask for reform of the *status quo* and those reforms may be very close to revisions. This is not to say that these perspectives are unmanageable, but there is no doubt that the West must prepare itself carefully to deal with some very thorny questions in the Near East, much more serious than under Mubarak's conflict-smoothing mantle. In the same perspective, it seems about time for the West to manifest its autonomy with respect to the new North African regimes by clarifying its own end-game objectives and expectations.

### **Islamists and Democracy**

If the moment has come for the West to point out objectives, red lines, and flexibilities with regard to its interests and relations with the region, the time has also come to define what the West is expecting from Islamist regimes. Western governments have recognized Islamism on the assumption it would be democratic and, allowing for differences, would share a number of core principles and values, in particular democratic procedures (such as

elections, power rotation, and so on), the principle of citizenship, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. Still, what the differences could actually be or — more practically — what core democratic values can actually be shared remain undefined even though they might prove essential for Western-Arab relations.

What Western countries urgently need to do is to set out criteria for defining a mutually acceptable definition of core values, leveraging less on philosophical principles than on practical purposes. This definition would be a yardstick for Western relations with the new Arab regimes and a guide for negotiations with them. If relations are to be peaceful and cooperative, Westerners and Muslims need to know which values they can share and which ones they cannot, and need to find ways to respect those they don't share (for instance, blasphemy). This would be important for international relations as well as for relations with immigrants. In this sense, it is particularly important for Europe.

Is it feasible? Rejecting the notion of Islamic state, the objective of the Islamist centrist regimes is to establish “civil states,” which would somehow be separated from the religious sphere, though inspired by that sphere and certainly not in contradiction with it.<sup>17</sup> This concept is, in principle, quite different from Iran's Islamic Republic with its fully theocratic regime. The drafts of the Constitution submitted for the referendum in December duplicate Article 2 of the previous 1971-1980 constitutions, which states that Sharia principles “are the main source of legislation.”<sup>18</sup> Under Anwar Sadat and then Mubarak, this gave way to a secularizing regime because Egyptian jurisprudence and the Supreme Constitutional

<sup>17</sup> T. Ramadan, “Islamists' current dilemma,” *Gulf News*, January 24, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> A. Aboul Enein, “Egyptian constitution draft released,” *Daily News Egypt*, October 15, 2012.

Court — as Nathan Brown explains — “worked out an approach to Article 2 that adheres to the language of the provision but does not find many laws in contravention of Sharia principles.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, the judicial power interpreted the principle in keeping with the broad orientations prevailing in government and the civil society elites. In the debate that brought about the current draft Constitution, the Salafists complained about the wording of Article 2 “as hinting everything and delivering nothing.”<sup>20</sup> A new article, Article 219, sets out a fine balance between the Salafists, more moderate Islamists, and non-Islamists. It is not clear whether and how this will be allowed to work, but it seems to highlight some ability by the parties to look for compromise.

Thus, in conclusion, while the real weight of the separation of state and religion is going to depend on the political and cultural evolution of Egyptian society, it is important that separation is stated, as unclear as that separation may be. Once this separation is assured, it will be up to the political and social forces to evolve toward a more secular society if they should want to do so. On the other hand, in international relations, the principle of separation and the institution of a “civil state” may facilitate a dialogue intended to single out an agenda of shared values. Ideally, this agenda, while ensuring essential freedoms, should leave cultural values aside. In this sense, the proposal put forward by a group of Carnegie authors is of notable interest.<sup>21</sup> In their words, “demanding that Islamist movements adopt broad ideological agendas that endorse secularism or blanket philosophical commitments to core values such as women’s rights is the wrong approach. Instead, international

actors should focus on a few, very specific issues for special emphasis, such as international human rights standards,” besides other international objectives such as “the maintenance of existing treaty relationships, and the principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes.” From this perspective, emphases would be shifted from values to a set of negotiated basic shared international obligations, whose implementation in domestic arenas would evolve and help bring about cultural change.

However, developments show that, while the statement in Tunisia’s constitution about women’s “complementary” role only aroused indignation in the West, there are Islamist forces on both the right and the left of the Islamist center plainly rejecting the notion of “civil state.” In the course of these transitions, there have been many acts of violence against minorities or acts denying personal or collective freedoms, generally attributed to violent Salafi groups or even jihadists in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. Governments do not seem able or willing to counter these acts with a view to clearly affirming personal and collective freedoms. But this attests less to their unwillingness to do so than to their weakness and the lack of internal cohesion between left and right Islamist wings. This confirms the need for support for Islamist centrist parties at the present difficult juncture, with a view to preventing them from drifting away from the center, giving up in their attempt to build a “civil state,” and losing their chance to jumpstart a process of democratic change.

In sum, prospects do not look rosy. While chances to achieve understandings with regard to foreign policy are not negligible, questions related to freedoms and human rights defining a level of substantive democracy acceptable to the West in a shared, unifying perspective seem more impervious.

<sup>19</sup> N.J. Brown, “Egypt’s Constitution: Islamists Prepare for a Long Political Battle,” *Carnegie Article*, October 23, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> C. Lombardi and N.J. Brown, “Islam in Egypt’s New Constitution,” *Foreign Policy*, December 13, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> S. Ülgen et al., “Emerging Order in the Middle East,” *Carnegie Policy Outlook*, May 2012.

### Transatlantic Perspectives

The United States' and Europe's responses to the revolutions in North Africa — and the wider changes in the MENA area — have been different, even though they have proven quite convergent on most substantial aspects. How relevant is this convergence from a transatlantic perspective? Is the Arab Spring affected by the Atlantic Alliance or is it the former that affects the latter?

Let us consider these questions by starting with the United States. The Obama administration has firmly avoided any military involvement and consistently employed diplomacy and privileged cooperation. Although the MENA area is of declining strategic interest to the United States, some interests in this area remain important. To reconcile these, the United States, in addition to its diplomatic efforts, is implementing an “offshore balancing strategy,” whereby U.S. interests are ensured by multilateral alliances pursuing collective interests or by individual allies pursuing national yet shared interests. In the course of the Arab Spring, U.S. diplomacy has largely acted in this way, from Libya to Syria. Yet, despite the diplomatic engagement and the handling of this strategy, results have revealed a number of weaknesses.

Indeed, because of the need to escape President George W. Bush's legacy by rethinking the United States' global leadership, an assessment of President Obama's Middle Eastern policy will probably only be possible after another mandate. As of today, the balance-sheet looks somewhat problematic.

The administration tried to 1) keep the door open toward Iran with a view to agreeing, sooner or later, on some regional arrangements among the various actors involved; 2) build up good relations toward the revolutionary countries by firmly recognizing Islamists' leadership and extending support while avoiding interferences; 3) discourage Israel from attacking Iran, thus setting the region afire and

risking involving the West in a cycle of violent conflicts.

However, Iran did not reciprocate. The latest International Atomic Energy Agency report (August 2012) on Iran's nuclear development “... is another troubling remainder of Iran's proliferation potential, it is not a ‘game-changer’ in terms of Teheran's capability to build a nuclear arsenal if it were to decide to do so.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, the problem is less Iran's proliferation (which remains ambiguous) than Iran's use of talks on proliferation to indefinitely put off any political conclusion. Furthermore, the West's shift in alliances in North Africa, from authoritarian secularist to Islamist regimes, has created considerable difficulties and uncertainties. It requires enhanced stakes and more engagement in a perspective in which Egypt may be ready to cooperate, but in which its interests are not in line with U.S. and Western ones. Finally, while the U.S.-Sunni alliance still holds, all in all, Sunni governments are disappointed by the administration's incongruence and inconclusiveness in dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian question and, most recently, by the United States' low profile in the Syrian crisis. Among Arab people more generally, anti-Americanism is flaring up again, as attested to by the incident of the movie mocking the Prophet, which was privately produced in the United States. Despite the intentions outlined by the president in his 2009 Cairo speech, anti-Americanism remains. As aired by General Petraeus, the unsolved Israeli-Palestinian issue is the main cause for that, and keeps feeding the United States' bad image.<sup>23</sup>

As said, a final judgment would be premature and another mandate seems necessary to allow for the

<sup>22</sup> T. Collina and D.G. Kimball, “The August 2012 IAEA Report on Iran: An Initial Assessment,” *Arms Control Now. The blog of the Arms Control Association*, August 30, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> “U.S. General: Israel-Palestinian conflict foments anti-U.S. sentiments,” *Haaretz*, May 17, 2010.

significant shifts in U.S. Middle Eastern policy that President Obama is seeking and that the ongoing dramatic changes badly require. In any case, as of today, one can safely say that, if responses to the Arab Spring sometimes look inadequate or insufficient, this is largely due to the weaknesses of the United States' wider Middle Eastern policy, that is its responses to yesterday's Israeli-Palestinian relations, relations with Iran and so on. Conversely, for the offshore balancing strategy to work, a clear and more credible leadership is necessary, and this, in turn, requires a new, coherent, and effective Middle East policy. In a possible second mandate, the administration should reconsider its entire Middle East policy to deal with Arab Spring changes and lead the Alliance in dealing with them.

What about the European allies? As in the United States, interest in Europe (that is the EU) in the Middle East and North Africa is diminishing. However, while U.S. interest in the MENA area is diminishing in the context of shifting U.S. global priorities, Europe's interest is diminishing as a consequence of faltering political cohesion in the European Union. To deepen the disunity, in the past ten years, an economic fault line has opened up between the stronger North and the weaker South. The geopolitical consequences are that, while northern countries, starting with Germany, are looking eastward and watching over EU resources being apportioned to the Eastern European neighbors rather than Mediterranean ones, the Southern European countries are interested in the stability of the Mediterranean countries (with a French-Spanish emphasis on the Maghreb). The Southern European countries, however, especially Italy and Spain, do not have enough national resources to sustain their interests in North Africa nor enough strength in the EU to significantly divert EU resources toward this area. Thus, while the Mediterranean has long represented an important collective political interest, because of the EU's weakening cohesion, this seems less

true today. In terms of Glenn Snyder's theory of alliance politics, this almost seems to be a case of abandonment (whereby Southern European countries are being singled out in the European alliance's context).<sup>24</sup>

To be fair, the United Kingdom seems to have shown an interest in the Mediterranean as well. In fact, France, Italy, Spain, and the U.K. make up the group of EU countries most engaged in the Arab Spring's evolution. These four countries share U.S. interests and policies in the Arab Spring framework, yet their national interests in the Mediterranean as well as their capabilities are very different.

In an offshore strategy perspective, this European fragmentation means that bilateral transatlantic relations will be more relevant than multilateral ones. Not that NATO intervention under European leadership is ruled out but, as seen in Libya, NATO would perform as a more or less significant coalition of the willing and able. It also means, though, that local allied forces to balance power in the region could prove limited and politically volatile. In this sense, diplomatic influence in a U.S. offshore balancing framework may not be easy.

### Israel

In general, the EU and its member countries share U.S. interests and policies in the Arab Spring process framework. When it comes to Israel, however, the European collective position is closer to the Arab than the U.S. one, even though European countries may share U.S. policy bilaterally.

The EU Mediterranean policy, set in motion in 1995 in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) framework, was intended among other things to open up a perspective that would

<sup>24</sup> G.H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997.

downplay the Arab-Israeli dichotomy. The ensuing split between Fatah and Hamas, the policies of Benjamin Netanyahu's government, and the gradual evaporation of the two-state objective all prompted a change in the EU perspective. While Israel remains formally integrated in Euro-Mediterranean institutions, relations with this country within those institutions are in fact separate from those with Arab countries. At the end of 2008, the Arab states decided to suspend their membership in the newly established Union for the Mediterranean (UFM) because of the Israeli occupation of Gaza. After more than a year, Arabs resumed participation in the UFM on the condition that relations between the EU and the partners would be based on a totally variable geometry and thus be completely separate from relations with Israel. As the Arab League is an observer in the UFM, the situation today is that, under the UFM umbrella, the EU has in fact moved from a Euro-Med to a Euro-Arab format of relations. And, as Turkey is also a member of the UFM, the format is actually a Euro-Arab-Turkish one vs. a separate EU-Israel format. Thus, although EU and EU members' bilateral relations with Israel are generally good if not excellent, from a regional perspective, Israel is isolated not only physically from the Arab states and Turkey but also institutionally in the EU's regional frameworks.

That does not mean that the EU and the Europeans would abandon Israel's security. Still they seem less and less prepared to sacrifice their Arab interests on the Israeli altar. Thus, as soon as the Israeli-Palestinian issue is taken up again in the new framework of Western relations with the emerging Islamist regions extending from North Africa to the Gulf, Europeans will strongly expect and demand a feasible solution to that issue from both Israel and the United States. If this solution does not materialize, transatlantic as well as inter-European relations could be affected, as could transatlantic capabilities toward the region.

### **Turkey**

This survey of the Euro-U.S. relations vis-à-vis Arab Spring developments and perspectives is not complete unless Turkey is also taken into consideration. The Arab Spring brought the Justice and Development Party (AKP) policy of Turkey's regional projection and influence to an end. As this policy came up against change, it proved to be an unsustainable status quo policy, from both the diplomatic and the national security angles. In fact, the Turkish policy of projection into the Middle East was based on establishing good relations with authoritarian Arab regimes — exactly like the EU and the United States.

From diplomatic and political points of view, Turkey's relations with the emerging Islamist regimes need to be reconstructed, probably on a new basis. The AKP still projects a positive image and even has an ascendancy over the new mainstream Islamist regimes, rather more for its economic success than for its success in coupling Islam and secularism. On this last point, the various Muslim Brotherhoods in the Arab countries, beginning with the one in Egypt, are rather distrustful and suspicious — contrary to common perception in Western countries. Moreover, there are historical and political national rivalries, especially in the case of Egypt, which will never be pleased (today with President Morsi as yesterday with Mubarak) with Turkish influence over the region.

From the point of view of national security, the Turkish policy of good neighborliness aimed at developing good relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran, but also at dealing with the Kurdish issue, are as paralyzed as the policies of the transatlantic allies and other international actors by the Syrian crisis. In this crisis, the Syrian Kurds are standing alone with respect to other stakeholders, pursuing

their own interests.<sup>25</sup> They see the crisis less as an opportunity to liberate Syria from the Baath dictatorship than as one to further Kurdish nationalism. They support the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and their actions have led to a flare-up of the long-standing conflict between the PKK, the Turkish Kurds, and Ankara. The concomitant serious rifts between the Iraqi Kurds and Baghdad and the lasting political crisis in Iraq are driving even the Iraqi Kurds to think in national terms, to support their struggling brethren in the neighboring countries, and to frustrate the Turkish objective of seeing Irbil well integrated into Iraq.

Nevertheless, Turkey remains a regional power interested and inevitably involved in the Middle East's big game. While it is changing its policies and adapting them to the new situation, its shift toward the Middle East is firm. President Morsi's proposal in Teheran of banding together Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey to solve the Syrian crisis may well prove feasible and effective, but above all it reflects a newly emerging regional configuration in which Turkey will unavoidably be included. What will this mean from a Western and transatlantic point of view in the changing regional geopolitical and strategic context?

Western countries and alliances, before and after the Arab Spring, strongly tend to see Turkey and the AKP as their Trojan horse in the MENA area. Actually though, AKP-led Turkey, while remaining firmly tied to the Western camp and NATO, is playing out the West to help assert itself as a national power in the region rather than presenting itself as the Western card in the Middle East. Its membership in the EU, while possibly further harming EU political cohesion by adding another big nationalist-bent member to those already in it, would neither improve nor worsen its present

position in the Atlantic Alliance, in which national variable geometries are well advanced.

In this framework, Turkey, while remaining an asset in today's largely pragmatic transatlantic alliance, must be regarded as a key strategic partner. From a U.S. point of view, it may prove functional as much as the U.K., France, and Southern European nations, were the United States to develop an offshore balancing strategy in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern area.

### Some Conclusions

Arab change in North Africa and the wider MENA area continues unabated. The transatlantic allies' policy of supporting change in a democratic framework has failed to engage mainstream Islamist forces convincingly and strengthen them more resolutely. As a result of that and the opposition/competition from fundamentalist Islamists, mainstream Islamist parties could abandon their centrist policy course and be compelled to draw closer to fundamentalists of various brands. Intentions of moderation in Islamist leadership circles are not matched by the masses' anti-Western attitudes, more specifically their strong anti-Americanism. This was attested to in September 2012, when a flare-up and spread of violence throughout the Arab and Muslim world was prompted by a privately produced U.S. movie mocking the Prophet. This anti-Americanism may convince the United States and the Europeans to disengage. But such a decision would accelerate mainstream Islamism's drift toward Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism. On the contrary, in these circumstances, Islamist centrists need more support. Western governments would, thus, be better advised to make their policies more sophisticated and to enhance engagement.

Transatlantic policy toward change in North Africa has failed to develop a more compact allied approach. While transatlantic governments,

<sup>25</sup> T. Arango, "Kurds to Pursue More Autonomy in a Fallen Syria," *The New York Times*, September 29, 2012.

including Turkey, substantially converge in their assessments, expectations, and national policies toward the changes in North Africa and the MENA area, national policies have hardly translated into collective efforts. Both NATO and the EU, while providing services functional to national policies, clearly remain on the sidelines. The fragmented transatlantic approach resulting from this state of affairs is not helping to shape events.

As weak as it may be, the existing transatlantic framework could help the United States in advancing its national interests, were it to pursue an effective offshore balancing strategy in the Mediterranean and the Middle East by mobilizing alliances and individual allies, such as Turkey, France, the U.K., friendly Arab states, and possibly others.

However, U.S. involvement in the Middle East, despite its global strategy shifts, is still so important and demanding that an offshore balancing strategy may prove insufficient. U.S. leadership is necessary in any case, especially in the transatlantic framework, not only as an alternative to offshore balancing but to sustain it through effective and coherent diplomacy. Whatever strategy the United States decides to pursue, the next administration should reconsider its entire Middle Eastern policy. The weaknesses in U.S. Middle Eastern policy stem less from responses to today's Islamists than from yesterday's responses to the Israeli-Palestinian question, relations with Iran, and so on. Only under such a reconsideration will the administration be able to deal with Arab Spring changes and lead the Alliance in handling them, whether by means of an offshore balancing strategy or otherwise.



# 3 U.S. AND EUROPEAN POLICY RESPONSES TO THE ARAB SPRING

## The United States

After initial hesitation, the U.S. administration responded to the unexpected 2011 democratic movements in North Africa and their quick spread eastward to the Arab world with declarations of support, and a cautious, pragmatic, and selective approach.

In principle, the administration's policy is substantially reactive. The United States welcomes and supports democratic change. It does not promote change driven from the outside, though. It supports the ongoing democratic transitions, looking forward to their evolution with a view to adapting its policies and strategies in the region. This reactive approach is more or less actively shared by all members of the Atlantic Alliance, Europeans being no exception.

In the only case in which military tools have been employed, i.e., Libya, the United States provided support but stayed away from direct action. No doubt, the administration is giving distinctive preference to restraint and political-diplomatic tools in the framework of a new strategic perspective whose contours do not yet appear to be well defined.

In line with this unusual U.S. foreign policy approach, the current administration has made a clear distinction between countries in which the United States believes it has a firm strategic interest, such as Egypt and the GCC countries, and countries bereft of such interest, such as Tunisia and Libya. But even where there is an unmistakable strategic interest, such as in Syria, but where direct interventions would go beyond domestic change and cause strong regional and international tensions, possibly involving Washington in further conflict, the United States has stopped short of steps other than diplomacy and political-economic pressure.

By the same token, the administration has decidedly preferred multilateral action every time this has proved possible, first of all in Libya and then Syria, and has mostly encouraged individual allies to take the initiative of dealing with regional crises, leveraging their own interests — as in the cases of France, the U.K., Turkey, and the GCC countries — while abstaining from direct intervention. In addition to NATO and the African Union, cooperation with the League of the Arab States has proven particularly significant and successful in this respect.

Obama's preference for diplomatic and political instruments derives fundamentally from his earlier and constantly cooperative approach toward the Middle East. While the president did not succeed in setting in motion a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict nor in convincing Iran to “unclench its fist,” there is no doubt that he is still looking for cooperative political solutions in keeping with his priority of exiting from past wars, avoiding entering new ones, and rebuilding an acceptable image in the MENA area.

Against this backdrop, the United States' response to Arab Spring developments has focused on a set of significant policies:

- As said, it has acted indirectly and let international organizations and/or allies intervene locally and regionally, as in Libya and Syria;
- In the Gulf, in particular, it has let, if not encouraged, the GCC states police the peninsula with their own diplomatic and military means — as they did in fact in Bahrain and Yemen — showing little concern for democracy and human rights;
- It has kept the Israeli leadership's threat to attack Iran at bay and, on the contrary, tried to restore a dialogue with Teheran, with a new round of

“3+3”/“5+1” non-proliferation talks in Istanbul, Baghdad, and Moscow (having apparently been brought in to the bilateral talks);

- It has recognized the political legitimacy of moderate Islamist parties, in particular and very unequivocally, that of Egypt’s Muslim Brothers;<sup>26</sup> and
- It has concentrated its direct and most significant political and diplomatic efforts on Egypt, which it considers pivotal to any future regional scenario.<sup>27</sup>

It is worth noting that the amount of U.S. economic and financial aid — allocated on top of the existing engagement (which includes the annual military aid to Egypt) — does not seem to be in line with the importance assigned in political rhetoric to the ongoing changes. At the beginning of 2012, the administration 1) provided a \$100 million grant and a \$30 million guarantee to Tunisia (after providing \$190 million in 2011); 2) released a historic \$1.3 billion grant to Egypt; and 3) announced its intention to propose a \$770 million Middle East and North Africa Incentive Fund in addition to the current bilateral aid already budgeted for 2013. In the summer of 2012, the administration announced that it would grant Egypt \$1 billion in debt relief and has proceeded to cancel the first \$450 million. As we will see, U.S. limitations on extending additional aid — undoubtedly conditioned by the lingering Western economic crisis — are matched by European ones.

<sup>26</sup> Secretary Clinton *Keynote Address at the National Democratic Institute’s 2011 Democracy Awards Dinner*, November 7, 2011; T. Gabbay, “Clinton: U.S. Will Work with Arab Spring’s Islamist Parties,” *The Blaze*, November 7, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> R. Springborg, “The U.S. Response to the Arab Uprising: Leadership Missing” in R. Alcaro and M. Haubrich-Seco (eds.), “Re-Thinking Western Policies in Light of the Arab Uprisings,” *IAI Research Paper*, No. 4, February 2012, pp. 31-53.

## The European Union

The European response has come partly from the European Union (EU) and partly from national governments. While both responses distinctively leverage democracy promotion, national responses are in fact decidedly more cautious and pragmatic than the EU’s, and more similar in that to the U.S. response. Let’s begin with EU policies.

The Mediterranean agenda, launched in the first half of 2011 by the EU to respond to the Arab Spring, is composed of two main policies: 1) a broad platform establishing a “Partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean”<sup>28</sup> and 2) an updated and reinvigorated version of its 2004 European Neighborhood Policy (ENP).<sup>29</sup> These two programs involve broad policy guidelines (more differentiated bilateral relations with partner countries, conditionality, privileged partnerships with countries opting for engagement in relations with the EU) and objectives (deep democracy, deep trade liberalization) that in general resemble past ones. Furthermore, the EU has set up some new facilities (such as the “Civil Society Facility,” the “Support for Partnership Reform and Inclusive Growth” (SPRING) facility, and a “European Endowment for Democracy”) as well as policy frameworks that still have to be developed and completed, such as the country-by-country

<sup>28</sup> European Commission and 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 final, Brussels, March 8, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood*, COM(2011) 303 final, Brussels, May 25, 2011.

comprehensive partnership agreements to regulate mobility and migration.<sup>30</sup>

The EU has also reinforced its organization by setting up a Task Force for the Southern Mediterranean and appointing a European Union special representative for the Southern Mediterranean (Bernardino León, whose mandate also comprises the Gulf area).

Rather than setting out new concepts, the EU has strengthened, streamlined, and adapted existing ones, such as deep trade liberalization (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, DCFTAs) and mobility partnerships (which increase access for citizens of countries accepting EU policies aimed at containing illegal immigration). What is worth noting is that the EU has reasserted the role of democracy in its programs by setting out a very ambitious and demanding perspective of attaining “deep” democracy (which “refers to the right to vote accompanied by the respect for human rights; forming competing political parties; receiving impartial justice from independent judges and security from accountable police and army forces; and access to a competent and non-corrupt civil service”<sup>31</sup>). This renewed, and in some respects increased importance of democracy — after years of rather low profile — is also attested to by the introduction of the “Civil Society Facility” for strengthening the capacity of civil societies to promote reform and increase public accountability in their countries, and the SPRING facility to

<sup>30</sup> I. Ioannides, “EU Responses to Transitions in the Southern Mediterranean,” in I. Ioannides and A. Missiroli (eds.), “Arab Springs and Transitions in the Southern Mediterranean: The EU and Civil Societies One Year On,” *Berlaymont Paper*, No. 1, January 2012, pp. 6-11; N. Tocci, “State (un)Sustainability in the Southern Mediterranean and Scenarios to 2030: The EU Response,” *MEDPRO Policy Papers*, No. 1, August 2011 (updated April 2012); N. Tocci and J.-P. Cassarino, “Rethinking the EU’s Mediterranean Policies Post-1/11,” *IAI Working Papers*, No. 1106, March 2011.

<sup>31</sup> I. Ioannides, “EU Responses to Transitions in the Southern Mediterranean,” cit.

reward partner countries showing sustained commitment to and progress in democratic reforms.

When it comes to resources, while the EU institutions are now considering a remarkable increase in the 2014-2020 budget (some 40 percent, to be shared somehow between southern and eastern neighbors), in addition to the humanitarian aid (amounting to €80.5 million) disbursed in 2011, the EU has increased its aid allocation to Southern Mediterranean countries by €800 million in addition to ordinary resources already budgeted in 2011-2013.<sup>32</sup> The EU has allocated €1.4 billion in 2011 through the ENPI (European Neighborhood Partnership Instrument). For the period 2011-2013, it has budgeted €540 million under the SPRING program and €78 million under the Civil Society Facility.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, important amounts have been made available to the Mediterranean by the two large European regional banks: the European Investment Bank (EIB), with additional loans of up to €1 billion, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) — which has extended its geographic coverage to include Europe’s southern neighborhood, besides its eastern neighborhood — with up to €2.5 billion in public and private sector investment annually to support the establishment and expansion of business and the financing of infrastructure.

For the time being, this program is being implemented chiefly in Tunisia, for which a “Tunisia-European Union Task Force” has been set up, Morocco and, to some extent, Jordan. Egypt is

<sup>32</sup> EU, *The EU’s Response to the “Arab Spring,”* Memo/11/918, Brussels, December 16, 2011; R. Youngs, “Funding Arab Reform?” *Mediterranean Policy Program-Series on the Region and the Economic Crisis*, August 9, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Associazione studi e ricerche per il Mezzogiorno (SRM), *Economic Relations between Italy and Mediterranean Area. Annual Report 2012*, Napoli, Giannini, 2012, pp. 72-73.

hesitant to undertake talks in the current situation of political and constitutional uncertainty, although a certain reluctance has been a constant feature of EU-Egypt relations. Talks have been initiated with Libya but progress, if any, will be possible only after some stabilization takes place in the country.

### European National Diplomacies

While all EU member states share EU Mediterranean policies, only a few of them also have significant national foreign policies toward this area. At present, the EU countries that seem most involved in Arab Spring developments from a national perspective are France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Other countries, like Germany,<sup>34</sup> Greece,<sup>35</sup> and Portugal may even have considerable interests in the Mediterranean, but hardly have a region-wide engagement or a specific focus on that area. Let's consider, first of all, the economic and then the political dimensions of the Mediterranean policies of the four EU countries with major interests in the area.

From an economic point of view, while Italy and Spain have not allocated significant new resources in response to the Arab Spring in addition to their current bilateral programs, France and the U.K. have. Through the *Agence française de développement*, France has provided €1.1 billion in soft loans over 2011-2013, of which €625 million is to Egypt and €425 million is to Tunisia.<sup>36</sup> The U.K. has set up an "Arab Partnership" initiative with a budget of €132 million over four years, and

<sup>34</sup> A. Möller, "L'Allemagne face au printemps arabe," *Note du CERFA*, No. 88, July 2011.

<sup>35</sup> T. Dokos, "The Evolving Mediterranean Perspective of Greece in the Transatlantic Context," in R. Aliboni et al., "Southern Europe and The Mediterranean: National Approaches and Transatlantic Perspectives," *Mediterranean Paper Series*, German Marshall Fund, September 29, 2011, pp. 21-36.

<sup>36</sup> Answer of Alain Juppé, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, to the written question No. 101881 of Patrick Balkany, Member of the National Assembly of France, September 13, 2011, <http://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q13/13-101881QE.htm>.

has strengthened the Westminster Democracy Foundation for assistance to democratic reform, endowing it with a fresh budget of some €11.3 million over 2011-2013.<sup>37</sup> Germany has allocated €130 million in 2011-2012, channeled through its Transformation Partnership.<sup>38</sup>

These less than adequate contributions (due to the EU's ongoing economic crisis) are offset by the countries' activism in mobilizing international and EU resources, for example, the Deauville process launched by France. Furthermore, these countries, more in particular Southern European ones, are striving to channel EU resources toward Mediterranean objectives. For example, on September 13, 2011, in illustrating France's efforts to the National Assembly, Foreign Minister Alain Juppé said, "France acts through two channels: that of the European institutions and that of the *Agence française de développement*."<sup>39</sup> Finally — as we are going to see in the following — these countries are also driven to build up fresh relations with the emerging Arab regimes and the whole Arab world by very dynamic business prospects.

While EU and national economic efforts converge, there is a remarkable divergence between EU and national foreign policy approaches when it comes to the political dimension. As hinted at above, the EU's response to the mass democratic revolutions in North Africa has been a kind of return to earlier policy approaches, that is those underpinning the now dissolved Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). This return to the past is clearly premised on resuming a distinctively principled and cogent concept of democratic reform. In itself, this is not mistaken. If one considers the whole mechanism worked out by the new platform of partnership,

<sup>37</sup> H. Michou, "The U.K. in the Middle East: commercial diplomacy to what end?," *FRIDE Policy Brief*, No. 118, March 2012.

<sup>38</sup> R. Youngs, "Funding Arab Reform?," cit.

<sup>39</sup> Answer of Alain Juppé, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs to the written question No. 101881, cit.

however, it is also clear that what the EU proposes is once again Euro-Mediterranean integration in the framework of a community-building approach, and that does not fit with the new picture.<sup>40</sup>

The proposal coming from the individual EU states with an interest in the Mediterranean — similar to that of the United States— is different. Countries on both sides of the North Atlantic immediately understood that the change underway entails the rejection by the new Arab ruling classes of whatever kind of integration into the EU or West may be on offer and, on the contrary, highlights the need to build new international relationships that take differences into consideration. Instead of being based on integration, post-Arab Spring Mediterranean relations need to be based on respect for respective autonomy and interests. Both the EU and its component states wish the ongoing democratic transitions every success, but what they expect from this success is different: while the EU expects more Euro-Mediterranean integration, national governments are primarily trying to understand what is going on and to stand ready to adapt to changes opportunely so as to be able to satisfy their own political and economic interests. As Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata said, “the Arab revolutions have created a new, still fluid, regional context, in which Italy needs to update its strategies with a view to keeping its role and protecting its national interests. First and foremost: there must be no doubt that we are most interested in supporting the democratic transitions. We fully share this interest with our allies, in particular the United States. These transitions’ success could lead to greater stability

<sup>40</sup> R. Youngs, “The EU and the Arab spring: from munificence to geo-strategy,” *FRIDE Policy Brief*, No. 100, October 2011; T. Behr, “After the Revolution: The EU and the Arab Transition,” *Notre Europe Policy Paper*, No. 54, April 2012; N. Tocci, “One Year On: A Balance Sheet of the EU’s Response to the Arab Spring,” *Op-Med*, German Marshall Fund, May 2012.

and, thus, greater security for us, as well as new opportunities for our firms.”<sup>41</sup>

This approach may appear in contradiction with the direct intervention carried out in Libya. However, that intervention, whose drivers still need to be satisfactorily explained, was exceptional in character and took place thanks only to Libya’s marginal strategic and political role in the regional context. The policy of the little group of countries under consideration is not at all interventionist and distant from any intent to support current Arab transitions by force with a view to assisting regime change. This is clear *vis-à-vis* Syria, which — unlike Libya — is a central country from the strategic point of view. Aside from specific cases, there is no doubt that the policies of France, Italy, Spain, and the U.K. are in keeping with the emerging general rule, very aptly underscored by Volker Perthes, that the Western countries “may assist or obstruct, but they cannot determine the course of events” in the Arab Spring.<sup>42</sup> In this sense, even if it may look paradoxical, the policy of these four countries is no more interventionist than Germany’s. It is more active, though, because Germany either has no interests in the area or considers them decidedly less urgent.

The approach of this more engaged group of Europeans converges with that of the United States, even though they may focus on different countries and objectives. Yet, while their approach is as reactive as the United States’, at times it looks more passive. The United States, apart from domestic polemics on “grand strategies,” is betting on a set of key objectives. The Europeans, on the other hand, seem to be waiting for the United States to take the initiative. This reflects the historical European

<sup>41</sup> Interview to Minister Giulio Terzi by P. Perone, “Nel Mediterraneo c’è voglia d’Italia l’Europa ci segue,” *Il Mattino*, December 21, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> V. Perthes, “Europe and the Arab Spring,” *Survival*, Vol. 53, No. 6, December 2011-January 2012, pp. 73-84.

approach to the Middle East ever since the Suez crisis in 1956. It also reflects the fact that the four EU countries do not have the same credibility and impact in Arab eyes as the United States. The case of Egypt is telling.

As said, the United States has focused strongly on Egypt. Even though the outcome may still look uncertain in the Fall of 2012, it has sought to implement a set of hard balancing acts among Egyptian stakeholders with the aim of fostering democratic change and, at one and the same time, setting the conditions for smoothing out major incompatibilities between U.S./Western and Egyptian regional objectives. While European leaders paid their visits to Egypt and met with Muslim Brothers leaders, it is quite evident that no European country is having any significant impact on Egyptian developments — because of the weakness of both the EU and its component countries.

In sum, the Europeans are monitoring developments in the region very closely — e.g., the Italian Foreign Minister has appointed a Special Envoy for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Ambassador Maurizio Massari, with a view to tailoring policies to circumstances as soon as the latter become less fluid. But they are not leading politically. They follow U.S. policy in the context of a substantially harmonious yet stagnant transatlantic approach, in which their initiative is limited.

While rather passive politically, the four EU countries are very active on the business front. They are concerned — as are other European countries and the United States — about the need to limit damages, to contain competition (e.g., in Libya), in short to defend and promote their economic and commercial interests. Thus, actions to ensure present and future economic positions are very dynamic, almost unscrupulous. On the one hand, France, Italy, Spain, and the U.K. are focusing on the Mediterranean (at present, more on the North African countries than the Levant, also because of the Syrian crisis). On the other hand, many European countries are actively promoting business with the GCC countries, beginning with France<sup>43</sup> and the U.K.<sup>44</sup> and including Spain and Italy (e.g., Ambassador Massari's mandate comprises the Gulf). Assistance to poor North African revolutionary countries, coupled with fresh business promotion in the Gulf (and Libya), almost hints at EU-GCC cooperation toward North Africa and, perhaps tomorrow, the Levant. This all-Arab perspective would be a new development with respect to the standard European perspective in which the Mediterranean and the Gulf are distinct. If consolidated, it could prove interesting from a political and strategic angle.

---

<sup>43</sup> B. Mikail, "France and the Arab Spring: an opportunistic quest for influence," *FRIDE Working Paper*, No. 110, October 2011.

<sup>44</sup> H. Michou, "The U.K. in the Middle East: commercial diplomacy to what end?," cit.

# 4 PERCEPTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

In this section, we consider the United States' and Europe's perceptions, objectives, and interests shaping current responses to the Arab Spring, as well as their possible evolution. In this sense, three groups of factors will be examined. First, we consider the strategic transitions in the United States and Europe and the role North Africa is expected to play in them. Second, we look at the evolution of North African revolutions, focusing mostly on Egypt, evaluate U.S. and European responses to developments, and comment on policy responses and perspectives. Third, we explore some of the most relevant security issues stemming from Arab Spring developments and affecting both transatlantic security and relations between the West and North Africa.

## North Africa and the Middle East in the U.S. and European Strategic Transitions

Western countries are experiencing a relative decline in their global role. The conditions and significance of these transitions are very different in the United States and in Europe. In both cases, though, they tend to alter the role of North Africa — and the Middle East — in their strategic outlooks.

### The U.S. Transition

Despite relative changes in its global power, the absolute weight of the United States still leaves all other countries well behind. Nevertheless, the rise of China and other new powers is limiting and to some extent conditioning the enormous freedom of action perceived by the United States after the Cold War, in the “unipolar moment” described by Charles Krauthammer.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the outcome of global dominance policies in the past 20 years has shaken United States' influence and prestige and overstretched its resources. To that has to be added the financial and economic crisis affecting the United States since 2008.

<sup>45</sup> C. Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 1, Winter 1990/1991, pp. 23-33.

While both neoconservative and liberal imperialist interventionism is on the decline today, a debate is taking place on what “grand strategy” best suits the United States. While internationalism is still alive and well in this debate,<sup>46</sup> another trend that focuses on the national interest, and is sometimes even infused with isolationism, has emerged from the failure of the internationalist extremism that dominated the unipolar moment. Some analysts support a thorough retrenchment.<sup>47</sup> A majority though believe that, while the United States needs to renounce the huge influence enjoyed in the framework of its global dominance, it has to direct its power, still the strongest in the world, toward advancing the national interest.<sup>48</sup> From this perspective, the United States should choose the objectives that matter and pursue them by means of offshore balancing strategies, in which regional balances of power are essentially maintained by allied countries that leverage their own interests. While the United States must support the allies, bilaterally or in the framework of multilateral alliances, it only intervenes if it has to. Therefore, the United States should drop any ideas of global dominance and, above all, the policies of nation-building that were more often than not coupled with global dominance “in places where local identities remain strong and foreign interference is not welcome for long.”<sup>49</sup> To conclude, it must be added that almost all concerns stemming from this debate have to do with China, and that geopolitical

<sup>46</sup> Z. Brzezinski, “Balancing the East, Upgrading the West. U.S. Grand Strategy in an Age of Upheaval,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 1, January/February 2012, pp. 97-104.

<sup>47</sup> J.M. Parent and P.K. MacDonald, “The Wisdom of Retrenchment,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 6, November/December, 2011, pp. 33-47.

<sup>48</sup> S.M. Walt, “The End of the American Era,” *The National Interest*, No. 116, November-December 2011, p. 6; J.J. Mearsheimer, “Imperial by Design,” *The National Interest*, No. 111, January-February 2011, p. 16-34; R.D. Kaplan and S.S. Kaplan, “America Primed,” *The National Interest*, No. 112, March-April 2011, p. 42-54.

<sup>49</sup> S.M. Walt, “The End of the American Era,” cit.

indications suggest a shift in the U.S. central interests toward Asia and the Pacific area.

What is the Obama administration's position in this debate? The president's position is hard to identify because, on one hand, his pragmatism brings him close to the national interest trend pointed out by analysts, yet on the other, his broad perception of international relations and cooperation draws him over to the internationalists. Thus, while Drezner sees an internationalist strategy in Obama's earlier actions, which he calls "multilateral retrenchment,"<sup>50</sup> more in general the Obama administration's foreign policy has often been in tune with the suggestions coming from the national interest oriented analysts. The closure of the two disastrous imperial wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, i.e., the indispensable condition for launching any new strategy, is now well advanced. With the publication of the Pentagon's new "strategic guidelines," the shift toward the Asia-Pacific area has become part and parcel of the administration's official foreign policy since January 2012.<sup>51</sup> It should be pointed out that the Asian-Pacific strategy is conceived of as a typical offshore balancing strategy, and that the policy pursued during the 2011 Libyan crisis took the same path.

The Obama administration's tendency to reduce U.S. engagement toward the Middle East and North Africa is consistent with this broad picture. In particular, in the Mediterranean framework this tendency is coupled with the (not dramatic) U.S. troop disengagement in Europe, set out in the January 2012 Department of Defense's "priorities" (a \$450 billion decrease in the next ten years). The overall sense of these decisions is that the theater

<sup>50</sup> D.W. Drezner, "Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy?," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 4, July/August, 2011, pp. 57-68.

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*, Washington, January 2012; H. Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, November 2011 and remarks at East-West Center, Honolulu, November 10, 2011.

to the south of Western Europe is a relatively low priority for Washington, and that the United States expects the Europeans, Turkey, NATO, the Arabs, and the Arab League to lead and carry out the necessary interventions with support from Washington as the need arises.

This lower priority accorded to North Africa and the Middle East does not mean that the United States has ceased to be interested in the region. While the Central and Western Mediterranean will increasingly become an area of U.S. disengagement (offset by greater engagement by Europeans, Turks, and Arabs), Israel and the Levant, as well as the Persian Gulf, will continue to be of U.S. concern. Attempts will be made to restore offshore balancing in the Gulf, yet direct U.S. engagement will not fail to materialize if it proves necessary. To a large extent, the same will be true for the Israeli-Arab security complex. However, the overall area is bound to lose the undoubtedly exaggerated importance it has held in the past 20 years.

It is not only a question of changing strategic priorities and Orient fatigue, but of a deeper sense of estrangement, if not disappointment, that is well captured by the sentence by Stephen Walt already quoted regarding "places where local identities remain strong and foreign interference is not welcome for long." The January 2012 "strategic guidelines" substantially diminish engagement in "nation-building." As argued in chapter 3, these "places" must be allowed the autonomy they desire: attempts to shape people and countries have to be replaced by more traditional diplomacy limited to shaping the environment in a broad cooperative sense. The policies the U.S. administration is pursuing — pointed out in chapter 3, such as the focus on trying to bring a democratic regime into being in Egypt; recognition of the Muslim Brothers as a legitimate political actor; keeping a door open to negotiations with Iran — are already moving in that direction.



It should be added that, in fact, rather than paving the way for these changes, the Arab Spring has confirmed strategic shifts that were already underway. The United States responded to developments in North Africa and the Middle East with policies already consistent with the emerging strategic setting, that is policies attesting to less interest in North Africa and the Middle East and a new way of handling existing interests.

Although the Obama administration is acting from a strategic perspective whose contours are not clearly stated, it is evident that, on one hand, MENA's relative weight in this perspective is diminishing and, on the other, the United States' broad policy approach already seems directed toward a strategy of offshore balancing, especially in the Mediterranean, the Levant, and North Africa. In its second mandate, the United States' interests in the region will prove more selective, more fully cognizant of regional actors' autonomy and objectives, and more inclined to let local allies intervene. This strategic perspective does not rule out political action in the region, though. Quite the contrary, political action would remain important, reflecting the lasting relevance of the region for the United States despite its major shift in terms of grand strategy. This was attested to by the foreign policy debate between Obama and Republican nominee Mitt Romney prior to the November 2012 elections, which focused strongly on the Middle East, even though the two candidates agreed on Asia's strategic pre-eminence. Policies toward emerging Islamists and, above all, the Israeli-Palestinian question will still be extremely important in a strategically downgraded Middle East, and central in U.S. foreign policy.

### **The European Transition**

Europe's strategic transition is driven by factors similar to those affecting the United States (globalization, multipolarism) and by the repercussions on the transatlantic bonds of the

United States' power overstretch. It is different, though, because Europe, at the global level, is represented by the European Union and that is what François Duchêne called a "civil power" rather than a traditional power.<sup>52</sup> The grand strategy of the EU, as stated in 2003 by its leadership, aims to foster integration and international cooperation abroad in keeping with its own model. Its political influence is determined by its soft and economic power only.<sup>53</sup>

Globalization is highly consistent with the EU grand strategy. Nonetheless, it has also considerably eroded the relative power position of the EU, as European countries' responses to its challenge have proven differentiated and, all in all, weak. This weakness is largely related to the downgrading of the EU countries' political and economic cohesion in the past 12 years or so. On the one hand, they failed to implement the steps toward modernization they committed to in the 2000 Lisbon Agenda (proposed once again in the recent "EU 2000 Program" worked out by the Commission).<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, rather than increasing their political and institutional integration, in particular the EU Common and Foreign Security Policy (CFSP), they have weakened both by substantially renationalizing European policies.<sup>55</sup> To a large extent, the gravity of the ongoing eurozone crisis stems from this standstill in the integration process: it is a crisis regarding European integration rather than its currency.

<sup>52</sup> F. Duchêne, "Europe in World Peace," in R. Mayne (ed.), *Europe Tomorrow. Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead*, London, Fontana/Collins, 1972, pp. 32-49.

<sup>53</sup> European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*, Brussels, December 12, 2003.

<sup>54</sup> European Commission, *Europe 2020. A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*, COM(2010) 2020 final, Brussels, 3 March 2010.

<sup>55</sup> C.A. Kupchan, "Centrifugal Europe," *Survival*, Vol. 54, No. 1, February-March 2012, pp. 111-118.

As projection of its integration model is the basis of Europe's grand strategy, the weakening in the EU's political and economic integration obviously and seriously puts European soft power and its grand strategy into question.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the European strategic transition is at a crossroads: either a step forward in the Union's economic and, most of all, political integration or some kind of dissolution. In this dissolution, while the Union would not necessarily disappear, it could easily be reduced to a kind of outsourcing facility for national member states. Some of these states would go back to acting as unlimited and anarchical nation-states with ensuing power ambitions which, ironically, could only be very limited in the present conditions. Furthermore, these states would represent themselves and would be unable to replace Europe in its current integrated political expression.

What is the place of North Africa and the Middle East in this transition? The neighborhood is of central importance in Europe's security strategy: while the Union's integrative model is related to its broad external relations, European strategy has focused on the neighborhood since the end of the Cold War and still does today. In the neighborhood framework, which is an arc stretching from Belarus to Morocco, the Mediterranean area — that is the Maghreb and the Mashreq — is of major significance for the EU. Other Middle Eastern countries, such as the GCC countries, have far less structured relations with the EU, or rather vague relations, like Yemen, Iran, and Iraq. Thus, the question is whether the Mediterranean will hold its place in the European transition or whether there will be some changes.

There can be no single answer to this question. Both the European Union and its member states

---

<sup>56</sup> R. Wijk, "The geopolitical consequences of the €-crisis," *Europe's World*, No. 21, Summer 2012, pp. 16-22; C. Grant, "The strategic consequences of the Eurozone crisis," *Europe's World*, No. 16, Autumn 2010, pp. 68-71.

perceive the Arab Spring as an opportunity. However, as seen in chapter 3, they seem to have different responses and different strategies.

To begin with the EU, the policy survey in chapter 3 shows that, for all updates and improvements, all the EU is doing is putting its traditional Euro-Mediterranean strategy back on track: deep democracy, inclusiveness and human rights, sustainable development from a neo-liberal (Washington Consensus) perspective, inter-regional liberalization, and economic integration in the framework of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs). How much sense is there in that? It's legitimate to doubt that it makes sense in many respects.

One has to remember that these ambitious objectives will be pursued under the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which is a bilateral policy based on individual southern partners' ownership and performances. How many countries will be able and willing to play the game? The ENP in its less ambitious 2004 version already decreased its partners' numbers. The 2011 version might have even fewer followers, not only because of the enhancement of its ambitions, but also because the new regimes have no reasons to comply with these ambitions any more, whether enhanced or not. The revolutionary countries will certainly resist external influences. In particular, they seem to have their own concept of democracy and thus they will hardly be interested in reforms leveraging the democratic concepts of others. Furthermore, although the Muslim Brothers seem interested in foreign investment and capitalism, they will think twice before buying economic policies — as those promoted by the ENP — that in partners' eyes have brought inequality, economic exclusion, economic insecurity, and vulnerability to their countries.

This unilateral ENP approach, which has prevailed in the past 20 years, is still a part of Western

perceptions in general: Arab revolutions are seen as an opportunity for those countries to implement Western ideals and democratic values rather than their own. As aptly underscored by Heydemann, “Western governments have tended to define the challenges of the Arab Spring in their own image rather than in terms defined by the participants in these uprising.”<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the current EU approach — also because of its more elaborate form — looks even more unilateral, especially with respect to the more pragmatic approaches broadly adopted by individual Western governments.

The EU Mediterranean strategy has some important shortcomings. First of all, an even smaller number of southern partners are likely to be interested in it, thus jeopardizing the EU Mediterranean policy’s perceived security objectives. The 2003 European Security Strategy based EU security upon the creation of a ring of friends in its neighborhood: “our task is to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations.” The ENP, after the Arab Spring, addresses a rather narrow and discontinuous ring: a handful of good bilateral relations rather than an overall regional setting. From a political and strategic angle, the differentiation pursued by the ENP is synonymous with fragmentation.

Second, the EU response to changes in the Arab world seems less concerned with recognizing the autonomy — if not the political otherness — the revolutions brought to the fore than amending the mistakes of its Euro-Mediterranean project revealed in the last ten years with a view to tardily enhancing its effectiveness. In this sense, there was some

<sup>57</sup> S. Heydemann, “Embracing the Change, Accepting the Challenge? Western Response to the Arab Spring,” in R. Alcaro and M. Haubrich-Seco (eds.), “Re-Thinking Western Policies in Light of the Arab Uprisings,” *IAI Research Paper*, No. 4, February 2012, pp. 21-29.

self-criticism, such as that by Commissioner Štefan Füle, who clearly missed the point, though. Despite improvement and self-criticism, the fact is that the emerging Arab regimes, while interested in getting funds and assistance, are no longer interested in the kind of Euro-Mediterranean integration pursued by EU programs.<sup>58</sup> As underscored by Youngs, “Arab protests are in the name of freedom from the West and not in aspiration of joining a ‘Western project.’”<sup>59</sup> Thus, the EU platform, as important as it is in its size and resources, seems to be pointing the wrong way, as it once again proposes a policy of shared values and objectives that the old regimes used to espouse for instrumental purposes and the new ones reject.

Third, the severe economic and social factors that contributed to triggering the Arab Spring have failed persuade the EU to introduce changes in the philosophy underpinning its Mediterranean socio-economic agenda. The nationalist and liberal segments of the Arab world have long criticized the strictly neo-liberal agenda that shapes Euro-Mediterranean economic cooperation. In their opinion, that agenda is the source of both the crony capitalism and the inequalities and impoverishment that have increased in their countries. The Islamists have an economic agenda attuned to broad Western liberalism, but their sensitivity to social issues will lead them to put limitations on liberalism, especially in view of the need to acquire and keep political consensus.<sup>60</sup> With respect to this situation, the inter-regional integration agenda the EU is once again proposing in the framework of its new Euro-Mediterranean partnership does not seem to fit for at least two reasons: 1) since the Islamists do have a liberal perspective, they will carefully

<sup>58</sup> T. Behr, “After the Revolution: The EU and the Arab Transition,” cit.

<sup>59</sup> R. Youngs, “The EU and the Arab spring: from munificence to geo-strategy,” cit.

<sup>60</sup> I. Saif and M. Abu Rumman, “The Economic Agenda of the Islamist Parties,” *The Carnegie Papers*, May 2012.

compare the Euro-Mediterranean offer with those of new regional actors, such as China, the GCC countries, India, and so on (and secularists will do the same); 2) they will not fail to note that the EU offer brings about symmetrical liberalizations on merchandise and services as well as restrictions on the movement of persons and agricultural exports. Nathalie Tocci is right in believing that only very few Southern Mediterranean countries will be interested in signing the DCFTAs the 2011 Partnership proposed.<sup>61</sup> By the same token, the southern partners will not accept Mobility Partnerships that easily, in particular Central and Western Mediterranean countries, that is those with the most serious problems with regard to migratory movements.

Despite many changes over time, the EU strategy in the Mediterranean area has upheld a Eurocentric Euro-Mediterranean perspective aimed at building up a communitarian bond of sorts, and the 2011 partnership is no exception. The conditions for implementing this strategy, always very weak, have now completely disappeared with the Arab Spring. In this sense, the newly launched 2011 partnership is bound to work more like a conventional international development assistance program than a political strategy. Thus, the question is not about what role North Africa is going to have in European strategy, but the other way round: what role can the EU be expected to play in the foreign policies or the national strategies of the emerging North African regimes? The answer could well be that if the EU does not manage to pull itself out of its deep political and economic crisis, this role, in particular from a political point view, will be rather limited.

Another dimension of this evolution is the lingering separation in EU policies between the Mediterranean and the GCC countries (as well as other Arab countries, such as Yemen and Iraq). The

<sup>61</sup> N. Tocci, "One Year On: A Balance Sheet of the EU's Response to the Arab Spring," cit.

Arab Spring has shown very neatly the importance of Islamic and Arab political bonds and, more generally, the high significance of overall regional dynamics. Even from this point of view, the EU strategy seems obsolete and risks relegating it to a secondary role in the Arab world's future development.

As for the EU states that have important interests in the Mediterranean (France, Italy, U.K., and Spain), the strategies are quite different. As stated in chapter 3, these states seem aware of North African countries' new consciousness of their political autonomy and their lack of interest in any Euro-Mediterranean political integration. We noted their awareness of the links existing between the Mediterranean and the Gulf as well. Thus, these countries are candidates for pursuing more adequate strategies toward the Arab countries. However, they are barely supported and followed by other EU countries and, on their own, can carry out good national foreign policies, but not global strategies able to respond to the changes sweeping across the Arab world and their international ramifications.

When it comes to the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the European transition is suffering from the weakening of the European integration process and is contradictory: on one hand, the European Union has the global size suited to North African states' political and developmental requirements, but its political capabilities make it unable to catch up with new developments; on the other hand, several EU states have caught up, but their size condemns them to a secondary global role.

Against this variegated backdrop, let us try to respond to our earlier question: what roles are North Africa and the Middle East going to have in the European strategic outlook? As there are two strategies, there are also two answers. The

four EU member states we pointed out, and Southern European countries in general, will have a significant interest in developing political relations. For these states, the role of North Africa and the Middle East will continue to be important in their political relations, even if their strategies will have little global or strategic relevance.

For the EU, the role of North Africa and the Middle East will weaken. As always, there will be a struggle inside the EU between members interested more in the Mediterranean and those more interested in the eastern neighborhood with a view to directing common resources toward these areas. All in all, though, with the Southern EU states looking seriously enfeebled today, the balance does not seem to be too favorable to the southern partners. Therefore, while taking a more tortuous path than in the United States, the importance of North Africa and the Middle East will also be declining in Europe as a whole, even though this will not be a rapid process.

### **The Evolution of the Arab Spring and the Islamists' Role: Perceptions and Policies**

This section comments on the perceptions and objectives guiding Western policies with respect to change in North Africa and, more in general, the Arab world. Two important perceptions are taken into consideration. One regards Islamists and the shift of centrist Islamist segments from systemic opposition to a governmental role. Western perceptions of this shift are being put to the test, especially in Egypt, where the United States' diplomacy is particularly committed.

The second perception is the Western perception of the new sense of autonomy North African states have acquired as a consequence of the revolutions. The West is respecting this emerging autonomy. Unlike past developments, it is respecting the results of the elections, is open to the advent of Islamist-led regimes, and ready to support them.

However, tipping the balance between emerging Arab autonomy and lingering Western perceptions and interests still proves difficult and uncertain. Clear engagement is still to come.

### **Centrist Islamists**

Western public opinion is following developments in North Africa with two opposite perceptions. On one hand, there is a majority concerned by the high ebb of the Islamist tide and its arguable consequences on both freedom and human rights in the countries of the region and their own countries, as well as on Western interests in the regional context. On the other hand, a minority is convinced of the Islamist parties' democratic potential, despite lingering "gray zones."<sup>62</sup> Leveraging different assumptions, they say that democracy, once a set of core principles is respected, does not have to be based on the same values everywhere and that societal change has brought about individualization in Islam and thus opened the door to a quest for political democracy.<sup>63</sup> This minority is thus convinced of the need to shore up emerging political change with a view to setting democratic constitutional reforms in motion.

Western governments are following an intermediate path by sharing the minority's convictions without completely dropping the majority's concerns.

One has to add that concerns about change are affecting Europe more than the United States. This is the result of political expediency rather than conviction. While the United States, in the framework of its shifting strategic interests, wants to see cooperative governments taking over as

<sup>62</sup> N.J. Brown, A. Hamzawy, and M. Ottaway, "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring Gray Zones," *Carnegie Papers*, No. 67, March 2006.

<sup>63</sup> O. Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1994; O. Roy, "Islamic Revival and Democracy: The case in Tunisia and Egypt," in C. Merlini and O. Roy (eds.), *Arab Society in Revolt. The West's Mediterranean Challenge*, Washington, Brookings Institution Press, July 2012, pp. 47-52.

soon as possible, whether like-minded or not, Europe maintains a more ideological approach, in particular in the Union. Furthermore, the neighborhood and the immigration challenges it poses for Europe are only distant events for the United States.

Against this backdrop, while the United States works from a regional/global perspective, the European allies and the EU pursues an essentially regional/bilateral perspective. As a result, European governments and the EU are essentially active in Tunisia and Libya. In the Egyptian transition, with its strong regional and even global implications, it is the United States that plays a pivotal role, while Europe remains largely on the sidelines. Since Egypt is the most important and challenging case with respect to the West's balancing act between emerging Islamist regimes and its own interests, let us start there.

Up to the presidential elections in June 2012, the U.S. administration's diplomacy dealing with Egypt's transition was based on two chief objectives: 1) to support the advent of a stable and friendly democracy in Egypt — although this democracy could feature “cultural” differences with respect to Western concepts; and 2) to preserve the Camp David Accords and the regional system of security relations based on it, albeit with possible modifications. In order to achieve these objectives, by the end of 2011, the United States had arguably come to the conclusion that the two actors best equipped to play an effective role in achieving the transition were the Muslim Brothers, which it publicly recognized in November, and the SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces), i.e., the military. To that purpose, the United States worked to promote a power-sharing compromise between the Muslim Brothers, as the potential leader of the emerging Egyptian democracy, and the military, as the loyal guarantor of continuity in the regional security setting, in their respective constitutional

roles. In this sense, it constantly provided declaratory support, while trying to smooth out tensions (it fully recognized the Muslim Brothers' victory in the legislative elections; it regularly disbursed the annual \$1.3 billion subvention to the military;<sup>64</sup> it abstained from reacting to the Egyptian government's harassment of U.S. NGOs based in Egypt;<sup>65</sup> and so on). However, since the election of the Muslim Brothers' candidate to the presidency in June 2012 after a tortuous process, the outlook is quite uncertain and requires a change in U.S. policy. We will delve into the political process that took place in the transition.

For a long while, it looked as if the SCAF was complying with the U.S. script. However, after the elected Parliament and the Constitutional Committee were dissolved by the Egyptian “deep state” and even more so after the SCAF issued its supplementary constitutional declaration of June 17, trying to pre-empt presidential powers, all stakeholders were authorized to believe that the SCAF was trying to gain the upper hand rather than looking for a power-sharing compromise with the Muslim Brothers, with a view to restoring the old regime in alliance with past elites and to throwing the Islamists out of the political arena.<sup>66</sup>

As for the Brothers, for a long time they also looked like they were in favor of power-sharing. Daniela Pioppi argues that “looking at the long history of the Brotherhood, one is led to believe that the Muslim Brothers played the old strategy of searching for a political compromise with

<sup>64</sup> S. Lee Myers, “Emergency Aid to Egypt Encounters an Objection,” *The New York Times*, September 29, 2012, p. A11.

<sup>65</sup> R. Springborg, “The US Response to the Arab Uprising: Leadership Missing,” cit.

<sup>66</sup> M. Ottaway and N. Brown, “Egypt's Transition in Crisis: Falling into the Wrong Turkish Model?,” *Carnegie Commentary*, March 30, 2012; H. Abdel Rahman, “Cosa è successo agli egiziani?,” *MedArabnews*, June 14, 2012.

the regime,” that is the SCAF and the military.<sup>67</sup> However, after the dissolution of the Parliament and the Constitutional Committee, the Muslim Brothers, who earlier on had accepted to abstain from presenting their candidate in the presidential elections in order to allow a balance between Islamist power in the legislative and non-Islamist in the executive, decided to go ahead resolutely with a candidate of their own, not just to compete but to win. This made the SCAF and all those opposing Islamists perceive the Brotherhood as an actor trying to monopolize power and an unacceptable systemic change rather than a compromise.

This sequence of events shows that at some point in time, both the SCAF and the Muslim Brothers perceived each other as a “winner-takes-all” adversary and reacted by dropping any idea of compromise, trying to gain the upper hand. In this sense, by June 2012, one could consider U.S. policy to have failed, or at least be in serious difficulty. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s mid-July 2012 visit to Cairo shed light on the fact that Washington, far from exercising influence on any of the actors in the Egyptian transition, is seen more or less with distrust, if not outright hostility, by everybody: the military, the old elites, the Coptic minority, and the revolutionary/liberal movement, which do not accept any compromise with the Muslim Brothers and, unlike the United States, do not believe in any Islamist democracy (and feel betrayed by U.S. support for the Islamists); and the Muslim Brothers who, at the end of the day, sense that U.S. policy accepts their taking over power only instrumentally and thus would not leave them free to govern according to their own inclination.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> D. Pioppi, “The Muslim Brotherhood and the Illusion of Power,” *Op-Med*, German Marshall Fund, July 18, 2012.

<sup>68</sup> D.D. Kirkpatrick, “Clinton Pledges Support of U.S. as Egypt Shifts,” *The New York Times*, July 15, 2012; K. Fahim, “After Meeting With Clinton, Egypt’s Military Chief Steps Up Political Feud,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2012.

Indeed, the presidential elections have emerged as an unexpected divide in the Egyptian transition’s sequence. For days after the elections, the SCAF was on the verge of proclaiming its candidate, General Ahmed Shafik, as the winner, but quite surprisingly gave up in the end and Mohamed Morsi was proclaimed president by the Electoral Commission. Some analysts interpreted Morsi’s election as a Pyrrhic victory, predicting — quite reasonably in light of past developments — that the SCAF would call new elections as soon as the new constitution was delivered and enforced.<sup>69</sup> However, again surprisingly, in August 2012, without waiting for the new constitution, President Morsi, fully in keeping with the Egyptian revolution’s legal approach, dismissed General Tantawi from the government, appointed a new general, Abdul Fattah el-Sisi, as defense minister, changed the armed forces’ chief of staff, and abolished the June 17 constitutional declaration issued by the SCAF before the presidential elections, thereby taking on the powers the SCAF had attributed to itself with that declaration.

Thus, U.S. policy is faced with new events and perspectives and the administration needs to work out a new policy. In the sequence of events just reported, two developments seem remarkable:

- the appointment at the helm of the army of new and younger generals, apparently representing a more modern and loyal generation, willing to prove their competence with respect to the Byzantine and sluggish tenure of Tantawi and his team, and arguably also sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood, and
- the Egyptian government’s intervention in the Sinai, restricting Hamas’ activities, to restore security conditions in the area, but apparently also to assert Egypt’s desire to reform the Camp

<sup>69</sup> M. Ottaway, “Good News Before More Battles in Egypt,” *Carnegie Commentary*, June 25, 2012.

David Accords in some way, the contours and modes of which are still very blurry.

These two developments have given way to different interpretations. Some see the emergence in Egypt of an Islamist regime with unclear reformist or revisionist views on the Camp David Accords, bound to oppose Israel, the United States, and the West.<sup>70</sup> Some go so far as to speculate that the Brothers are beginning to establish a winner-takes-all, and thus undemocratic, Islamist regime in Egypt, supported by a pro-Islamist military.<sup>71</sup>

However, these developments can also be interpreted more trivially, that is as moves meant to ensure domestic consensus and Arab/Islamic support for the Brothers in a context in which if they don't win, they die. Then again, if the model is Turkey, what the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) has done so far is in tune with that: getting rid of the military guardianship and reasserting civilian power over them. Of course, it remains to be seen whether this first legitimate step will be followed by the emergence of a democratic regime. Another interpretation is that change stems from the internal dynamics of the military, adverse to Tantawi's political ambiguity and chiefly reflecting the military's concern that it will "remain on the sidelines of Egyptian politics as long as Egyptian politics remains on the sidelines of its internal affairs."<sup>72</sup> It may be that these two interpretations combine with one another: a corporative move by the military, which is politically well managed by President Morsi. In the end, this would not be that far from the power-sharing compromise desired by the United States and the West, although it remains

<sup>70</sup> K. Fahim, "Developments in Iran and Sinai Deepen Israel's Worries About Egypt," *The New York Times*, August 23, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> O. Perlov and S. Brom, "Changes in the Balance of Power in Egypt: Egyptian Discourse on the Social Networks," *INSS Insight*, No. 365, August 22, 2012.

<sup>72</sup> H.A. Helliyer, "Military or President: Who Calls the Shots in Egypt," *RUSI Analysis*, August 24, 2012.

to be seen what voice the military will have in security affairs.

While the sense of current developments cannot be easily discerned, U.S. and Western diplomacies should try to avoid anticipating some dramatic development and seek to establish the confidence they have failed to foster so far. As noted, the Muslim Brothers do not see the United States as a sincere supporter. This perception has to be dispelled, above all, by internalizing the fact that political change can be not just cosmetic, as in Tomasi's *Leopard* (for things to remain the same, everything must change). In this sense, a degree of discontinuity in relations between the West, Israel, and the Arabs should be anticipated. The United States needs to make Egyptians conscious of their red lines, while assuring them that in principle discontinuity is accepted and Egyptian autonomy respected. To be sure, tipping the balance between emerging Arab autonomy and lingering Western interests is not easy. Yet, this is what has to be done if the West wants to leave the old conflicts behind and jumpstart a new era of secure and good relations with the Middle East. That said, if Egypt really were to turn into an undemocratic Islamist regime, or even a kind of Islamic republic (though this is not in the cards), this would certainly pose a serious dilemma for the West, which would have to decide whether or not to accept such a degree of discontinuity.

The Egyptian sequence confirms Perthes' savvy evaluation stressing that the Western countries "may assist or obstruct, but they cannot determine the course of events."<sup>73</sup> What is happening is that, after the Arab Spring, developments are being determined by Arab rather than Western actors. This was accepted by the United States at the very moment they decided to recognize the Muslim Brothers as possible democratic leaders of Egypt. All the United States has to do now is be consistent

<sup>73</sup> V. Perthes, "Europe and the Arab Spring," cit.



with that decision and work in a perspective of change rather than one of conservation.

The Europeans are essentially engaged in Libya and Tunisia where, as of today, challenges are no less complex although strategically less important. In Libya, the Islamists are on the opposition and, in Tunisia, while the Islamist centre is less assertive than in Egypt, the Ennahda-led government has to manage a situation that is far less exposed to global and regional trends. Nevertheless, problems of national and political stability are looming in these countries, which could, at a later stage, involve Europe in situations as thorny as those the United States is dealing with today.

In Libya, the liberal coalition led by Mahmoud Jibril scored a success in the July 2012 elections by obtaining control of 44 of the 80 seats reserved for MPs elected from party lists. The outlook in a democratization perspective is favorable although stability will be hard to achieve.<sup>74</sup> However, attempts at forming a national unity government in October and November under Ali Zeitan's leadership proved very difficult and so are his government's first steps. This is linked more to the country's overall instability rather than to the behavior of the Islamists specifically. In sum, the question of political Islamism and its democratic potential has proved less problematic in Libya. Here, the challenge for Western governments is not to recognize an Islamist regime and assess its democratic potential, but to determine how to relate to a democratic Islamist opposition and how to engage it. This is a long standing issue, very much debated, especially in Europe, yet never really solved.<sup>75</sup> However, the most important challenge for Western countries is that Libya's nation-building

problems are particularly serious and complex, exposing Libya to radical Islamist subversion — a problem that nobody can be certain will be overcome.<sup>76</sup> What is novel in the new context is that nation-building is not up to the West, but to the countries involved. Of course, it will need to be supported from the outside, yet without interferences. This will be the new challenge.

As for the transition in Tunisia, what started with the military's neutrality and an Ennahda-led governmental coalition with liberals is continuing with difficulties and contradictions that nevertheless do not seem bound to disrupt the democratic transition.<sup>77</sup> The outlook for democratic stability is affected most of all by the political parties' strong tendency toward fragmentation, be they secular or Islamist. Ottaway and others report strong mistrust from the country's staunchly secular elite, which sees Ennahda — as their Egyptian counterparts do the FJP — as an unacceptable systemic alternative.<sup>78</sup> These elites, though, are far weaker and less organized than in Egypt, nor do they receive any support from the military. Disturbances on the part of Salafi extremists — broadly more radical, yet definitely less numerous than in Egypt — as well as deficiencies and ambiguities in the government's ability or willingness to defend liberties and human rights have been reported.<sup>79</sup> European states and the EU support the government and are trying to strengthen relations with Tunisian civil society. Their effectiveness may be undermined, however, by inconsistencies and, at times, rivalries among

<sup>74</sup> Y.H. Zoubir and E.N. Rózsa, "The End of the Libyan Dictatorship: The Uncertain Transition," cit.

<sup>77</sup> M. Ottaway, "The Tunisian Political Spectrum: Still Unbalanced," *Carnegie Commentary*, June 19, 2012.

<sup>78</sup> M. Ottaway, "The Consequences of the Internal Power Shift," in S. Ülgen et al., "Emerging Order in the Middle East," *Carnegie Policy Outlook*, May 2012, pp. 6-10.

<sup>79</sup> A. Wolf and R. Lefèvre, "Revolution under threat: the challenges of the 'Tunisian Model,'" *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3, June 2012, pp. 559-563.

<sup>74</sup> R.B. St John, "A Transatlantic Perspective on the Future of Libya," cit.

<sup>75</sup> K. Kausch, "Plus Ça Change: Europe's Engagement with Moderate Islamists," *FRIDE Working Paper*, No. 75, January 2009.

the different European interventions, as well as by the existing close historical and cultural relations between secularists and former colonial powers.

Perceptions in Europe of Islamism and its democratic potential are more complex than in the United States because of immigration and historical ties. Consequently, the ambiguity of governments pointed out at the beginning of this section, whereby they share the minority's optimism on democratic Islamism, but do not completely drop the majority's concerns is very widespread in Europe. In any case, although Europeans have been much less explicit than Americans in recognizing Islamists and engaging them, in fact they have pragmatically and cautiously done so.

#### ***North Africa's Autonomy and Western Detachment***

Whatever the short-term outcome of Western policies and political developments in the countries of the region, there are at least two Arab Spring consequences that are bound to last: 1) the emerging sense of autonomy talked about in previous sections and that can be seen in Egypt; 2) the assertion of culture and religion, independently of the Islamist or non-Islamist nature of the political regime. Western countries' policies toward the region have to take these two perceptions into due account.

The sense of autonomy is bound to be reflected, first of all, in the international and regional posture of MENA countries. The regional security setting based on the Camp David Accords, established 30 years ago and then complemented by the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue and EU Mediterranean policies, is bound to change if Islamist-led democracies consolidate. The arguable evolution of the Syrian civil war toward a Sunni-led regime — among other scenarios — would emphasize the need for a change in regional security even more than developments in Egypt.

This perception of autonomy replaces the system of indirect guardianship exercised by the West for many years. Although Western countries, by abandoning the former dictators in the MENA area, have also given up their guardianship and seem ready in general to deal with more autonomous partners, the timing and means to get out of the old state of affairs cannot yet be predicted. Today, it is hardly even possible to foresee to what extent the Camp David system will be put into question and how Western-Arab relations will change. But what is certain is that relations will change and this may prove a difficult process.

Problems will not fail to arise, complicated perhaps by a comeback of East-West competition, as is happening in the Syrian civil war. In dealing with Islamist regimes' new sense of autonomy and assertiveness, Western reactions will be affected by two contradictory drives: on one hand, their declining overall interest in the region and, on the other, the need to preserve a number of specific red lines that the West regards as more or less non-negotiable.

As mentioned, the trend is toward North Africa and the Middle East losing significance in grand Western strategies, in particular as far as the United States is concerned. As we also underscored, this trend is taking the shape of a perception of detachment with respect to a region in which Western countries have been enormously involved, at least since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. This detachment can be clearly captured in the Western governments' — in particular United States' — sudden shift to believing in the Islamists' ability to ensure democratic governance, while mistrust reigned uncontested only two years ago. This shift stems less from a change in perception or an analytical second thought than from a political choice dictated by strategic realities (including the West's relative weakening). Stephen Walt's words on the failure of nation-building policies — “in places

where local identities remain strong and foreign interference is not welcome for long” — are apt here.

On the other hand, the end of Western guardianship also means Western autonomy toward the new Arab regimes, which are no longer allies. In this sense, while Western interests in the region tend to be generally downsized, what interests the West does retain will have to be stated more clearly and resolutely. It is through the prism of both sides’ greater autonomy that international and regional security issues will be considered in the near future. This could lead to tensions and even conflicts but it is also the necessary condition for any cooperation to prevail.

In addition, a more assertive role for culture and religion is emerging in post-Arab Spring regimes as an important dimension of the new Arab autonomy. This enhanced cultural and religious reappropriation is independent of the religious or secular, liberal or authoritarian inspiration of the regimes. For example, in Libya, Mahmoud Jibril has spoken time and time again of national cohesion in terms of religious homogeneity and, while asserting the secular character of the state, has ensured the pivotal role of religion in that state. Islamist regimes could be democracies with elections, institutions, and so on, in which Islamic religious and cultural values and objectives somehow permeate politics and constitutions. How Western countries will engage these different democracies in relations that they would like to be respectful and good is not yet very clear.

Particularly in the last 20 years, the West has emphasized the universal nature of “moral” values (including human rights) that evolved after World War II, especially in the transatlantic community. Recognition of Islamist democracies will require a degree of relativism. In an interesting policy outlook for the Carnegie Endowment

for International Peace, the authors set out a bold engagement path (with respect to Western conventional egocentrism). In their words: “demanding that Islamist movements adopt broad ideological agendas that endorse secularism or blanket philosophical commitments to core values such as women’s rights is the wrong approach. Instead, international actors should focus on a few, very specific issues for special emphasis, such as international human rights standards, the maintenance of existing treaty relationships, and the principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes.”<sup>80</sup> The statement mentions two tiers of questions. For human rights standards, it is essentially up to civil societies to change and adapt core customs in the framework of democratic debates and institutions. The platform pointed out by the Carnegie experts is, at the end of the day, the same one on which Italy, Spain, and Portugal entered the Atlantic Alliance and the EU, and from which their respective civil societies developed different moral standards (honor, divorce, abortion, the role of women, and so on). As for the maintenance of treaties and the peaceful settlement of disputes, what is needed is the shared development of an enlarged, patient, and effective multilateralism, globally and regionally.

This pragmatic platform for engaging culturally assertive Islamist democracies may not be easily acceptable to Western governments and could hinder future relations,<sup>81</sup> in particular in the framework of EU programs contemplating “deep democracy” and in the NGO universe, where actors

---

<sup>80</sup> S. Ülgen et al., “Emerging Order in the Middle East,” cit.

<sup>81</sup> R. Aliboni, “Societal Change and Political Responses in Euro-Mediterranean Relations,” in C. Merlini and O. Roy (eds.), *Arab Society in Revolt. The West’s Mediterranean Challenge*, Washington, Brookings Institution Press, July 2012, pp. 184-213; T. Behr, “After the Revolution: The EU and the Arab Transition,” cit., p. 26.

consider themselves “normative and value-laden.”<sup>82</sup> There is no doubt that, as the EU and Europe are following a more ideological agenda, Europe will have more problems in its relations with the emerging autonomies of the Middle East than the United States.

### Security Challenges

Of the many issues touching upon security in the new Mediterranean context (energy security, trafficking of all sorts, environment, and so on), three will be taken into consideration in this section: 1) the broad evolution of the regional security picture; 2) the fundamentalist and jihadist threats to centrist regimes; and 3) the evolution of relations between the new regimes and Israel in the emerging regional configuration.

#### *The Emerging Security Contours of the Region*

Triggered by a liberal and West-minded awakening, the Arab Spring quickly turned into an Islamist and Sunni awakening. This awakening affects the entire Arab world, but it is unfolding under different conditions in North Africa and in the Levant/Gulf area. It is affecting the regional security framework from the point of view of both regional and external stakeholders, Europe, and the United States in particular.

There are various reasons for the differences between North Africa and the Levant/Gulf. First of all, North African revolutions did not internationalize, neither regionally nor internationally. The NATO and Arab League intervention in Libya did not reflect an external conflict. And while the Libyan revolution has subsequently had important repercussions in Mali

<sup>82</sup> R. Mabro, “Civil Society in the History of Ideas and in European History,” in Bruno Kreisky, *The Role of NGOs in the Development of Civil Society: Europe and the Arab Countries*, Amman and Vienna, 1999, pp. 29-48; A. Jünemann, “The EuroMed Civil Forum: ‘Critical Watchdog’ and Intercultural Mediator,” in S. Panebianco (ed.), *A New Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Identity*, London and Portland, Frank Cass, 2003, pp. 84-107.

and the Sahara-Sahel area, the Libyan civil conflict has not been internationalized. By contrast, the Syrian revolt in the Levant is extremely regionalized and, in some respects, even internationalized (because of strong opposition in the UN Security Council and ensuing West-Russia-China competition). The Syrian revolution, which started out as a grassroots protest against the regime, has evolved into the revolt of the Sunni majority, supported and somehow even fostered by external Sunni allies — Saudi Arabia and Qatar — against the Alawite minority regime, supported in turn by regional Shi’a allies — Iran, the Shi’a majority in power in Baghdad and the Lebanese Shiites. Those fighting in Syria against or in favor of the Syrian regime are, willy-nilly, proxies for other actors engaged in a wider regional context.

If Assad’s regime falls, this will fundamentally change today’s regional balance between Shiites and Sunnis, triggering serious collateral problems with regard to the Kurds (and thus involving Turkey’s national security).<sup>83</sup> This change would immediately affect Lebanese Shiites, in particular the Hezbollah, and as a consequence the whole of Lebanon, but it would also increase contrasts between the Shi’a Iraqi government and Iraqi Kurds and Sunnis, and raise serious strategic questions for Tehran. At the same time, it would be to the advantage of Saudi Arabia and the other GCC countries in terms of national security and their sectarian and political sway over the rising Sunni forces in the Arab world.

While this would hardly trigger a conventional war in the region, a more or less conventional conflict could take place in the Levant — somehow linked to the Hezbollah — were the latter to take the initiative and/or Israel to become somehow involved. By contrast, it is far more likely that Sunni regional actors could jumpstart non-conventional

<sup>83</sup> H.J. Barkey, “The Evolution of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East,” *TESEV Foreign Policy Programme*, July 2012.

warfare throughout the region, a region that Al Qaeda can easily infiltrate.

As a matter of fact, while revolutions in North Africa have been managed and even dominated by well organized Islamist Sunni parties, having in many cases participated in domestic political life for some time — as they might — in Syria the Sunni Islamist revolt has slowly and unevenly been structuring itself from its grassroots origin, in a country where Muslim opposition has been almost totally overthrown and massacred by the regime over the years. For this reason, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has developed in exile and is hardly present in Syria and in the armed uprising today.<sup>84</sup> While in Libya, opposition to Gaddafi largely developed abroad, many exiled people were willing and able to return to fight inside the country to an extent that is not materializing in Syria. Syria today is a case, frequently found during the decolonization era, in which rebels are separated between those inside and those outside and are thus bound to converge only with difficulty, if not to clash.

In this situation of improvisation and political fragmentation, the Syrian revolution is being increasingly infiltrated by jihadists, both independent fighters generally supported by Gulf countries, and members of Al Qaeda. Moreover, the revolution in Syria has seemingly proved instrumental in fostering or triggering what looks like an “Al Qaeda in Iraq” revival. This organization has taken on activities in Iraq itself and seems active today on the Syrian battle ground, perhaps with the ambitious goal of setting up an Islamic state comprising the two countries. In sum, the perspective of a Sunni-Shiite region-wide conflict is coupled, as usual, with the perspective in which radical Sunni currents are ready to wage war against other Sunnis and the Shiites.

<sup>84</sup> M. Kabalan, “Brotherhood faces Damascus challenge,” *Gulf News*, July 20, 2012.

For the Western countries, this is challenging, not because it threatens their existential security, but because it entails strong economic and energy risks, a broad risk of instability and violence spilling over, as well as risks of being involved, especially if instability were to translate into threats to regional allies (the GCC countries, Israel, Turkey). The West could also be affected by such threats as the dispersal of Syrian chemical arsenals and, more generally, the spread of and trafficking in heavy and light weapons, as happened in Libya.

One has to underscore that the risk of conflict regards the Maghreb less than the Mashreq. Although not immune from regional conflicts, North Africa is likely to remain on the sidelines. In principle, Egypt may be an exception, as this country is part of the Mashreq and has a regional outreach. However, one can expect Egypt — whether military or Muslim Brothers-led Egypt or both — to be very little inclined to participate in or foster an enlarged Iranian-Saudi conflict. As some Egyptian steps taken under the SCAF regime seem to point out, Cairo may easily prove willing to keep good relations with Iran, while contributing to preventing conflict from erupting in the region. President Morsi’s August 2012 speech in Teheran confirms this approach. That said, there are security challenges regarding North Africa that deserve consideration, as we will see when considering developments in the Sahara-Sahel area in the next section.

#### ***Fundamentalism and Jihadism***

The Arab Spring has created a kind of post-Western Mediterranean region, in which the broad security picture is affected by, among other things, a durable strengthening of Sunni Islamism in its multifaceted expressions.

The strengthening of Sunni Islamism is regarded by Western countries as a source of concern. However, as argued in other sections, by lowering

past bars in response to the Arab Spring, Western governments have supported Islamist parties, looking at them as a challenge to be turned into an opportunity rather than a risk or a threat to their security. These parties, though, are only part of a wider trend comprising Sunni fundamentalist and radical tendencies. In fact, the end of the suppression of Islamism by past authoritarian regimes has allowed all Islamist trends to come into the open: not only trends that have evolved over time toward pragmatic or national-democratic perspectives, such as the Muslim Brothers, but also trends with fundamentalist, such as the Salafis, or even violent orientations, such as the jihadists and Al Qaeda franchises. How can we expect these fundamentalist trends to evolve in the new context, affecting North Africa's security and reflecting on Western security?

### **Egypt**

Let us begin with the domestic setting and look first at fundamentalist tendencies, as in the important case of Egyptian Salafists. While typically a politically quietist group, the democratic transition in Egypt has unexpectedly stimulated Salafists to shift from political quietism to activism. They have set up parties, participated with success in the elections, and jump-started an internal debate on a number of key issues (democracy, the role of women, and so on).

How will the Egyptian Salafi trend evolve? Will they undergo an evolution similar to that of the Muslim Brothers, from whom they do not differ significantly on ideological grounds? Will fundamentalism remain an overwhelming conservative feature in their political activity without radicalizing? Or will they evolve toward violence? The outcome is not easy to predict. Jonathan Brown believes that Salafists' "real involvement in an open democratic system [could lead] to significant mitigation in Salafi positions."<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> J. Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt," cit.

Current events in Egypt suggest that there is fierce competition between the Muslim Brothers and the Salafists and that "though the Muslim Brotherhood still occupies the dominant position, it has lost its hegemony over Islamist politics."<sup>86</sup> Thus, there is the possibility that Salafists could replace the Brothers' present leadership in a future democratic process. If the Salafists were to undergo a pragmatic evolution, this would not change things significantly from a Western point of view. By the way, a Salafi pragmatic evolution could also make Salafist and Muslim Brothers political parties converge and coalesce. If, on the contrary, a politically ascending Salafi trend were to retain a significantly fundamentalist perspective, even the sense of an Islamist democracy could be put into question and problems could arise between Salafists and both the Muslim Brothers and the West. Under pressure from an ascending Salafi trend, the Muslim Brothers might even be compelled to draw back from their reformism.

Radicalization, paving the way for violence and turning Salafists into jihadists, would depend on events and their religious leaders' interpretation of them. Exclusion from mainstream politics by Muslim Brothers' ostracism, or by a military-Muslim Brothers coalition, or by renewed suppression by the military could lead to radicalization. Should religious leaders see events as the outcome of a non-Muslim or a corrupt Muslim leadership, Salafists might be authorized to shift from fundamentalist quietism and their emerging pragmatism to jihadism, as happened with their Wahhabi cousins.<sup>87</sup> This evolution would introduce violent jihadism in the domestic arena and unleash streams of jihadists abroad, wherever their religious imperatives call upon them.

<sup>86</sup> S. Lacroix, "Sheikh and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism," cit.

<sup>87</sup> J. Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt," cit.

## Tunisia

In Tunisia, an active Salafi trend has emerged with the fall of the regime.<sup>88</sup> Tunisian Salafists, far less numerous than Egyptians, seem more aggressive and bent on violence than their Egyptian brothers.<sup>89</sup> While the Egyptian Salafists have been quick to integrate themselves in the new political process by forming a number of parties and jumpstarting a debate, in Tunisia (with the exceptions of Jabhat al-Islah/Reform front, the only licensed Salafi party in Tunisia so far) the Salafists have not taken part in the elections and the process that led to the present institutions. It is likely, though, that some groups will do so in the next rounds in 2013.

Could jihadists and Al Qaeda groups pour into the three revolutionary countries? Jihadists and Al Qaeda adepts are now flocking to Syria, invited by the violent and protracted conflict in this country, the military weakness of the insurgents, and the strategic significance of the Syrian conflict.<sup>90</sup> In principle, jihadism is attracted by situations featuring violent conflict or important fault-lines and state failure. Where conflict erupts and fundamentalists radicalize, jihadists pour in. Were Libya to prove unable to control its numerous fault lines, it would be exposed to jihadi infiltrations, which would join emerging domestic radicals and jihadists. However, domestic-based jihadist spot initiatives, inspired or even led from abroad, cannot be ruled out, as seems to have been the case with the September 2012 attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi.

<sup>88</sup> A. Zelin, "Who is Jabhat al-Islah," Sada. Online journal of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 18, 2012; E. Parker, "Tunisian religious Tensions and the Emerging Bogeyman: Salafism," *Ramadan.com*, originally published in *Tunisia Live*, June 15, 2012.

<sup>89</sup> A. Wolf and R. Lefèvre, "Revolution under threat: the challenges of the 'Tunisian Model,'" cit.

<sup>90</sup> N. MacFarquhar and H. Saad, "Jihadists Taking A Growing Role In Syrian Revolt," *The New York Times*, July 30, 2012.

More in general, it can be said that, if transitions do not succeed, there will be instability and conflict in the countries concerned. This would make them more vulnerable to external factors, jihadism included. Furthermore, it would allow home grown jihadism to flourish and domestic and external jihadists to join up. It must be added, though, that failed transitions in Egypt and Tunisia, long-standing cohesive nations, are unlikely to turn into situations like those in Syria or Iraq.

In sum, while a radicalization turning Salafists into jihadists cannot be ruled out in North Africa, jihadism is at present a much smaller risk in this area than in the Levant and the Gulf. North Africa looks more like a supplier than a consumer of jihadists in the wider Arab world. However, any possible evolution depends very much on the outcome of the transitions. If transitions succeed, risks will prove greatly reduced. If they fail on politically or, more importantly, socio-economic grounds, instability and conflict will foster Islamist radicalization domestically and fatally attract radicals from abroad, especially if violent conflicts arise in the countries concerned. Thus, for North African countries and the West, security perspectives are tied to the success of the transitions.

## Sahel-Sahara

As just stated, it is unlikely that, in the present context, jihadism will be able to spill over from the Mashreq into the three North African countries under consideration. However, one has to take Islamist radicalism in their southern approaches, that is the Sahara-Sahel area, into account as well. There, jihadism has developed from the Algerian civil war and has expanded to northern Mali and the other countries south of the Maghreb, chiefly Mauritania, Niger, and Chad. In 2007, the heirs to the Islamist organizations that fought during the Algerian civil war and its aftermath became officially affiliated to Al Qaeda, with the name of

“Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb,” AQIM. Could AQIM be a security challenge for the revolutionary North African countries? Actually, AQIM’s activities were ideologically and operationally significant only at the very moment it joined Al Qaeda. One can basically agree with Cristiani and Fabiani’s evaluation that, all in all, “AQIM activities in the Sahel are best described as a loose network of Islamist terrorists and local criminals who profit from the smuggling and kidnapping trade,”<sup>91</sup> by taking advantage of the semi-failed status and economic distress of the region’s nations and the lack of cooperation — in particular the fierce competition between Algeria and Morocco — among the Maghrebi and Sahelian states and also between the two regions.

Algerian Islamists have always acted from a local/regional perspective and focused on Algeria. The decision to go global with their affiliation to Al Qaeda was chiefly aimed at escaping their local predicament and related difficulties and constraints. When the then GSPC (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat*) became affiliated to Al Qaeda, changing its name to AQIM, it had a role to play in that organization’s global strategy: recruiting and training people in the Maghreb-Sahara-Sahel area and Europe with the aim of sending them to fight in Iraq. When “Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia” declined, this role came to an end and AQIM’s strategic irrelevance with respect to Al Qaeda’s global perspective in the Middle East became evident.<sup>92</sup> AQIM went back to what it essentially is: a broad local security challenge to the Sahel, Algeria, and the Maghreb. In fact, today, AQIM’s activities are confined to the weak Sahelian states and disconnected from Middle

<sup>91</sup> D. Cristiani and R. Fabiani, “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM): Implications for Algeria’s Regional and International Relations,” *IAI Working Papers*, No. 1107, April 2011.

<sup>92</sup> J.-P. Filiu, “Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Algerian Challenge or Global Threat?,” *Carnegie Papers*, No. 104, October 2009.

Eastern global-oriented jihadism and its activities. Its regional outreach is relevant in terms of soft security challenges (kidnapping, trafficking, and so on) but modest in military and political terms. It is a significant concern for the Sahelian states. It is a concern for Algeria and to some extent for Morocco.<sup>93</sup> It is irrelevant for Egypt. What about Libya?

Gaddafi’s Libya regularly and strongly interfered in the Sahel. Gaddafi’s interest in Africa and the Sahel, never shared by the Libyan people, will certainly not be shared by the new regime either. Libya will need immigrants from Africa, but will restrict and control their access. However, the new regime may be vulnerable to some extent to the instability in the Sahel, perhaps even more than Algeria, which has had time to organize itself to control spillovers. Furthermore, if there is a “spawn” of Gaddafi’s Libya in the Sahel, to some extent this spawn will maintain Libya’s ties to that area and expose the country to spillovers.<sup>94</sup>

The repercussions of the Libyan civil war on the Sahel have been disastrous, less for North Africa than for the Sahel countries.<sup>95</sup> However, the mid-2012 occupation of northern Mali by AQIM in alliance with the Ansar el-Din Tuareg Islamist group is a new development, possibly a strategic upgrade of AQIM’s struggle and objectives that could challenge North African security.<sup>96</sup> If this occupation proves less short-lived than the Azawad state Gaddafi’s former Tuareg mercenaries

<sup>93</sup> On Algeria see A. Arieff, “Algeria and the Crisis in Mali,” *Actuelles de l’IFRI*, July 19, 2012.

<sup>94</sup> Y.H. Zoubir, “Qaddafi’s Spawn,” *Foreign Affairs Snapshot*, July 24, 2012.

<sup>95</sup> W. Lacher, “Regional Repercussions of Revolution and Civil war in Libya,” in M. Asseburg (ed.), “Protest, Revolt, and Regime Change in the Arab World. Actors, Challenges, Implications, and Policy Actors,” *SWP Research Paper*, No. 6/2012, February 2012, pp. 47-50.

<sup>96</sup> B. Riedel, “The New Al Qaeda Menace,” *The National Interest*, August 8, 2012.



established on the same territory for a couple of months before being evicted by AQIM and Ansar el-Din, this could make a difference. The installation of an Islamic territorial entity — an Islamic emirate — similar to Somalia would be a security challenge to the Sahel and the Maghreb and would affect Europe as well.

As things stand today, unless the northern Mali occupation by AQIM and Ansar el-Din marks a strategic watershed, fundamentalism and jihadism do not seem serious security challenges for the North African transitions, either domestically nor regionally. However, if the transitions do not succeed in including citizens and, on the contrary, degrade into conflict, discrimination or repression, there will be radicalization and the very idea of an Islamist democracy will be put into question. Domestic radicalization will then be able to interact more easily with external jihadism. At the end of the day, successful governance by the Islamist parties now in power or Islamist-liberal coalitions is the most important condition for the security of the new Islamist/Arab democracies in North Africa and for the West.

From the point of view of Western countries, while their security requirements were previously met by authoritarian and allied regimes that kept Islamists at bay domestically and cooperated with Western governments to counter violent transnational Islamism, in the new situation they cannot be assured of the new regimes' willingness and ability to do the same. If the new regimes cannot or do not want to manage fundamentalists and radicals, this will turn into a threat for Western countries. However, fundamentalism and radical Islamism are primarily a threat for the emerging centrist Islamist governments, on both political and security grounds. The Islamists presently in power are under strong pressure from the various brands of Islamist opposition, which may hinder their ability to achieve a democratic transition and give way to

more or less radical fundamentalist regimes. In this sense, one has to stress once again how important it is that the West supports the current Islamist regimes by consistently pushing for the adoption of truly democratic policies.

### ***The Arab-Israeli Setting***

In the context of the Arab Spring transition, quite unexpectedly, the Arab-Israeli conflict is resting on the sidelines. This is due to the lasting paralysis of Israeli-Palestinian relations in a situation of “no peace, no resistance, and no war.” Ideas are stagnating. It is also due, however, to the Arabs' concentration on domestic affairs because of democratic transitions and revolutions and the focus on the regional conflicts mentioned in sketching out the current security situation. Meanwhile, Israel is keeping a very low profile toward Arab affairs and acts as if the Israeli-Palestinian issue does not exist, focusing its anxiety on Iran instead. Thus, the Arab-Israeli question looks like a non-issue in the Arab Spring context. However, the Islamists' rise in the region, which has already brought three Islamist-led governments to power in North Africa and could expand further into the Levant in the near future, suggests that the question is bound to resurface sooner or later. One can safely say that at some point in time the Arab-Israeli issue will come back as an important security issue affecting both the region and the West.

What are the terms of the question today? In general, while the jihadists' point of view has not changed (meaning that if the emerging Islamist regimes turn out to be “moderate” vis-à-vis Israel, jihadists would not hesitate to consider them apostates like the previous regimes), the Islamists already in power or integrated in the current democratic transitions are pursuing a reformist rather than revisionist approach toward Israel, its existence, and Palestinian-Israeli relations.<sup>97</sup> They

<sup>97</sup> K. Kausch, “Islamist-led foreign policies: what implications?” *FRIDE Policy Brief*, No. 120, March 2012.

apparently have no intention to abolish the Camp David Accords, although they believe that they need to be modified in a way and to a degree that still has to be clarified, and would generally like to reshape the kind of relationship that prevailed under Mubarak. While it is clear that they want to have cold rather than warm relations with the “Zionist entity,” which remains generally unaccepted, it also seems that they aim to have peaceful and even constructive relations with Israel. As for the fluid mass of Salafists, those who have decided to integrate in the ongoing political process (such as al-Nour in Egypt and Jabhat al-Islah in Tunisia) have still not set out their ideas, although they should turn out to be closer to those of the moderate Islamists than the jihadists.<sup>98</sup> In contrast, Salafi groups bent on radicalization (such as Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia) are obviously bound to stay closer to jihadists. In conclusion, if the Islamists presently in power consolidate and continue with their moderation, the Camp David system will have to be reformed but will survive. Nevertheless, this process of reform may not prove easy for many reasons, including the need for the Islamists in power to carry out a difficult balancing act in order to prevent the Islamist opposition from eroding, if not ending, their power. The case of the Tunisian draft constitution banning the normalization of relations with Israel attests to the difficulties inherent in the process of reform.

Moreover, this process may be complicated or even frustrated by such “external shocks” as an Israeli attack on Iran or local/regional conflicts arising in a post-Assad Syrian context. Such developments would obviously harden public opinions, reinforce Islamist opposition, weaken centrist Islamist governments, and hinder their constructive intentions. The same would happen

<sup>98</sup> J. Brown, “Salafis and Sufis in Egypt,” cit.; S. Lacroix, “Sheikh and Politicians: Inside the New Egyptian Salafism,” cit.; O. Abdel-Latif, “Salafists and Politics in Egypt,” cit.

should a violent Israeli-Palestinian crisis flare up for whatever reason.

Against this backdrop of changing Arab positions on Arab-Israeli relations, the most important case to consider is Egypt. This country is the pivot of the Camp David security setting. How is its position evolving with respect to the Mubarak era? The general impression is that the new Islamist-led Egyptian government wishes to reform yet keep the Camp David Accords and its inherent regional security regime.<sup>99</sup> Attesting to this are their statements and positions before Morsi became the Egyptian president, as well as Morsi’s moves once ascended to the presidency. The way this question is going to evolve, however, apart from regional developments, is related to two main aspects: 1) Egypt’s bilateral relationship with Israel, revolving around the role of the Sinai and related modifications to the Camp David Accords’ military annex; and 2) the Israeli-Palestinian issue, in its bilateral dimensions, but most of all as a regional issue over which Egypt acquired a special political responsibility in signing the Camp David Accords.

### **Sinai**

The insecurity in the Sinai stems above all from the Cairo government’s failure to take care of this region from a social and economic point of view after Israel handed it back to Egypt.<sup>100</sup> While the treaty limits Egypt’s military presence in the peninsula — so as to ensure Israeli strategic depth — this in no way concerns the presence of the Egyptian state in any other respect. Nevertheless, the Egyptian government has always seriously neglected the Sinai. The worsening socio-economic conditions of the Bedouin tribes drove them first to home-grown violence and crime, then to

<sup>99</sup> P. Droz-Vincent, “A Post-revolutionary Egyptian Foreign Policy? ... Not Yet,” *Op-Med*, German Marshall Fund, July 10, 2012.

<sup>100</sup> N. Pelham, *Sinai: The Buffer Erodes*, London, Chatham House, September 2012.

interact with external factors, involving them in the radicalization in Gaza and arms smuggling. Finally, infiltration by jihadists from Gaza and the entire Arab world as well as from Al Qaeda and Iran has produced alienated and radicalized local youth.<sup>101</sup>

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring and taking advantage of Egypt's focus on its transition, incidents targeting Israel, its interests, and the stability of Israeli-Egyptian relations have multiplied: the August 18, 2011 attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border (which Jerusalem attributed to Hamas), in which four Egyptian policemen were killed by the Israelis in a cross-fire; about 14 attacks in 2011-2012 to the pipeline supplying Egyptian gas to Israel (which led to the revocation of the related 2000 agreements in April 2012);<sup>102</sup> and the August 5, 2012 attack on the Karm post on the Egyptian border with a brief penetration into Israeli territory and the killing of 16 Egyptian border policemen by the attackers.

The August 2011 incident enraged Egyptian public opinion. There were calls for cancelling the Camp David Accords and demonstrations against the Israeli embassy in Cairo. Since then, the Sinai has become a source of anxiety in both Israel and Egypt as the possible trigger of a serious crisis, if not a conflict, putting into question not only the treaty but also the now long-standing state of peace. The recent 2012 incident prompted an unexpectedly strong response from President Morsi who sent in considerable military forces, including heavy weapons, and had the tunnels to Gaza sealed.

President Morsi's response is politically multifaceted. It was, first of all, a domestic political

move to assert his position after he dismissed Field Marshal Tantawi from his government, replaced him with another general, and re-staffed the chief of staff.<sup>103</sup> Second, and more pertinent to this section, it was a foreign policy move aimed at raising the question of updating the Camp David Accords.

President Morsi's intervention was arguably a strong signal underscoring Egypt's desire for the annex to be modified. That is not the Israeli position, which maintains that the treaty already contemplates the necessary waivers, should they be needed, and prefers not to touch the annex so as not to risk setting in motion further modifications and the eventual weakening of the treaty itself.<sup>104</sup> Israel would like to limit itself to providing Egypt with waivers, as contemplated in the annex, that would allow Egypt to do what is needed to put the area in order and keep the Sinai from becoming a threat to Israel's security, without changing the treaty.<sup>105</sup> In this sense, Egypt's unexpected and strong intervention in the Sinai, while apparently meeting Israeli expectations for Egypt to intervene to restore order in the Sinai peninsula, has in fact opened the first round on the Camp David Accords' future state of play.

Ofer Zalberg, from the International Crisis Group, says that Israel would be better advised to accept secret negotiations to modify the annex, seeking out the right balance between an unlimited vs. a well selected Egyptian military presence on the ground. This would strengthen the new Egyptian regime's consensus and would make Egypt less anxious over the treaty and its regional

<sup>101</sup> J. Goodman, "Shades of the Sinai's Instability," *Sada*. Online journal of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 15, 2012; L. Attalah, "Sinai: the paradox of security," *Bitterlemons-international*, Vol. 13, No. 13, March 29, 2010.

<sup>102</sup> S. Even, "Egypt's Revocation of the natural Gas Agreement with Israel: Strategic Implications," *INSS Insight*, No. 332, May 6, 2012.

<sup>103</sup> K. Fahim, "Egyptian Leader Pushes Generals Into Retirement," *The New York Times*, August 13, 2012.

<sup>104</sup> B. Berti and Z. Gold, "Security Vacuum in the Sinai," *The National Interest*, August 10, 2012.

<sup>105</sup> A. Baker, "Sinai, the New Egypt, and the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty," *Jerusalem Issue Briefs*, Vol. 12, No. 19, August 22, 2012.

implications.<sup>106</sup> At the end of the day, it would strengthen the treaty.

While Western countries tend to lean toward the current Israeli position, they should reflect on Egyptian political requirements as well. In this sense, they should support the new regime in obtaining a reasonable modification of the military annex with a view to having the treaty politically confirmed and the new Egyptian regime consolidated.

#### **Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

What are the security implications of at Israeli-Palestinian relations when viewed through the prism of the emerging Islamist-led governments? The outlook is very aptly epitomized by Nathan Brown's comment on the visit paid by Hamas leader, Khaled Mishal, to Egypt's newly elected President Morsi: "Palestine can wait ... for now."<sup>107</sup> The sealing of the tunnels to Gaza during Egypt's mid-August intervention in the Sinai confirms that neither Hamas nor Palestine are a priority for the Egyptian Brothers at this time. In fact, Egypt's new leadership is busy consolidating its power vis-à-vis its domestic opponents and is undertaking the daunting task of governing a country in full social and economic disarray. Hence the practical irrelevance of the meeting. However, as soon as the situation stabilizes in Egypt and the Levant (Syria), the Israeli-Palestinian issue will be an imperative for the Egyptian government, for the Brother's stability in power, for national security, and for Arab leadership.

If the Muslim Brotherhood is able to consolidate its institutional and political role at Egypt's helm and willing to lead in the Arab world, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the rise of a Palestinian

state will come up as an inescapable test. From this perspective, should the Egyptian government support Hamas politically and militarily (replacing Iran), this will mean a collision course with Israel. Moreover, this policy would not be appreciated by Western countries. Since the Muslim Brothers apparently want to reform yet retain the Camp David Accords, on one hand, and develop good economic, investment, and, broadly speaking, even political/diplomatic relations with the West, on the other, this course seems a non-option.

Another option is the pragmatic continuation of Egypt's historical role as mediator between Israel and the Palestinians and between the Palestinian factions. For this option to have some chances of success, however, the present configuration of Arab, Israeli, and Western policies has to change significantly. In the framework of that configuration, mediation efforts by Mubarak's Egypt were fruitless, in particular regarding Israeli-Palestinian relations. If the configuration remains as it is today, there is no reason to believe that the Brothers would be more successful.

Western policies in the Oslo framework have led Fatah to provide Israel with the security it wants without convincing it to respond by making a two-state solution feasible. The result is that "Israelis have come to believe they can eat their cake and have it, too."<sup>108</sup> In exchange, Fatah and its leadership have acquired a monopoly on power and protection from Hamas thanks to Israeli and Western support. But Fatah has also reached an absolute dead end and have brought with it the actors in the Arab-Israeli setting, including the West and the Arab Gulf countries.<sup>109</sup> If this state of affairs does not change, a renewed mediation effort by the Brothers will prove a non-starter with serious consequences for

<sup>106</sup> O. Zalzberg, "Qui craint une révision du traité de paix entre Israël et l'Égypte?" *Le Figaro*, July 25, 2012.

<sup>107</sup> N.J. Brown, "Palestine Can Wait ... For Now," *The Daily Beast*, July 20, 2012.

<sup>108</sup> N. Thrall, "The Third Intifada Is Inevitable," *The New York Times*, June 24, 2012.

<sup>109</sup> International Crisis Group, "The Emperor Has No Clothes: Palestinians and the End of the Peace Process," cit.

---

them, the region, and the West. A lack of success would weaken domestic consensus and sooner or later trigger intra-Islamist tensions: between Hamas and the Egyptian Brothers, inside the latter, and between the Brothers-led government and other Egyptian Islamist parties. A third Intifada, even if not in the short term, could erupt as a consequence of external partners' ineffectiveness.<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> N. Thrall, "The Third Intifada Is Inevitable," cit.

Other in-between options would have only tactical and doubtful value. Thus, U.S. and EU governments should activate themselves to avoid a Muslim Brothers' failure or radicalization on an issue where failure or radicalization could compromise the success of the moderate Islamist course, which seems likely to take place in Egypt. This would affect Western security as well as democratic transitions in North Africa and elsewhere in the Middle East.

# 5 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Transatlantic Allies in their Relations with Islamist-Led Countries

- The transatlantic allies should engage mainstream Islamists and Islamist governments more explicitly with a view to ensuring a strong moderate center against fundamentalism and jihadism. While resurgent anti-Americanism may tempt the United States and Europeans to disengage, such a decision would make it more difficult for mainstream Islamists to resist pressure from radical and fundamentalist opposition and would enhance the drift from the center toward Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism.
  - In order to allow engagement to translate into effective policies, the transatlantic allies should first of all realize and keep in mind that, because of the Arab Spring, the revolutionary countries are no longer allies but partners. What these partners principally want to achieve is an independent foreign policy, though not necessarily hostile to the West, and societies based on democratic regimes, leveraging different values and customs.
  - The transatlantic allies, having failed to build up trust and confidence in their relations with mainstream Islamists in the first stage of the transitions, are now having difficulty in establishing any political cooperation with them. As a result, while jump-starting engagement in the shorter term, they should significantly enhance economic and financial cooperation, on both bilateral and international grounds, as a better socio-economic performance is badly needed by centrist Islamist governments to cope with Islamist opposition and avoid drifts toward fundamentalism. In the end, good governance by the Islamist parties in power or Islamist-liberal coalitions is the most
- important condition for their own security and that of the West.
- When it comes to foreign policy and regional interests in the MENA area, the transatlantic allies should encourage Sunni leadership, especially the reemerging Egyptian leadership, to take on initiatives to cope with regional conflicts and work out peaceful and well-balanced regional arrangements, like the one hinted at by President Morsi at the August 2012 Non-Aligned Countries' summit in Teheran.
  - More generally, the transatlantic allies should set up new multilateral ties and strengthen existing ones to include emerging Islamist-led regimes and to improve relations between Western and Arab multilateral organizations. The Union for the Mediterranean should try to recover effectiveness and a political role in addition to enhancing its economic cooperation capabilities. By the same token, the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) should be revived with a view to setting up working instances of Western-Arab cooperation.<sup>111</sup>
  - The transatlantic allies, especially the United States, should not just wait for developments but should take the initiative as soon as possible with regard to the modifications of the Camp David Accords that the Egyptians seem eager to obtain, Gaza's access to Egypt, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
  - With respect to the Camp David Accords, the transatlantic allies should encourage Israel and Egypt to enter into negotiations with a view to modifying the military annex, seeking the right balance between an unlimited vs. a well-selected Egyptian military presence on the ground. This

<sup>111</sup> P. Fuhrhop, "The Transformation of the Middle East and the Future of NATO's Partnership," *SWP Comments*, No. 35/2011, November 2011.

would strengthen the new regime's consensus, keep Islamist opposition at bay, and make Egypt less anxious about supporting the treaty and its regional implications.

- As for the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the transatlantic allies should be prepared to do everything to prevent the issue from becoming a new stumbling block in regional as well as Western-Arab relations. In this sense, while Israel is acting as if the issue does not exist, with the U.S. president having received a new mandate, the transatlantic allies should take it on as soon as possible, and reflect on ways and means to relaunch the process with the objective of setting up two states. In the emerging regional political context, it is in the strategic interest of the United States and EU governments to avoid the failure of the Muslim Brothers or their radicalization on an issue, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where failure or radicalization could compromise the success of the moderate Islamist course.
- The transatlantic allies should not underestimate the threats to mainstream Islamists and Western interests stemming from Sahelian and Saharan jihadism. If the transatlantic allies do not manage to convince Algeria — since it perceives a Western presence in the region as an interference in its regional leadership — to actually lead, they should take urgent initiatives to 1) allow the Mali government to recover the northern part of its national territory from AQIM and the Ansar el-Din Tuaregs, 2) revive initiatives such as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), and 3) provide support for new regional initiatives. The EU should reconsider and strengthen its 2011 Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel (SSDS), clearly overtaken by developments, and shift from dealing with soft security issues, such as

kidnapping, to more politically and militarily sensitive questions.<sup>112</sup>

- The transatlantic allies should work out a set of criteria for a mutually acceptable definition of core values in their relations with Islamist-led regimes, leveraging practical objectives more than philosophical principles. While avoiding demands stemming from “broad ideological agendas that endorse secularism or blanket philosophical commitments to core values,”<sup>113</sup> this should focus on specific issues such as international human rights standards. In any case, if relations are to be peaceful and cooperative, westerners and Muslims need to know which values they can share and which ones they cannot but would nevertheless be committed to respecting (such as blasphemy). This would be as important for international relations as for relations with immigrants, especially in Europe.

#### **Relations among Transatlantic Allies with Regard to North Africa and the Middle East**

- While transatlantic governments, including Turkey, substantially converge in their assessments, expectations, and national policies toward changes in the MENA area, national policies prevail. The fragmented transatlantic approach resulting from this state of affairs is not helping to shape events in the MENA area. From a very general point of view, NATO and the EU should try to focus on the need for a more compact approach, strengthen their own approaches, and reinforce coordination and consultation on the ongoing MENA crisis.
- In present conditions, with the United States and the EU changing their strategic focuses and

<sup>112</sup> F. Reinares, “The EU’s Approach to Recent Developments in the Sahelian Terrorist Sanctuary,” *Elcano Expert Comments*, No. 23/2012, October 1, 2012.

<sup>113</sup> S. Ülgen et al., “Emerging Order in the Middle East,” cit.

Western alliances broadly weakening, some U.S. offshore balancing strategy toward the area seems inevitable. However, the transatlantic allies should make efforts to preserve and possibly reinforce allied procedures and institutions with a view to collectively shaping and possibly influencing respective unilateral policies and moves.

- From this perspective, Contact Groups between transatlantic allies for planning common actions in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and the Sahel-Sahara belt should be set up under the NATO framework, if appropriate. These Groups should accept and encourage participation or other forms of cooperation by non-transatlantic governments.
- The Europeans should endeavor to reinforce and, if possible, enlarge the Group of Countries of the Western Mediterranean, called the “5+5 Group.” The same should be done with regard to the 1994 Mediterranean Forum. In general, the transatlantic allies should strive to enlarge and

strengthen sub-regional formats for multilateral cooperation shared by Western and Arab countries in North Africa and the Levant.

- As bilateral transatlantic relations would be more important than multilateral ones from an offshore strategy perspective, the transatlantic allies should be encouraged to report to the allied NATO framework when setting up possible coalitions of the willing and able. By the same token, European coalitions should preferably act by means of EU joint actions and “reinforced cooperation.”
- The transatlantic allies should try to decompartmentalize their links to North Africa and the Gulf in both bilateral and multilateral relations. While the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue and the ICI should be connected more effectively to one another, EU policies toward the Mediterranean should be more open to the Gulf and better connected to EU policies toward that area.



The image features a solid brown background with several horizontal white lines. Small white dots are placed at various intervals along these lines, creating a minimalist, grid-like pattern. The lines and dots are distributed across the page, with a higher density in the lower half.

G|M|F OFFICES

WASHINGTON • BERLIN • PARIS • BRUSSELS  
BELGRADE • ANKARA • BUCHAREST • WARSAW • TUNIS

[www.gmfus.org](http://www.gmfus.org)