Papers presented to Conference I and II on

Thinking Out of the Box: Devising New European Policies to Face the Arab Spring

Edited by:
Maria do Céu Pinto

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Introduction
This issue contains a collection of papers presented at the NEPAS I and II conferences at the University of Minho, EEG Faculty, Braga, Portugal. This is part of a comprehensive European project whose aim is to develop a new European Union (EU) Mediterranean policy which may accommodate the changing political situation in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. NEPAS is a project funded by the Lifeling Learning Programme (LLP) of the European Commission.

The main objective of NEPAS project is to bring together a transnational and multidisciplinary research network to reflect on how the European Union (EU) should address the long-term consequences of the Arab upheavals for EU-Mediterranean (North Africa and the Middle East) relations and of achieving a high level of understanding of the needs, the requirements and the means of putting into place the newly adopted EU “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity”.

The first aim is thus to provide opportunities for academics from a range of disciplines and countries to share their research both through the conference podium, roundtable sessions and workshops. The second is to create a transnational and multidisciplinary research network to provide a framework for international information exchange in this area and to conduct collaborative research in view of the newly adopted EU agenda towards the Mediterranean. The third is the promotion and dissemination of knowledge related to the complex reality and evolution of the internal political and socio-cultural processes of the different southern Mediterranean countries and the reforms underway in terms of governance, social development, human rights and political transition. We mean to raise the political recognition of the relevance of a new EU-Mediterranean approach: help develop a truly Euro-Mediterranean culture and improve knowledge about it. The fourth is to translate participants’ knowledge into policy recommendations for EU decision-makers. The organisation also intends to stimulate interest in the fields of Euro-Mediterranean relations and to provide stimulus to students interested in pursuing research in this area. This initiative envisages offering an opportunity to students of all academic levels to meet, visit, and exchange views and experiences with other practitioners and academics.

The organisation intends to put together those exchanges and knowledge by means of two major international conferences with the participation of academics, policy experts, NGOs, other civil society organisations, journalists, as well as students at various academic levels. In order to stimulate the participation of young researchers, we will organise several workshops devoted to undergraduate, MA and PhD students on the basis of international “call for papers”. These conferences and workshops enabled the publication of a final E-book of the best research papers.

Two major events were held under the theme. NEPAS Conference I – “Thinking Out of the Box: Devising New European Policies to Face the Arab Spring” was held on 21st February in the University of Minho, Braga, and on the 22nd, in the Instituto dos Vinhos do Porto e do Douro (IVPD), in the city of Porto. The second NEPAS event was a Seminar on “Democratization and Political Transitions in the Arab World: Actors, Challenges, and Policy Options for the EU” in the University of Minho, 17-19th July. The conference and seminar were organized by NEPAS, a project led by the University of Minho in partnership with IsAG (Istituto di Alti Studi in Geopolitica e Scienze Ausiliari), University Roma Tre and the University of Pisa. For generous financial support for the first conference, we would like to thank the Luso-American Foundation. The second conference was held with the financial contribution of the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI).

We owe tremendous thanks to all of those who were present. In addition to those who delivered papers, we also want to give special thanks to the project’s scientific staff and the EEG staff. Particular thanks to Mrs. Estela Vieira of the EEG International Relations Office for her enthusiastic and enduring support, who did such a masterful job organizing the conference, and to the Editor.

Maria do Céu Pinto
EU´s Policy Responses: Exploring the Progress and Shortcomings
The EU “Paradigmatic Policy Change” in Light of the Arab Spring: A Critical Exploration of the “Black Box”
Iole Fontana¹

Abstract

In the wake of the Arab Spring, the challenges that are emerging from a “changing neighborhood” have opened a new policy window for the EU and called for a policy reassessment regarding the Southern side of the Mediterranean. The Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity and the “more for more” logic tried to accomplish this by contributing to the definition of a new framework in EU-Mediterranean relations that could go beyond the inconsistencies of the past. At this stage, a fundamental question has emerged: to what extent has the EU undertaken a real “paradigmatic policy change”? The aim of this paper is to answer this question by investigating, through the lens of the policy cycle, the much-praised renewal of the EU approach in light of the Arab uprisings. Assuming that processes matter in shaping outcomes, the policy cycle is adopted to investigate the “black box” of the EU approach in all its phases – from agenda setting to implementation - in order to understand to what extent the new “item” on the EU agenda called for a real policy reassessment. Thus, the paper is divided into two parts. The first one, which considers the Arab uprisings as a watershed in the EU approach, presents a comparative analysis of all the policy phases before and after the events, assessing the elements of continuity and discontinuity with the past. Drawing on these results, the second part proposes suggestions to overcome the policy “incrementalism” that seems to emerge as a constant feature of the EU approach in the area.

Introduction

In the “art and craft” of politics, one of the most “artistic” aspects is to “feel the moment”, to do the right thing at the right time (Dente, 2011). The importance of timing is even stronger when seizing the moment means seizing the opportunity for change: i.e. when the normal policy environment is disrupted by a crisis or an external event and a window for reform is opened which paves the way for policy change. It is in that moment that policy actors have the opportunity to “catch the wave” and to adopt new radical decisions moving away from the “shore” of status quo. Similarly, the Tunisami², which in 2011 triggered the popular protests across the Arab world and unsettled decades of authoritarian stability, marked a turning point for the European Union (EU) and provided the opportunity to seize the moment and radically rethink its Mediterranean policies on a brand-new background.

¹ Ph.D. Student in Institutions, Politics and Policies at IMT-Institute for Advanced Studies, Lucca, Italy. Comments are welcome at iole.fontana@imtlucca.it.
² The term Tunisami became popular when referencing the wave of revolutionary movements which surprisingly spread from Tunisia across the Arab world.
For more than two decades, EU policies towards Mediterranean and North African (MENA) countries made regional stability and security the cornerstones of a policy approach marked by the shadow of incrementalism which were cautious changes marginally differing from past practice and slightly detaching from a status quo that perfectly suited existing priorities (Missiroli, 2011). Even though long EU engagement in the MENA region has been shaped by different frameworks, neither the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) nor the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) nor even the more recent Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) changed the substance of EU Mediterranean policies, prioritizing stability and “low politics” issues against destabilizing reforms and democracy promotion, while hindering any proactive EU role in the latter.

The Arab Spring uprisings brutally demonstrated the limits of the EU projection in the region and, by impetuously entering the European agenda, urgently called for a paradigm shift in EU policy. Indeed, the challenges emerging from a “changing neighborhood” opened a new policy window for the EU and represented a watershed, a new “time zero” (Bicchi, 2007) in Euro-Mediterranean relations. This would finally allow for movement beyond incrementalism and towards a new policy reassessment. The “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity” and the review of the ENP tried to meet such a need by contributing to the definition of a new approach that could go beyond the inconsistencies of the past.

At this stage, some fundamental questions have emerged: To what extent did the EU undertake a real “paradigmatic policy change”? Has the EU really overcome the incremental policy-making of its Mediterranean policies? Departing from the policy cycle analysis and focusing upon the theoretical assumptions of the incremental decision-making model, the aim of this paper is to answer these questions by investigating the much-praised renewal of the EU approach in light of the Arab uprisings.

Recalling Cloete’s (1991:21) definition of policy, we define EU policies in the MENA as a “program of action to give effect to selected normative and empirical goals in order to address perceived problems and needs in society in a specific way, and therefore achieve desired changes in that society”. Therefore, with “EU Mediterranean policy,” we are referring to the comprehensive set of different EU policies, under the different policy frameworks of the ENP, EMP and UfM, addressing the perceived political, economic and security problems of the MENA.

Many scholars have already focused on the post-Arab Spring EU and its policies: specifically on its opportunities and constraints as an external actor of democratic change (Panebianco, 2012), on its response to the uprisings in the search for a new regional role (Behr, 2012), and on the renewal of its bottom-up strategies of democracy promotion in the MENA (Rossi, 2012).

Here, the focus is on the domestic rationale of the EU renovated approach in the Mediterranean and the way in which the unforeseen external event of the Arab Spring shaped the EU policy puzzling (Dente, 2011) and its processes, which are understood as a sequence of actions and decisions determining the final policy content. The assumption is that processes matter in shaping outcomes and that, to understand why certain policy results are achieved, we need to go in depth when analyzing the decisional processes. Therefore, the policy cycle and the theoretical assumptions of the incremental model are adopted here in order to investigate the “black box” of the EU approach. Based on the idea that the life of a policy is a cycle where all the steps are related and influence each other (Jones 1984; Howlett and Ramesh 2003), the policy cycle analysis is extremely useful when explaining the interlocked nature of agenda-setting, decision-making and implementation while simultaneously illustrating the main interests and actors involved. In this way, it is possible to understand to what extent the new “item” on EU agenda called for a real and non-incremental policy reassessment.

The paper is organized as follows: the first part, which considers the Arab uprisings as a watershed in the EU approach, is concerned with a comparative analysis of all the policy phases before and after the events, assessing the elements of continuity and discontinuity with the past, the degree of incrementalism and, against this backdrop, explaining the reasons for the EU limited projection in the region. Drawing on these results, the second part proposes suggestions to overcome the policy incrementalism that seems to emerge as a constant feature of the EU approach in the Mediterranean.

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3 For a further analysis of the EU reaction to the Arab Spring, see Tocci and Cassarino (2011), as well as Grant (2011), all quoted in Schumacher (2011).
“Muddling Through”
Before Arab Spring: Why the EU Failed to Shape Events in the Region

In light of the long-term EU involvement in the Mediterranean that pledged political and economic reforms on the bedrock of European core values, one would presume that the EU would have played a remarkable role in the inception of the Arab Spring or, at least, been aware of the incoming change as well as prepared to manage it. Instead, in August 2010 Obama’s Presidential Study Directive 11 already underlined “the growing discontent” of the region and the beginning of a “critical period of transition” (Ignatius 2011). Meanwhile, the EU was caught off guard by the “Arab Awakening”. Why was the “Mediterranean change” so surprising to the EU? Why did the EU not have any role in shaping or at least orienting what happened in the region? Despite numerous omens suggesting “that 2011 was gearing up to be a watershed year for the MENA” (Behr, 2012:77), the EU was taken by surprise since its attention was elsewhere and its systemic agenda was dominated by domestic concerns. The Euro-zone crisis, the EU’s internal divisions and its grappling with the renewal of its organization under Lisbon diverted the attention away from the Mediterranean in the months before the uprisings.

In many ways, this inward-looking focus invokes a sense of déjà vu. Similarly to the 1980s, when the former European Community (EC) was dealing with the Southern enlargement and with the strengthening of its internal integration, little attention was paid to the worsening economic and political conditions of the Mediterranean countries (Bicchi, 2007:chp.4), which left the Mediterranean in the same position within the European agenda. By the same token, the worry regarding “getting the Euro-house in order” prevented any forward thinking about the EU’s role in the region (Behr, 2012: 77). This revealed that the attempt to renew the ENP in October 2010 was merely the result of a fortunate intuition (Tocci, 2011) rather than an expression of awareness of what was going on in the Mediterranean. Yet, a self-centered EU which underestimates its neighbors is just part of the picture.

More importantly, the Arab Spring undermined the paradigm of stability that had long been the cornerstone of EU policies and paved the way for the uncertain and unstable change that the EU had always tried to contain by engaging with authoritarian rulers. As suggested by Junemann (2012:1), if the EU was caught off guard by the uprisings, it was also because the protestors revolted against Arab autocracies that were “thought to be extremely stable”. Indeed, the uprisings were the litmus test of the EU’s incapability to orient the events and revealed the inconsistencies of its narrow one-sided approach that was committed to a gradual “downgrading” of democracy in the name of stability (Junemann and Maggi 2010; Bicchi 2009; Cardwell 2011).

The comprehension of the EU’s perception of “stability” is fundamental in understanding the competing paradigms that shaped the cycle of its MENA policies. Stability has always been identified by the EU as the “common asset” of Euro-Mediterranean relations, as a goal to be achieved by tackling “the root causes of political instability and economic vulnerability”. Thus, democracy, pluralism and respect for human rights are mentioned as “essential prerequisites”. Actually, this point highlights a huge contradiction. If, for political stability, we mean not only the absence of immediate threats but also “continuity” in terms of a stable, secure and durable situation, any attempt to change such a condition implies uncertainty and instability. In a similar fashion, promoting democracy or any destabilizing political reform in a consolidated and durable autocratic regime means to threaten that stability. Faced with this much discussed dilemma, democracy vs. stability, the EU opted for the latter and engaged with Arab regimes that were supposed to be predictable and reliable partners in order to contain key security threats (Junemann 2012:2).

In this context, the EU, therefore, could do nothing more than simply “muddle through” (Lindblom 1959; 1979). Which is to say, they could take only small incremental steps marginally differing from past practice and slightly detaching from the status quo. Indeed, by observing the genesis of the EU policies in the MENA from the EMP to the ENP to the UfM, all these initiatives were

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4 The reports of the Arab Barometer are a case in point. In fact, the pro-democracy uprisings in the Arab world emerged from a background that had gradually become ripe for revolution. The interviews conducted between 2006 and 2009 with 13,019 randomly selected men and women in eight Arab countries illustrate that 85.8% stated that they were strongly in favor of democracy. Of these, 44.4% said that they would support “secular democracy” while 41.4% expressed support for “democracy with Islam”. See www.arabbarometer.org.


7 Ibidem.
the result of an evolutionary- rather than revolutionary- decision-making promoting cautious changes. This gradual incrementa-
lism, which was in the name of stability and strategic interests in order to “not rock the boat”, explains the EU’s incapability to
shape the Arab protests which were unveiled to an astonished Europe.

A brief policy cycle analysis of the EU initiatives in the decades preceding the uprisings highlight this point by showing how, in
the decisional processes on the MENA, stability and strategic interests were a common thread across all the policy-phases.

Looking Inside
the “Black Box”
Before the Arab Spring

The Mediterranean entered the EU agenda regularly when specific strategic interests and the fear of new challenges with their
related uncertainty made it a priority. The visibility of the problem is, indeed, of high importance for a new policy window to
be opened. In the post cold war international context of the early 1990s, the low democratic and economic performance of the
Mediterranean countries could no longer be neglected and the need to deal with security concerns, such as migration and Islamic
terrorism, directed the EU’s attention towards the area (Bicchi, 2007). The EMP emerged from these trends and, with its three
baskets committed to promote peace, stability and prosperity, mentioned democracy promotion for the first time with the explicit
assent of the Mediterranean nonmembers (Bicchi, 2009). In the early 2000s, the need to “eradicate the root causes of terrorism”
(Tocci and Cassarino, 2011), exacerbated by 9/11 events and the EU’s enlargement which created new borders and new, close
neighbors, made the Mediterranean a high issue on EU agenda again. This time, the priority “not to import instability” (Solana,
2003) became the main policy paradigm eventually reflected in the bilateral and pragmatic approach of the ENP (Panebianco
2008; 2010). Security, stability and strategic concerns, therefore, were the main yardsticks that influenced how the EU perceived
and “framed” the “Mediterranean issue”.

Certainly, the way a policy problem is defined is essential as it reveals the actors’ perceptions and their different competing
paradigms necessary when framing the issue. The aforementioned dilemma, stability vs. democracy, embodies this competition
of different paradigms. The definition of the problem, anyway, is unstable. It can change during the process according to changing
standards and perceptions (Dente, 2011). Similarly, if, during the 1990s, the “democracy promotion paradigm” was considered
suitable to address the Mediterranean in a manner consistent with the EU normative concerns, the turn of the new century
also marked a “stability turn” in the name of the status quo rather than of a change that could be uncertain. The UfM, with its
“depoliticizing” (Bicchi, 2011) focus on low politics issues, further contributed to this reframing.

All these considerations are clearly evident in the EU decisional processes. Consistent with the idea of the policy cycle as a conti-
ummus (Barrett and Fudge 1981), the strategic inputs of the agenda inevitably flow in the decision-making, eventually determining
the policy content and outputs.

Despite their rhetoric, the EU policy initiatives in the Mediterranean were deeply influenced by Member States’ interests gra-
dually trumping any normative goal sponsored by the Communitarian institutions. After all, in the EU “weakly institutionalized
supranational decision-making structure” (Forster and Wallace, 1996), any normative discourse supported by Communitarian
institutions is constrained by the intergovernmental channels of action prescribed by the Treaties. If the Commission is in charge
of the implementation, Member States in the European and ministerial composition of the Council are responsible, respectively,
in the provision of guidelines and the endorsement of final policy choices. Consistent with this decision-making structure, the
reframing of the “Mediterranean” in terms of stability and strategic concerns shaped the content of the EU initiatives in the region.
While the European Council (2004) endorsed the European Security Strategy as a “key framework for policy formulation”, the
Council of the EU (2007) stressed the EU’s clear strategic imperative to foster stability through values merely defined as “rule of
law and human rights”.

Stability, therefore, became the EU policy rationale that affected the policy content in terms of prudent changes, which resulted
in small adjustments to the status quo (Lindblom 1959; 1979). Indeed, from the EMP to the ENP to the UfM, the substance
remained the same. The new policy frameworks, the shift from regionalism to bilateralism and the principles of differentiation
and of co-ownership did not change the substance of European policies in the area. The priorities were still stability, economics and low politics issues against democracy and destabilizing reforms. These policies, therefore, were the result of incremental decision-making, of gradual construction based on the existing situation which moves step by step in order to avoid unexpected consequences. Quoting Lindblom (1979:517), this decision-making model relies upon policy analyses preoccupied more with “ills to be remedied than positive goals to be sought”. Similarly, EU Med policies were addressed to tackle “the roots of instability” rather than promote genuine political reforms. Furthermore, consistent with fragmented policy-making involving many actors (ibid.), this decision-making model perfectly suits the EU intergovernmental structure. In fact, moving through small adjustments is convenient to Member States seeking nothing more than the “agreeable” and is congenial to outputs that are more politically feasible than desirable.

If keeping stability via the status quo is the goal, this incremental decision-making is quite understandable. As Wildavsky (1988) puts it: “for those who chose safety as their goal, of course the task of decision-making is simple: choose the safer path. There is no need to look further since we already know what to do”. The need to avoid “cognitive uncertainty” (Bicchi, 2007) and to act against a familiar background explains why the EU does not strive for democracy. If the status quo of a consolidated authoritarian regime is understood, the consequences of democratic turmoil are not known.

In a cycle where all the steps are related, the features of the EU decision-making process influence the implementation phase, revealing what the literature has defined as “the dilemmas of implementation” (Bicchi, 2009). Indeed, the implementation of EU Mediterranean policies has been blamed, among other things, for the vague formulation of the Action Plans and the pragmatic trend (Panebianco 2008, Menendez-Gonzalez 2005) of its financial instruments (such as EIDHR II), which favor less political goals vis-à-vis those whose implementation could turn out to be a source of instability (such as democracy). The opacity of the Action Plans is also embodied by benefits, which are only vaguely summarized and lack clear benchmarks and time spans that leave the partners with the freedom to set their own calendar for political change (Panebianco, 2008). Furthermore, the search for stability and the status quo has hindered the application of genuine political conditionality. Despite the “suspension clause” entailing “the stick” and the logic “more for more” pledging “the carrot”, the EU failed to suspend any agreement in the case of non-compliance in the first case and continued to give “more for less” in the second case. In spite of the evident violations of the Egyptian constitutional amendment excluding the formation of parties on the basis of religion in 2007 and of Ben Ali’s restriction of media freedom in 2009 committed during the Algerian civil war between 1992 and 2000 (Joffè, 2008), the EU was quite passive. They left the Association Agreement with Algeria untouched while simultaneously not withdrawing the rewards in the cases of Egypt and Tunisia. The nomination of Mubarak as co-president in the UfM further confirms this trend.

This account of the EU policies in the MENA through the lenses of the policy cycle pointed out the main elements of the EU “policy paradigm” before the Arab Spring, which reveals why the EU did not orient the events. Namely, they were fearful of the consequences of change as it marginalized democracy and remained “stuck” between the ambition to promote political reforms and the Members States’ interest in stability (Behr, 2012). The Arab Spring emphasized the not so stable nature of Arab autocracies and exposed the EU credibility gap between normative rhetoric and real politik (Junemann, 2012). The uprisings, indeed, revealed the inconsistencies of an incremental approach that, by sustaining a narrow stability while withdrawing from the club of the friends of democracy (Hollis, 2012), was not, in the end, able to promote either democracy or stability.

At this stage, more questions emerge. Has the EU overcome its policy incrementalism? Have the Arab uprisings led to a policy reassessment in the name of a “paradigmatic policy change”?

Seizing the Moment?
A Policy Analysis of the EU Renewed Approach in the Light of the Arab Uprisings

Politics finds its sources not only in power but also in uncertainty (Heclo, 1974 quoted in Dente 2011:12). This means that uncertainty entails a fundamental paradox. While it can push for a safer path in name of stability, it can also open a new policy window,
paving the way for change. The Arab Spring and the uncertainty of its outcomes, indeed, opened a new policy window for the EU, representing an important opportunity to rethink its MENA policies. Analytically speaking, we could say that the Arab Spring is what Dente (2011) calls the “right moment”. The time when actors’ goals and perceptions are changed by an external event and there is the need to deal with problems that are “urgent and not to be postponed” (ibid). Similarly, the Arab uprisings now call for a paradigm shift and the need “to do something for the Mediterranean” (Bicchi, 2007).

When, in October 2010, Commissioner Füle and High Representative Ashton wondered what ENP vision within a 10-15 year horizon could be, they were far from knowing that the Arab awakening was a “latent time bomb” (Dery, 1997) and that change was at the doorstep. Indeed, the Arab awakening changed that horizon quickly and paved the way for a new policy-making, which was different from merely “muddling through”. After all, as suggested by Lustick (1980), the utility of incrementalism is highly reduced when there are thresholds or discontinuities. The Arab Spring is an important discontinuity, an exogenous event that should call for a revision of the status quo, overcoming incrementalism. Is the EU actually seizing “the moment”? A policy cycle analysis of the EU initiatives in the light of the Arab uprisings can address this question.

Looking Inside the Black Box after the Arab Spring

Despite their visibility, the Arab uprisings entered the EU agenda in a gradual and timid manner. The statement of the High Representative (2011) on the situation in Tunisia, which was released in early January 2010, only a few weeks after Sidi Bouzid revolts, is the first official reaction manifesting concern for the events. While this is a mere condemnation of violence, it was after Ben Ali’s departure that the EU recognized “the point of no-return” by affirming the will to “stand side by side with Tunisians” and to support the endeavors to achieve their democratic aspirations8. The same wait-and-see approach was applied in the case of Egypt. When it became clear that the protests in Tahrir Square were more than an isolated incident, the EU expressed its support to the “legitimate aspirations of the people of Egypt” and called on authorities to proceed with a free and fair election9. Mubarak’s resignation further displayed this cautious mix of spectatorship and actorness (Schumacher, 2011). The crucial presidential decision was merely “welcomed” in a soft-worded statement where the only probable solution for the EU was to remain at the ready “with all its instruments”10.

The events in Libya and Syria entered the EU agenda more rapidly in the wake of the violent repression turning into a civil war. In particular, following Holwett and Ramesh (2003), the Libyan case’s entry in the European agenda was marked by both an inside initiation, with French president Sarkozy emerging as a soloist voice in the European chorus and asking for the adoption of sanctions, and an outside initiation in line with the adoption of specific UN Resolutions. However, apart from these cases whose critical consequences could not be neglected, the EU remained a detached observer in other countries, such as Yemen, Algeria or Bahrain, were the protests were silenced. In a similar fashion, the temperate situation in Jordan and Morocco received minor attention, mainly tailored to the top-down processes of reform. Besides these issues, security and migration were other items high on the agenda, displaying the strong link between the European systemic agenda and the domestic ones of its Member States.

These multiple issues and the Arab crisis, which was more than a mere one-off event, provided the opportunity for a new approach. Following De Vries (2004), a crisis can be framed as an opportunity or as a threat, as an isolated incident or as a symptom of underlying forces that can open or close a window for reform. After some hesitation, the EU framed the new events as a moment of “historic proportions reflecting profound transformations that will have lasting consequences” and as an opportunity to take

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10 Joint statement by President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, and EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton on recent developments in Egypt, Memo 11/83, Brussels, 11 February 2011.
a “qualitative step forward” in order to face a “radically changing political landscape”\textsuperscript{11}. With this in mind, the EU reacted with self-blame, admitting that it had not been vocal enough in defending human rights and local democratic forces in the region (Füle, 2011). The European Council\textsuperscript{12} recognized the EU’s determination to support the ongoing transitions processes and the need to develop a “new partnership” with “those countries which are pursuing political and economic reforms”. The ENP Review and the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity emerged from this backdrop.

The notions of “democracy” and “stability” were reframed as well. The former, which had always been defined merely in terms of a “shared value” or as a mean to achieve stability, was reframed in terms of “deep democracy” that goes beyond the surface of people merely casting their votes and choosing the governments. Rather, democracy has to be a deep commitment that is built on respect for the rule of law, freedom of speech, respect for human rights, independent judiciary and impartial administration, enforceable property rights and free trade unions. Stability is also reframed\textsuperscript{13} by recognizing the limits of the “old” concept and of the “assumption that authoritarian regimes were a guarantee of stability in the region”. A “sustainable stability” is required and can be achieved by tackling the political and economic aspects in an integrated manner.

Still, while all these elements seem to call for a reframing of the EU approach, strategic interests, Member States’ divisions and the “precautionary principle” (Wildavsky 1988) are the main yardsticks of decision-making. The very same reasons, which had justified the EU approach in the name of stability, clarify the EU’s timid and cautious reaction in the Arab Spring. Member States’ strategic interests and their friendship with consolidated authoritarian regimes explain their initial hostility to proceed with “ac-torness” instead of with “spectatorship”. France stepping in on Ben Ali and Mubarak’s side (Mikail, 2011) or Berlusconi refusing to call Gaddafi so as “not to disturb him” (Koening, 2011:9) are just a few examples that illustrate how Member States’ interests can paralyze EU while hindering the effectiveness of common actions. Even greater evidence is provided by the French unilateral recognition of the Transitional National Council as the only legitimate representative of Libyan people\textsuperscript{14} only two days before the European Council meeting. The logic of diversity and the traditional internal divisions between Southern and Northern Member States is further displayed in the discussion about the renewal of the ENP in terms of means and money. While the former group called for a redistribution of funding from the Eastern neighborhood towards the South, the Northern members opposed such a proposal, calling for a mere redistribution within the ENP (Behr, 2012).

EU decision-making in the case of the Arab Spring was based on a gradual incrementalism, mere little adjustments and adaptation to the external events, following a wait-and-see logic. Indeed, it was just after the toppling of the authoritarian leaders that the EU reacted with a renewed approach, while its attitude remained closer to the \textit{status quo} in those cases where the protests did not bring a real change, such as in Jordan and Morocco.

The new initiatives under the innovated frameworks of the Reviewed ENP and of the Partnership for Democracy illustrate this point. The renewed focus is on democratic transformation and institution building, on a stronger partnership with society and on sustainable and inclusive growth and support to small medium enterprises. In particular, the stress is on the neighbors’ incentives in terms of money, mobility and market. While the goals and rhetoric are surely new, the instruments have only slightly changed from the past. The incentive-based logic and the “more for more” are not new inventions. What is different from the past, however, is that the “more for more” should be backed by a “less for less” when reforms are not achieved. Therefore, the new policy framework reiterates the need for clear benchmarks and monitoring mechanisms.

So far, the implementation shows that the “less for less” has actually been applied, with sanctions against Libya and Syria moving away from the “passive leverage” that used to characterize the ENP before the Arab Spring (Panebianco, 2012). Nevertheless, the “more for more” has been applied indifferently to Tunisia and to Jordan, in spite of their clearly different progress in terms of political reforms. It seems, therefore, that, once again, the principle of differentiation, which today is more important than ever when tackling the different outcomes of the uprisings, is not yet fully valid in the case of conditionality. Furthermore, the air of novelty has not involved the most intergovernmental framework of the EU policies in the MENA, leaving the UfM in the same condition of paralysis as it was before 1/11.

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\textsuperscript{11} European Commission (2011), “A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity”.

\textsuperscript{12} European Council Conclusions, 4 February 2011

\textsuperscript{13} See Füle (2011) and “Remarks by the EU High Representative Cathrine Ashton at the Senior Officials’ meeting on Egypt and Tunisia”, A 069/11, Brussels, 23 February, 2011.

\textsuperscript{14} Statement issued by President Sarkozy at the Council of Ministers meeting, 23 February 2011.
EU policies renewed under the Arab Spring, therefore, seem to be the result of a mere adjustment to the previous existing frameworks in the wake of the events and slightly altering the status quo.

Thinking Out of the Box? EU’s Incrementalism Assessed

In his speech to the European Parliament about the need to strengthen the ENP, Commissioner Füle was already aware, two months before the uprisings, of the need to think differently. He stated that “we may need to think outside the box here and move away from a black or white approach” (Füle, 2010). Yet, the account of the EU policies in the MENA through the lenses of the policy cycle before and after the Arab Spring has demonstrated that the EU’s thinking is still inside the box. Despite some changes in its approach, embodied by new rhetoric, a more serious commitment in the name of democracy and new financial instruments tailored to democracy (SPRING, Civil Society Facility, Democracy Endowment), EU policies in the MENA are, once again, the result of incremental decision-making. How can we explain and assess this incremental way of thinking?

Supporters of this model believe that incrementalism does not necessarily hinder change in favor of conservatism and that a fast-moving sequence of small steps and changes can dramatically alter the status quo. However, experience reveals that the frameworks of the EMP, ENP, UfM did not alter the substance of EU policies in the MENA or its status quo. Rather, the EU was caught off guard by the events and was forced to rashly adapt to the new environment. In this context, we can say that the Arab Spring is the litmus test of what has been suggested by Wildavsky (1988:1), i.e. that “there can be no safety without risk”. According to this way of thinking, actors should not consider safety just in terms of simply “keeping things from happening” (ibid:2). The “safety risks” and the loss in terms of opportunities should be considered as well. Similarly, in the MENA, the EU tried to “contain” the uncertain change while ignoring the “safety risks” entailed by authoritarian stability. The Arab uprisings demonstrated that uncertainty cannot be eliminated and that, even if we think in an incremental way to guarantee safety and the status quo, this does not mean that unknown and uncertain consequences are not going to appear. Risk and the search for safety are two sides of the same coin. In the wake of the recent Arab experience, the EU needs to learn that even an entrepreneurial activity can improve safety and that being dynamic means “to adapt to new circumstances by generating new alternatives” (ibid:5) rather than through small incremental steps.

Incremental decision-making can, indeed, be rational. It can be convenient in terms of costs to keep on doing something that is already known. As Atkinson (2011:15) suggests, individuals are reluctant to give up items with which they are familiar, independent of their market value. In the wake of this “status quo bias”, in the realm of losses, actors are risk-seeking. Meanwhile, in the realm of gains, people are risk averse (ibid:14). This reasoning suits the EU. When Arab autocrats are reliable partners for securing stability, Member States are risk adverse. Conversely, when this stability is compromised and uncertainty prevails, it is worth the risk. Actually, the EU’s reaction to the Arab Spring was not based on the will to risk but on the need to adapt to events that left no choice. As suggested by Panebianco (2012:161), EU policies in the MENA appear to be adaptive policies shaped more by external events and systemic conditions rather than by the will to act in the name of EU values. Similarly, while the crucial events in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya forced the EU to react, this was not the case of Jordan and Morocco.

Obviously, the features of the system in which each decisional process takes place influence the outcomes of the process itself. In particular, the presence of many veto players makes incrementalism extremely likely by increasing the difficulties to detach from the status quo. This is true for the EU. Indeed, its decision-making structure that is dominated by the Member States’ shadow of hierarchy and strategic interests accounts for the EU’s timid and incremental reaction in the Arab Spring, hovering between actorness and spectatorship.

If it is so, how can incrementalism be overcome? As Dente (2011) says, we should put ourselves in the innovator’s shoes by pondering how to change the content of a policy in a non-marginal way. The EU should learn from the errors of the past in such a non-marginal way and strongly detach itself from previous practices.
First of all, the EU should go beyond the assumptions that the Arab Spring proved wrong, i.e. the notion of stability and a narrow conception of neo-liberalism. It has to be verified to what extent its commitment to a “new” concept of stability is really detached from the old one.

Secondly, remembering the shortcomings from the pre-Arab Spring period, the EU should learn to be clearer and to better clarify its goals. The need for clarity is even more important in the definition of benchmarks and monitoring mechanisms, in order to apply a real conditionality. In this context, too much money can still not be enough if it is not spent well. Scholars agree\(^\text{15}\) that to provide less money in the beginning while increasing it later can be an important yardstick. Furthermore, the criteria for rewards should be better defined. It is not enough to merely refer to the adoption of general “political reforms” that, by equally recognizing an “advanced status”, do not take into account the difference between, for instance, the path taken by Tunisia and the situation in Jordan and Morocco. Still, the EU should also try to be aware of the consequences of a “variable geometries” approach.

Thirdly, the Arab Spring revealed the importance of dealing with the actors of change and not only with the domestic veto players. The EU should, therefore, increase its bottom-up strategies (Rossi, 2012), dealing more with local actors\(^\text{16}\).

A few other points need to be stressed. In the MENA, the EU should learn to combine a short term vision, to address immediately the consequences of the uprisings, with a more long term and wider approach. In particular, the spread of the uprisings across the region has demonstrated that the EU cannot engage just with its most immediate neighbors. It should also be ready to work with the “neighbors of the neighbors”. The new dynamics demonstrated that actors such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar matter and more consistent relations should be developed not only within the multilateral framework of the Gulf Council. The last point regards the UfM. The original rationale of the UfM was to focus on low politics issues as an attempt at “policy without politics” (Schmidt, 2006). In light of the Arab uprisings, it is now time to revitalize it, going beyond a neo-functional approach that is probably not working. In light of the new actors emerging from the uprisings, the UfM could become a new umbrella to foster dialogue at the regional level that would allow it to be truly tailored to the needs of the region (which may be more than the need to proceed with the desalinization of Gaza Strip\(^\text{17}\)). It is on these premises that the EU could eventually think outside the box.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to analyze the domestic *rationale* of the EU’s oft praised policy reassessment in light of the Arab Spring in order to understand to what extent the unexpected event affected the policy puzzling and called for the EU to overcome incrementalism. The analysis carried out through the lenses of the policy cycle confirmed that even though in many respects the EU strategy has been renovated, its policies remain largely the same (Tocci and Cassarino, 2011). In particular, they are based on an incremental decision-making that seems to be a constant feature of the EU.

The Arab Spring demonstrated that the *status quo* is not stability and highlighted the inconsistencies of EU long-term approach. Indeed, it seems that for a long time the EU has devised an approach committed to a Pareto-efficient criterion. Namely, actions are justified if they make people better off (promoting reforms and economic development in the MENA) without harming others (i.e. without endangering EU fundamental stability and strategic interests).

Incrementalism seems to be the main political pattern of a system where, in the foreign policy field, Member States take the lead. Even if communitarian institutions can have an entrepreneurial role in the setting of the agenda or in the definition of the policy content, their role is constrained by both Member States’ domestic agendas and by the intergovernmental channels of action that inform decision-making and, in turn, implementation.

The EU approach in the MENA did not survive what is known in evaluation policy as the theory of change: i.e. the reasons why the policy design should bring about change. Following Cloete’s (1991) earlier definition, we can say that the EU efforts in the MENA

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16 For instance, so far the financial instrument EIDHR II has mainly financed western NGOs rather than local ones.
region not only failed in promoting their desired changes, but the extent of their desirability also remains contested, at least before the Arab uprisings began.

As stated by High Representative Ashton, “politics is about changing things”\(^{18}\). The Arab Spring represented an important opportunity to seize the moment and to proceed in this direction. Yet, the EU is still not thinking outside the box, and the consequence is that, in the realm of foreign policy in general, and in the MENA context in particular, the EU is still “muddling, not yet through” (Lindblom, 1979).

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Assessing European Mediterranean Policy: Success Rather than Failure
Marie-Luise Heinrich-Merchergui, Temime Mechergui, and Gerhard Wegner19

Abstract

Unlike assessments of the political goals of the European Mediterranean Policy (EMP), studies dealing with the economic impact of the EMP on growth prospects are sparse. Most authors hold that it conserves low economic performance and that partner states will undergo economic destabilization. In the descriptive part of the study, we delineate the historical roots of economic performance in the MENA region in the wake of post-colonial socialism and compare the MENA countries to suitable reference cases. The empirical analysis of the EMP is based on General Method of Moments (GMM) that isolates particular aspects of EMP such as the openness for foreign direct investments (FDI), openness for trade or the impact on political and economic freedom. Given the political constraints, our findings support a positive impact of the EMP on economic growth.

Introduction

The southern shore of the Mediterranean has always played an important role for the politics of the European Union. The Treaties of Rome have granted the North African countries and former French colonies of Tunisia and Morocco a privileged partnership with the European Community. This political course has recently found succession in the new foreign policy of the EU as to the North African countries. The Barcelona Process is an attempt to narrow the economic gap between the EU and the North African countries but it is also motivated by security interests. While the economic crisis in the wake of the oil-boom of the 1980s has challenged the region with high unemployment, high inflation and slow economic growth, concomitant frustration in the population as well as migration, terrorism and fundamentalism and the exacerbation of regional conflict have altered the security perceptions of the European Union. After several attempts at creating a coherent political strategy, the member states have launched a common initiative with respect to the southern partners. The recent approach to European Mediterranean politics, i.e. the Barcelona Process that was officially launched in 1995, is centered around the following three areas: (i) political and security cooperation, (ii) economic and financial cooperation and (iii) social, cultural and humanitarian cooperation. The overarching goal of the cooperation is the establishment of peace, stability and prosperity in the Southern Mediterranean region.

For European Mediterranean politics, the third basket of economic and financial cooperation has given way towards the Euro-Mediterranean free trade area (FTA) for industrial goods in 2010. The FTA was established in order to enhance growth, attract foreign direct investment and to further social and economic development in the partner countries. Most of the funds are allocated to

19 Marie-Luise Heinrich-Merchergui, Temime Mechergui and Gerhard Wegner are Ph. D. candidates at the Jena Graduate School for Human Behavior in Social and Economic Change at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena, Germany.
implementation programs (also called the MEDA- programs), namely structural adjustment programs and the support of economic transition. Unlike accession negotiations with future member states of the EU, the Barcelona Process does not impose the *aquis communautaire* on the MENA countries that is to establish a market order, democracy and the rule of law that would transform the economy into an open access order (North et al. 2009) without any discrimination for domestic or foreign market agents. Hence, the Barcelona Process has set incentives for the MENA countries to move towards economic competition, investment and openness rather than establish an ambitious transformation process. In contrast to most of the empirical studies, we evaluate the European Mediterranean Policy with respect to these limited goals.

Unlike assessments of the political goals of the EMP, studies dealing with the economic impact of the EMP on growth prospects are sparse. Among them, most authors hold a skeptical view by stressing that the EMP at best conserves low economic performance on behalf of the partner states. More pessimistic authors argue that the poorly industrialized economies of the MENA region are not prepared for economic integration and will undergo economic destabilization in terms of chronic unemployment, slow growth and continuing low income per capita (e.g. Martin, 2004 and Nienhaus, 1999).

Nevertheless, our analysis supports a more optimistic view with respect to the EMP. Given the political constraints, namely the acceptance of autocratic regimes in the MENA region for want of feasible alternatives, our empirical findings suggest a positive impact of the EMP on economic growth. Although selection bias on behalf of the association countries cannot be ruled out completely, there is no evidence that the EMP conserves an ailing economy. On the contrary, it has fueled economic dynamics. In the following, we delineate the historical roots of economic performance in the MENA region in the wake of post-colonial socialism. This system was combined with an autocratic rule that increasingly became the chief characteristic of the Arab Mediterranean countries until the Arab revolution in 2011. After that, we attempt an empirical investigation of the EMP based on General Method of Moments (GMM) that isolates particular aspects of EMP such as the openness for foreign direct investments (FDI), openness for trade or the impact on political and economic freedom.

**Persistent Stagnation as a Result of Post Colonial Development Policy**

The current situation of the Arab countries in North Africa results from institutional re-adjustments after the post-war period of authoritarian *etatism* which has caused a severe economic crisis throughout the 1980s. However, even institutional re-adjustment has turned out to be insufficient since it combined elements of economic liberalization with new forms of *etatism* on behalf of the ruling elite group. As a result, the MENA-economies fell short of their economic potential.

After the colonial period, the MENA countries have experienced a tremendous expansion of the public sector. Several factors have contributed to this mode of economic development. First of all, an expansion of the bureaucracy was necessary in order to substitute the anarchical and tribal mode of society by building the institutions of a modern state (Ayubi, 1995). In addition, the private sector has suffered from the withdrawal of European settlers, while the indigenous class of entrepreneurs lacked capital and expertise. As a result, the state attempted to fill this gap by promoting economic development as a prerequisite for nation building (Yousef, 2004). Ambitious industrialization projects were considered necessary with respect to the high aspiration levels of in the first generation after independence. This observation is paralleled by worldwide policy conceptions for developing countries. The promotion of major ventures was regarded a proper task of the state and was corroborated by conservative and socialist ideologies alike. Irrespective of ideological reasons, the expansion of the state offered an opportunity for the ruling elite to acquire power and to attain legitimacy by allocating and redistributing public funds. Although it was enforced, inefficient industrialization served as a redistributive instrument for mobilizing resources and stabilizing power. This mode of development can be classified a model of *etatism* that all Arab countries followed irrespective of their official commitment to socialist or conservative economic values. Although the private sector was restricted, it coexisted persistently. The extent to which the public sector expanded depended on the endowment with natural resources. While the economies of Morocco and Tunisia were dominated by the textile sector, the Algerian government created gigantic energy companies such as the SONATRACH, which employed about 12 percent of the industrial labor force in 1978 (Adamson, 1998).
In general, the Arab countries have undergone an unusual expansion of the public sector in the first two decades after independence, especially in the manufacturing sector and in bureaucracy. As a result, these countries exhibited high public expenses and employment levels in comparison to international standards (see table 1). Even though the etatist development strategy did not prove sustainable in the long term, the MENA countries have found their niches in the cold war era, i.e. the pre-globalization period. In the 1960s, high growth rates that could only be offset by the East Asian countries had drawn away the attention from the long term weakness of the oversized public sector (see table 2). In fact, the quality of life in terms of consumption, health conditions and poverty reduction had even increased. As long as the MENA countries profited from oil resources, high growth rates were fuelled by the oil price boom that had favored many of the Arab countries. On the other hand, the non-oil exporting countries benefitted from the migration boom through worker remittances and geostrategic financial aid.

The shortcomings of etatism became manifest with the collapse of the international oil and energy prices in the mid 1980s (see Dasgupta et al., 2002) when the demand for migrant labor fell and the flow of remittances decreased. On top of that, the post war divide of the economic world ceased to exist. The Arab countries faced fierce competition on international markets, especially from the East Asian countries that had boosted their export-oriented industrial sectors and stepwise lifted existing governmental constraints. Under these circumstances, the Arab model of etatism required substantial revision, which, in turn, challenged the former way of stabilizing power. Facing a decline in public revenues and an increase in public debts as well as macroeconomic imbalances, most Arab Governments nonetheless decided for austerity measures and a reduction in welfare programs. This policy in turn caused violent political riots and protests, for example in Egypt 1977, Morocco in 1983, Tunisia in 1984, Algeria in 1988, and Jordan in 1989 (Yousef, 2004). In consequence, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan embarked on reforms and economic stabilization programs in the mid-1980s and were soon followed by most of the other countries in the MENA region. A combination of the growth effects of the reforms and the recovery of oil prices finally led to a stabilization in growth rates. Nevertheless, the economic performance of the region with respect to growth levels was considered insufficient due to the volatility of the oil price in the 1990s and several drought periods that struck those Arab countries that heavily depended upon agricultural sector (such as Morocco and Syria). Due to the strategic importance of the Arab countries with respect to European security considerations, the poor economic performance of the 1980s and 1990s contributed to the initiation of the EMP.

Constraints to Economic Growth in the MENA Region

In line with North et al. (2009), we consider institutions to form the basis of the underdevelopment problem. Even though this perspective recently became more prominent in the theoretical debate, many authors point to other factors for economic growth. Being aware of exogenous factors such as geography and other starting conditions that influence the growth process in the Arab countries, we leave aside a lengthy discussion of these factors. According to our view, exogenous factors are not the crucial determinants for underdevelopment in the MENA region. As an example, development economics has seen a lively discussion about the role of the growth impact of geography, the climate or cultural aspects. Sachs (2001) emphasizes the importance of natural resources as well as geographic and climatic conditions in the development process. On the other hand, Acemoglu et al. (2002) hold that suitable institutions compensate for these exogenous deficiencies. For instance, most Arab countries and nearly all the member states of the EMP have access to the sea. Thus, this aspect of geography can be ignored as a fundamental obstacle to economic growth. On the contrary, it facilitates the integration of the domestic economy in the global market. Therefore, the fact that only Tunisia and Morocco took advantage of their geographic position to strengthen their economic ties to the European market is likely to have other reasons.

Hence, the problem of water scarcity seems to be more important with respect to the geographic obstacles to economic growth in the Arab countries. Without exception, the largest part of any of the Arab countries is located in the arid climate zone. Hence, precipitation is concentrated in a short period of three to four months. Since the annual rainfall is low and volatile, the region frequently suffers from drought periods. In fact, the Arab countries possess the lowest amount of renewable freshwater resources per capita worldwide, with figures even declining (Devlin, 2008). With respect to economic development, water scarcity poses an important challenge since the economies of the non–oil exporting countries in the region such as Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt heavily depend on the agricultural sector; 25 percent of the labor force is employed in the production and export of agricultural
goods. In Egypt and Morocco, employment in the agricultural sector is even higher. In the same vein, figure 1 illustrates that the value added of the Moroccan agricultural sector strongly correlates with the GDP per capita.

In line with Rivlin, we argue that geographical constraints to the growth of the agricultural sector indirectly hamper economic growth in the Arab countries through a lack of opportunities for capital accumulation and inter-sectoral transfer (Rivlin, 2009). Water scarcity could be reduced by making large-scale investments in water storage, extraction of groundwater, or recycling of water and better management. As long as the capital for these types of investment is lacking, the Arab countries depend upon the international market to ensure food supply. This situation in turn causes considerable budget pressures, mainly due to large scale subsidies for food prices. The problems of the agricultural sector also have a political dimension as to the system of land tenure and the existence of state monopolies. Reforms in this context that would interfere with the interests of the elite group are not realized. Hence, political institutions rather than climate turn out to be the constraining factor for economic growth.

In consequence, the MENA-countries suffer from the inability of their economies to adapt to changing competitive conditions in the world market. Therefore, a comparison with East Asian countries may contribute to the understanding of the Arab underdevelopment problem. These countries have successfully exploited their competitive advantages for the industrialization project by participating in the first wave of globalization and international trade of the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, East Asian countries such as Korea and Taiwan have benefited from lower wages (see table 4), higher rates of schooling (see table 5) and not the least from the lenient attitude of the international community with respect to protectionist policies in the 1980s. In the 1970s, Tunisia and Morocco hinged on the preferential conditions of trade agreements with the European community in order to expand their textile sectors.

In fact, the Latin American countries have implemented reform programs earlier than the countries in the MENA region. Nowadays, the Arab countries face a twofold challenge with respect to the international market. In the wake of the multi-fiber agreement, the Arab countries underwent fierce competition from East and South Asia; with major competitors in the textile sector being India, China and Bangladesh that exhibit high productivity and low wage levels (Tab. 6). With respect to other labor intensive manufacturing products, the conditions are similar. At the same time, the Arab countries face keen competition in the high-tech sector from Asian, Latin American and Eastern European countries that rely on their competitive advantages and geostrategic positions. This especially holds for the new Eastern European members of the EU, Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as for the Latin American countries of Brazil and Mexico. The East Asian countries also benefit from a more dynamic regional growth surrounding (Dasgupta et al., 2002). A case in point is Vietnam; by intra-regional FDI inflows it profits from Singapore, Taiwan, Japan and even China in order to promote industrialization and to establish its comparative advantages (Chaponniere et al., 2008).

By comparison with other regions, the MENA countries have delayed economic reforms for which reason the economies were not able to handle the growth of the population (between the 1960s and the 2000s, the Arab population increased from 108 Mio. to 320 Mio. See table 7.). By no means did demographic development contribute to economic growth in the Arab countries. Quite the reverse, it has exacerbated social conflict and prevented reforms; for societal reasons, the governments felt the need to preserve food subsidies and to maintain jobs in an over-equipped and unproductive public sector.

In sum, the European Union has to deal with neighboring countries that failed to adapt their economies to changing conditions in the world market and to the necessities set by demographic development. The EU did not demand these countries to take the necessary steps towards free competition, the rule of law and the protection of property rights for all citizens. Instead, the EMP focused on different investment programs (see table 3).

For these reasons, expectations with respect to the development impact of the EMP need to be realistic. In particular, opportunities provided by open markets can only be exploited to the extent that the institutions as well as the endowments with human or real capital enable the reallocation of resources.
Empirical Assessment of the Growth Impact of the EMP

As far as we know, the assessment of the impact of the EMP on economic growth and development was mainly subject to studies that are based upon descriptive analyses or theoretical considerations and lacked the application of empirical-econometric methods. Hence, we contribute to the literature by assessing the impact of the EMP on the growth rate of the GDP and the volatility as important aspects of the development process.

Skeptics perceive the asymmetric opening of markets in favor of the EU to be the major obstacle as to the growth impact of the EMP. While the non-European partner countries of the EMP have agreed to open their markets to European exports, the EU still refuses to grant full access to exports from the Mediterranean partner countries. Hence, these countries cannot fully exploit their comparative advantages in the agricultural sector (Schumacher, 2005). Furthermore, the abolishment of trade tariffs for agricultural products between the partner countries and the member states of the EU is likely to increase the trade deficit. By and large, these conditions can be qualified a violation of the long term goal of the EU to support self-sufficient food supply in the Arab Mediterranean countries. Martin (2004) and Nienhaus (1999) expect deterioration of economic growth and the development conditions with respect to the introduction of European Mediterranean Free Trade Area. According to the authors, non-competitive domestic firms will leave the market and, lacking the advantages of a closed market foreign investors will no longer have incentives to produce in the region. In general, the less developed and diversified economies of the partner states are likely to face enormous competitive pressure, especially in the industrial sector (Sid Ahmed, 2000). The liberalization of the sector will not dramatically increase the productivity of the domestic firms since they already enjoyed easy access to capital goods and intermediate products from abroad beforehand. The liberalization and privatization of the economy in the context of the EMP will exacerbate budget constraints due to the abolition of trade tariffs as well as state owned enterprises and monopolies. In the middle term, the free trade area and the EMP are likely to decrease employment and income levels and other socioeconomic conditions. Moreover, financial aids from the EU cannot counterbalance these financial constraints. According to Brach (2008), the growth deficit of the EMP can be evaluated with respect to the performance of key macroeconomic variables such as the growth rate and the inflow of FDI, which are considered the most important growth channels of the EMP. Currently, the growth rates of the partner states are below the level necessary to achieve constant unemployment rates and to catch up with the EU member states (Nabli & Anos-Casero, 2006). Concerning the inflow of FDI, the region also fails to fully exploit its investment potential (Joffé, 2005). Furthermore, the narrow focus on the energy sector hampers the performance in the manufacturing sector (Brach, 2008).

Descriptive Analysis

In order to assess the development and growth impact of the EMP, we compare the Arab association countries to suitable reference cases. From our point of view, the Arab non-partner countries are eligible for this task. In order to obtain a sufficient number of observations, we also consider Turkey, Israel and Iran as Middle Eastern countries that share historical roots as well as modern characteristics of the Arab countries. Furthermore, we include the Balkan countries of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Croatia, which have benefited from the European development initiative in the Stabilization and Association Program and later the European Neighborhood Policy, in order to cope with the consequences of the Balkan crisis in the 1990s. We have chosen these additional cases, since we expect them to be sufficiently comparable to the MENA countries with respect to historical characteristics or benefits from European policy measures, yet distinct enough to render meaningful results in the descriptive and the empirical analysis. Thus, the final sample encompasses 29 countries of which 22 are members of the Arab League. For the descriptive analysis, we divide the sample into 5 groups. The Core Association Countries include Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Egypt, which have engaged in early reform programs and maintain close ties with the EU. The Other Arab Association Countries of Algeria, Syria, Lebanon, and the West bank as follower countries that are covered by the initiatives of the EMP. The Non-Arab Association Countries include the Balkan countries of Albania, Bosnian-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia as well as Turkey and Israel, which are also subject to the EMP. In order to obtain an unbiased evaluation of the performance of the different groups, we have isolated the High Income Gulf States from the rest of the countries to form a separate group. The remainder of the sample is called the Other MENA Countries.
For the comparison, we choose twelve variables out of five different categories. The first category includes the income level as well as the growth and the volatility rate as indicators for economic performance. The inflation rate is used as an indicator for macroeconomic stability which forms the second category. The third category includes the trade rate as well as the export shares of the agriculture and the manufacturing sector as percentages of the GDP. This category reflects the economic performance as well as the level of diversification of the economies. The fourth category encompasses public expenditure as a percentage of the GDP, the degree of privatization as well as the Polity IV Index indicating the level of democracy. Furthermore, it also contains an index for the quality of institutions by the Fraser Institute. The variables in this category cover the performance of the countries with respect to political and institutional reforms. The last category includes the FDI inflows and worker remittances that represent two more relevant variables for economic growth.

The time period of 1980 until 2009 contains three distinct development stages of the Arab Mediterranean countries: A time of economic crisis (1980s) followed by a period of economic reform and stabilization (1990s) as well as a period of more profound reforms and intensive cooperation with the EU (2000s). The final period is very important in order to evaluate the performance of the Arab Mediterranean countries in comparison to the Other Arab Countries and the Non-Arab Partner States. In order to have a first glance at the performance of the Arab Mediterranean countries, we employ the box plot method.

As non-oil exporting countries, the Core Association Countries show a low income level throughout the three decades. Nevertheless, they outperform the group of the Other MENA countries including the poorest Arab countries such as Yemen, Sudan and Mauritania (see Fig. 1a). Except for Jordan, the growth performance of the Core Association Countries is high and stable (see Fig. 1b). The same holds for the Non-Arab Association Countries that exhibit high economic growth and volatility in the 1990s and lead the sample in the last decade with lower but stable growth rates. The index of macroeconomic stability confirms this observation: the Core Association Countries exhibit low and stable inflation rates throughout the three decades while the Non-Arab Association Countries follow a pattern of high and volatile inflation rates, especially in case of the Balkan countries (see Fig. 2). The trade performance underwent a slow but steady increase (see Fig. 3a), notably in the small economies of Tunisia and Jordan. With respect to the composition of exports, the manufacturing industry plays a very important role for some association countries such as Israel (see Fig. 3b). Within the Arab countries, both groups of association countries have performed well in the last decade. Among the non-oil exporting countries, Jordan has delivered a high performance due to the free trade agreement with the USA in the context of the peace process with Israel.

With respect to the economic and reform performance of the Arab association countries, the privatization record of is of great importance. We would like to emphasize the record of Egypt in the 1990s and Tunisia in the 2000s. Among the Non-Arab association countries, the Balkan countries have implemented their privatization programs in the 1990s, while Turkey did not engage in the process until the 2000s. The Non-oil exporting Arab countries have shown gradual increases in the level of democracy except for Tunisia. The Non-Arab association countries however, can be qualified as democracies in the last decade. With respect to the quality of the legal system and the security of property rights, the Core Association Countries have outperformed the Non-Arab Association Countries thus ranging shortly behind the Gulf States (see Fig. 4). This observation clearly shows that democratization processes lead to deterioration in quality on behalf of the economic institutions in the middle term.

The inflow of FDI is considered one of the main channels by which the EMP is supposed to generate growth and to foster development in the partner countries. Interestingly, the box plot confirms an increased inflow of at least 2% of foreign investment for all groups. Within the Core Association Countries, an increase of 9% is achieved in Jordan (see Fig. 5). In order to analyze this observation, we calculate an index of FDI performance indicating whether the FDI inflow of a country corresponds to its share of the world income. This index is calculated as follows: (FDI inflows in the country/world FDI)/(country’s GDP/World GDP). A value of 1 shows that the country is an underachiever in attracting FDI. An index score above 1 points towards an over-achievement in the same context (Nugent & Pesaran, 2007). The results of the performance index confirm the interpretation of the box plot (Tab. 8). Within the last two decades, most of the association countries show an increase in the index of FDI performance. Jordan exhibits a dramatic increase while Tunisia shows a negative record although the score still is higher than 1.

The descriptive analysis of these key indicators clearly illustrates that most association countries have undergone a positive or neutral development within the context of the EMP. Regarding the econometric analysis of the growth impact of the EMP, we would like to highlight that some of the Arab association countries have engaged in reform and structural adjustment programs by the IMF and the World Bank shortly before the official initiation of the Barcelona process. Hence, a positive effect of the EMP cannot be interpreted as a one-sided causal impact.
The Impact of the European Mediterranean Policy on the Growth rate

For the econometric analysis, we have estimated the following endogenous growth model:

\[ \log Y_{t} - \log Y_{t-1} = \alpha_{t} \log Y_{t-1} + \alpha_{t} (\log Y_{t-1} - \log Y_{t-2}) + \beta X_{t} + \mu_{t} + \gamma_{t} + \epsilon_{t} \]

As mentioned above, we investigate the effects with respect to 29 sample countries. The analysis covers a period of 30 years with 6 sub-periods; we employ five year averages in order to avoid auto-correlation. Furthermore, we apply the General Method of Moments (GMM- Difference and GMM- System) which is considered suitable with respect to the endogeneity problem in a panel context. Here, we focus on the results of the GMM- Difference method, since it is more adequate for small samples. From the beginning of 2000, the association countries have benefited from a formal membership in the EMP as well as different initiatives and financial aids by the EU. Hence, we attempt to assess the growth impact of the EMP by introducing a dummy variable that takes a value of zero in the first four sub-periods until 1999, and a value of one for the last two sub-periods from the beginning of 2000. In order to investigate the channels of the expected growth impact of the EMP, we construct three different interaction dummies for the inflow of FDI, the level of democracy and the trade openness. Since we expect the growth impact of the EMP to differ across regions, we also construct group specific interaction dummies for the Arab Mediterranean Countries and the Non-Arab Mediterranean Countries.

The results of the regression show the expected sign for the macroeconomic and structural variables with some of the coefficients being significant (Tab. 9). With respect to the size of government and the trade openness, all member states of the EMP show the expected effect. On top of that, the Polity V index has a direct and positive impact on growth, which means that the level of democracy corresponds to the economic performance of the countries. Our results are not in line with most empirical studies that argue in favor of an indirect impact of democracy on economic growth. Interestingly, the introduction of the association dummy does not alter the results. The dummy variable is negative but not significant which means that the EMP does not directly contribute to economic growth. By disaggregating the growth impact of the EMP through the introduction of the interaction dummies, we observe a negative and significant effect of the democracy interaction dummy. This means that EMP negatively influences the economic performance of the partner countries via democracy. Put differently, the efforts at democratization in the context of the EMP have negatively affected the growth performance of the partner countries. The introduction of the group specific interaction dummies points out that the EMP contributes to the economic performance of the Arab association countries via the FDI inflow. The remaining two growth channels trade and democracy however, are not significant. With respect to the non Arab association countries, all variables are highly significant, yet only trade openness contributes to the economic growth (see Peridy, 2005) since the FDI inflow and the democracy index display negative signs. We have employed both methods and the results of the GMM-System correspond to those of the GMM-Difference estimator.

In contrast to the more prominent pessimistic view, we find that the EMP does not exert an aggregate negative impact on economic growth of the partner countries. On the disaggregated level, we find a positive as well as a negative effect on the growth rate that occurs through various channels and is group specific.

The Impact of the European Mediterranean Policy on the Volatility rate

As an important component of the development process, we also focus on the impact of the EMP on volatility. Hence, we estimate the following endogenous model:

\[ \sigma_{t} = \alpha_{t} \sigma_{t-1} + \beta X_{t} + \mu_{t} + \gamma_{t} + \epsilon_{t} \]
The estimation method is the same as in the growth model apart from the introduction of the added value of the agricultural sector as a share of GDP which is used as an index for the diversification level of the economy. Furthermore, we also added the effect of worker remittances since this factor is regarded essential to the stability of the development process (see Yang, 2008; Bugamelli & Paterno, 2009). As expected, the GMM-Difference estimation confirms the growth stabilizing function of the diversification level of the economy as well as the worker remittances (Tab. 10). Furthermore, the results show a positive and significant impact of trade openness on the volatility of the growth rate. This result is in line with several other empirical studies and shows that the default hypothesis with respect to trade openness does not always hold. Concerning the impact of democracy on the stability of the growth rate, the hypothesis for the aggregate level was rejected. The association dummy however, is significant and takes a negative sign which means that the EMP does contribute to the stabilization of the growth process in the partner countries. Same holds for the interaction dummies of the FDI and trade openness variables. Since we are looking for regional effects, we have introduced regional specific interaction dummies for FDI inflow, trade openness and the democracy index. The results clearly illustrate that the stabilizing function of the EMP on economic growth via FDI and trade openness can be attributed to the experience of the Arab Mediterranean Countries.

We conclude that the EMP significantly contributes to the stabilization of the development process of the Arab Mediterranean partner states by reducing the volatility of the growth rate. At this stage, we are able to confirm a positive development impact of the EMP, especially in case of the Arab partner states. However, we neither find a positive nor a negative impact of democracy on the volatility of the growth rate. This is in line with Yang (2008) who posits that there is no growth stabilizing effect of democracy for developing countries.

The Impact of the European Mediterranean Policy on Total Factor Productivity

In order to assess the development impact of the EMP in detail, we supplement the econometric analysis by investigating the impact of the EMP on Total Factor Productivity. In fact, the TFP is considered an important determinant of economic growth because it reduces the volatility of the growth rate (Tang et al., 2008). Hence, a positive impact of the EMP on the TFP of the partner countries would support the results of the econometric model.

Many authors (see Yousef, 2004 and Rivlin 2009) argue that the high growth rates of the Arab countries in the 1960s and 1970s were mainly based on capital accumulation. Until the 1990s, few countries of the region were able to attain a positive TFP record (see Abu-Qarn & Abu-Bader, 2007; Pissarides & Veganzones-Varoudakis, 2007; Dasgupta et al., 2002; Keller & Nabli, 2007). Unfortunately, these empirical studies did not cover the years 2000. Most of these authors have employed Barro and Lee’s (2000) database which contains the average years of schooling in order to avoid the lack of data concerning the accumulation of human capital. As mentioned above, the development of the TFP in the last decade gives important insights upon the efficiency of the EMP to promote growth and development in the Arab partner Countries. Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that the results of the TFP should be interpreted with caution; Apart from the accumulation of human and physical capital, many other factors influence the growth rate. Hence, it can be difficult to interpret the Solow residual as a real indicator for technical change (Hakura, 2004).

The TFP can be determined by accounting or econometric analysis. An advantage of the regression method is that one does not need fixed effects for the share of capital and labor on the TFP since the size and magnitude might differ between the countries (Abu-Qarn & Abu-Bader, 2007). A disadvantage is that the method can generate endogeneity biased results. In order to avoid this problem, we use both methods and run a correlation analysis with results of the other authors for the 1970s and 1980s as a robustness check. The analysis shows that the econometric regression generates the best results since they show a high correlation with the Abu-Qarn and Abu-Bader’s (2007) as well as Pissarides and Veganzones-Varoudakis’ (2007) findings.

For an investigation of the TFP, we estimate the following model:

\[ d \ln(Y_p) = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 d \ln(K_p) + \alpha_2 d \ln(L_p) + \mu + \gamma + \epsilon \]
Here, Y, L, and K represent GDP per capita, labor (as an alternative to employment) and capital. The most important challenge of this task is the lack of data for the calculation of the physical capital. In line with Abu-Qarn and Abu-Bader (2007), we estimate a time series for this variable following the formula:

$$K_{t+1} = \frac{I}{g + \delta}$$

Where K, g, δ, and I represent the capital, the long term growth rate of GDP per capita, the depreciation rate, and the amount of investment.

The results of the model (Tab. 11) show, that most of the partner countries except for Egypt and Israel have experienced a positive development of TFP throughout the 1990s and the 2000s. This finding is in line with Naceur et al. (2007), who argue that in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey, the privatization has contribute increased the efficiency and rentability of the firms.

Finally, we conclude that the EMP did not deteriorate the growth performance of the partner state as anticipated. On the contrary, there is substantial evidence for a positive impact on economic growth via the volatility of the growth rate and the TFP. As demonstrated by the European experience, integration processes are highly complex and provide visible positive results only in the long run.

Conclusion

The empirical results show that the positive impact of the EMP on economic growth was mainly caused by the inflow of FDI, while the limited access to European markets constrained the positive effects aspired by the initiators. Apparently, political stability of the MENA-region was sufficient in order to attract foreign investors. Given the uncertainty with respect to political change after the Arab revolution, we consider political stability most important for the time to come. This is in line with our findings which confirm that even slightly more democratic institutions require time in order to reduce uncertainty by stabilizing the institutional environment. A more strengthened rule of law is desirable, since it is likely to intensify cooperation among foreign investors and domestic entrepreneurs. In that case, the North African Arab countries are expected to make better use of their proximity to the European Common Market, which is likely to deliver a comparative advantage over the Asian competitors. A full integration to the European market, however, will require structural adaption and challenges the economies and the political institutions alike. In this case a more ambitious program of assistance for North African Arab countries will be essential.

References

» HOLDEN, Patrick, “In Search of Structural Power. EU Aid Policy as a Global Political Instrument” (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington: Ashgate, 2009).


**Table 1** Size of the Public Sector in Arab Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>56,18</td>
<td>787,000</td>
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<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>59,61</td>
<td>3,800,000</td>
<td>7,3</td>
<td>25,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>72,16</td>
<td>77,500</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
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<td>360,000</td>
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<td>40</td>
</tr>
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<td>296,500</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Syria</td>
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<td>343,000</td>
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<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>29,09</td>
<td>249,000</td>
<td>3,5</td>
<td>11,6</td>
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**Figure 1** GDP Dependency on the Agricultural Sector in Morocco
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>GDP Growth</th>
<th>St.Dev. GDP Growth</th>
<th>Government consumption expenditure (% of GDP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab World</td>
<td>1960</td>
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<td>5,36</td>
<td>17,37</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>5,96</td>
<td>3,43</td>
<td>21,65</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>-1,32</td>
<td>1,28</td>
<td>20,84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia &amp; Pacific</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>6,98</td>
<td>1,61</td>
<td>10,76</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>2,97</td>
<td>2,21</td>
<td>12,25</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>3,34</td>
<td>1,28</td>
<td>13,94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1,94</td>
<td>1,64</td>
<td>14,34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High income: OECD</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>15,34</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>2,87</td>
<td>2,04</td>
<td>16,84</td>
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<td>1980</td>
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<td>1,54</td>
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<td>1990</td>
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<td>1960</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>3,19</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>-0,19</td>
<td>2,47</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1,18</td>
<td>1,78</td>
<td>13,51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East &amp; North Africa</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>6,80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>5,78</td>
<td>4,70</td>
<td>21,04</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>-1,63</td>
<td>1,80</td>
<td>23,23</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2,07</td>
<td>1,51</td>
<td>21,08</td>
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<td>South Asia</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>3,66</td>
<td>4,26</td>
<td>8,83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>0,65</td>
<td>3,39</td>
<td>9,50</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>3,15</td>
<td>1,40</td>
<td>10,63</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>3,29</td>
<td>1,58</td>
<td>10,95</td>
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</table>

Source: WDI (2011)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>GDP Growth</th>
<th>St.Dev. GDP Growth</th>
<th>Government consumption expenditure (% of GDP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>2,10</td>
<td>1,91</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
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<td>-0,60</td>
<td>1,79</td>
<td>16,73</td>
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Source: WDI (2011).

**Table 3** Regional Support Allocation-Financial Breakdown- Years in which commitments are made in the programme

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<tr>
<th>Programme Heading / title</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Million EUR</th>
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<td>6,9</td>
<td>6,1</td>
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<td><strong>Political, Justice, Security and Migration Cooperation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidence building measures: civil protection</td>
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<td>Policy analysis</td>
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<td><strong>Sustainable Economic Development</strong></td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>South-South regional economic integration</td>
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<td>Environmental programme</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical assistance and risk capital support for FEMIP</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<td>128</td>
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<td>Development of the information society</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Development and Cultural Exchanges</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender equality and civil society</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Information and communication II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Euromed Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dialogue between cultures and cultural heritage</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>94,4</td>
<td>73,9</td>
<td>83,1</td>
<td>91,9</td>
<td>343,3</td>
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Source: European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

**Table 4** Manufacturing Wages in Asia, Latin America and the MENA Region, 1963-95

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manufacturing Wages</th>
<th>1963-70</th>
<th>1975-85</th>
<th>1985-95</th>
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<td><strong>Arab World</strong></td>
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<td>Algeria</td>
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<td>5569</td>
<td>5946</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
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<td>1894</td>
<td>2628</td>
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<td>3588</td>
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<td>Jordan</td>
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<td>Libya</td>
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<td>5834</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>0,81</td>
<td>0,95</td>
<td>1,85</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>1,17</td>
<td>3,20</td>
<td>5,10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>1,21</td>
<td>3,64</td>
<td>4,78</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
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<td>9,06</td>
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<td>Korea</td>
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<td>7,42</td>
<td>9,93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>2,51</td>
<td>4,69</td>
<td>7,02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>3,22</td>
<td>4,08</td>
<td>7,15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>3,56</td>
<td>6,62</td>
<td>8,00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>3,30</td>
<td>4,28</td>
<td>5,73</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>7,18</td>
<td>9,35</td>
<td>10,35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>6,82</td>
<td>8,51</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
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<td>8,73</td>
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</table>

**Source:** Karshenas (2001).

**Table 5 Average Years of Schooling (aged 25 and over)**
### Table 6 Regions of the World - Composition of Exports in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>High-technology exports (% of manufactured exports)</th>
<th>ICT goods exports (% of total goods exports)</th>
<th>Manufactures exports (% of merchandise exports)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab World</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>11.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia &amp; Pacific</td>
<td>30.01</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>84.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latin America &amp; Caribbean</td>
<td>13.22</td>
<td>11.38</td>
<td>55.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East &amp; North Africa</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>20.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>74.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>32.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>20.83</td>
<td>15.44</td>
<td>73.55</td>
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</table>

Source: WDI (2011).

### Table 7 Regions of the World - Demographic Development, 1960-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Population, total (Mio.)</th>
<th>Population Growth (annual %)</th>
<th>Fertility rate, total (births per woman)</th>
<th>Birth rate, crude (per 1,000 people)</th>
<th>Death rate, crude (per 1,000 people)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab World</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>108.86</td>
<td>2.718</td>
<td>6.951</td>
<td>47.092</td>
<td>19.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>144.15</td>
<td>3.023</td>
<td>6.683</td>
<td>44.399</td>
<td>15.307</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>197.03</td>
<td>3.070</td>
<td>5.924</td>
<td>39.759</td>
<td>10.430</td>
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<tr>
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<td>257.28</td>
<td>2.448</td>
<td>4.493</td>
<td>31.785</td>
<td>7.522</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>320.39</td>
<td>2.123</td>
<td>3.484</td>
<td>27.297</td>
<td>6.337</td>
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<td>East Asia &amp; Pacific</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>136.16</td>
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<td>5.324</td>
<td>31.726</td>
<td>16.382</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>142.15</td>
<td>1.998</td>
<td>4.536</td>
<td>29.457</td>
<td>8.852</td>
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<td>1980</td>
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<td>1.910</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latin America &amp; Caribbean</td>
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<td>40.502</td>
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<td>3.737</td>
<td>29.503</td>
<td>7.596</td>
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<td>2.926</td>
<td>24.577</td>
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<td>1.240</td>
<td>2.400</td>
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<td>1960</td>
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<td>5.999</td>
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<td>1980</td>
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<td>2.248</td>
<td>4.714</td>
<td>34.963</td>
<td>12.252</td>
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<td>1990</td>
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<td>1.930</td>
<td>3.909</td>
<td>29.783</td>
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<td>2000</td>
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<td>1.594</td>
<td>3.122</td>
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<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<td>256.02</td>
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<td>2.770</td>
<td>6.733</td>
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<td>19.737</td>
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<td>6.554</td>
<td>45.757</td>
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<td>5.971</td>
<td>42.762</td>
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Source: Barro and Lee (2000).
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
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<th>Population, total (Mio.)</th>
<th>Population Growth (annual %)</th>
<th>Fertility rate, total (births per woman)</th>
<th>Birth rate, crude (per 1,000 people)</th>
<th>Death rate, crude (per 1,000 people)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
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<td>4,926</td>
<td>34,306</td>
<td>16,176</td>
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<td>4,435</td>
<td>31,555</td>
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<td>2,613</td>
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<td>8,365</td>
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</table>

Source: WDI (2011).

**Figure 1a** GDP per Capita (constant: 2000 US$)

**Figure 1b** Growth in GDP per Capita (Annual Percentage)
Figure 2 Inflation, GDP Deflator (Annual Percentage)

Figure 3a Trade (Share of GDP)
Figure 3b Exports in Manufacturing (Share of Merchandise Exports)
Figure 4 Legal Structure and Security of Property Rights

Figure 5 Foreign Direct Investment, Net Inflows (Share of GDP)
Table 8 FDI Performance Index, 1990-99 and 2000-2009

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<th>FDI-Performanceindex</th>
<th>1990-99</th>
<th>2000-09</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
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<td>Israel</td>
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<td>1.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
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<td>Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AMDL</strong></td>
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<td>Algeria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
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<td>1.54</td>
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</table>

Source: Own Calculation, WDI (2011).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GMM-Diff</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth (t-1)</td>
<td>-.4305506 (0.011)</td>
<td>-.4324901 (0.012)</td>
<td>-.1928806 (0.132)</td>
<td>-.4142399 (0.006)</td>
<td>-.7845187 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log (initial GDP per Capita )</td>
<td>-.081894 (0.380)</td>
<td>-.382459 (0.399)</td>
<td>-.706559 (0.046)</td>
<td>-.4094392 (0.391)</td>
<td>8.662225 (0.177)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log (Government Size )</td>
<td>-.081348 (0.023)</td>
<td>-.927016 (0.024)</td>
<td>-.500422 (0.026)</td>
<td>-.383028 (0.104)</td>
<td>-.5717562 (0.073)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log (Inflation)</td>
<td>-.821565 (0.127)</td>
<td>-.1876285 (0.116)</td>
<td>-.187361 (0.194)</td>
<td>-.2664294 (0.049)</td>
<td>-.2238351 (0.047)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log (Trade openness)</td>
<td>4.075453 (0.083)</td>
<td>3.964099 (0.082)</td>
<td>5.066318 (0.002)</td>
<td>2.680325 (0.442)</td>
<td>-.3226514 (0.923)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Log (population)</td>
<td>4.322015 (0.224)</td>
<td>4.693747 (0.180)</td>
<td>2.710767 (0.410)</td>
<td>1.48223 (0.734)</td>
<td>-.2081334 (0.956)</td>
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<td>Polity2 score</td>
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<td>2.587221 (0.296)</td>
<td>10.35311 (0.099)</td>
<td>9.673997 (0.039)</td>
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<td>Ass dummy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>Sargan test</td>
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Table 10

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<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volatility (t-1)</td>
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<td>.1134553 (0.563)</td>
<td>.1554503 (0.120)</td>
<td>.159551 (0.335)</td>
<td>.0835974 (0.568)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Log (initial GDP per Capita )</td>
<td>-.346939 (0.930)</td>
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<td>7.851708 (0.131)</td>
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<td>.6682508 (0.864)</td>
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<td>Government Size</td>
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<td>-.0171119 (0.932)</td>
<td>.0687858 (0.734)</td>
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<td>Log (Inflation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GMM-Diff</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>V</td>
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<td>Remittances</td>
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<td>(0.162)</td>
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<td>(0.223)</td>
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Table 11 Sample Countries - Changes in Total Factor Productivity, 1990-99 and 2000-2009

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<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
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<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td>Israel</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
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### Table 12

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<th>Variable</th>
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<tr>
<td>Growth (t-1)</td>
<td>GDP per capita growth (annual %)</td>
<td>Own Calculation (WDI (2011))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volatility (t-1)</td>
<td>Standard deviation of GDP per capita growth</td>
<td>Own Calculation (WDI (2011))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial GDP per Capita</td>
<td>GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2005 international US$)</td>
<td>Own Calculation (WDI (2011))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Size</td>
<td>Government consumption expenditure (% of GDP)</td>
<td>WDI (2011)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inflation</td>
<td>Inflation, GDP deflator (annual %)</td>
<td>WDI (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade openness</td>
<td>Trade (% of GDP)</td>
<td>WDI (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Population, total</td>
<td>WDI (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversification</td>
<td>Agriculture, value added (% of GDP)</td>
<td>WDI (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances</td>
<td>Workers’ remittances and compensation of employees, received (% of GDP)</td>
<td>WDI (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polity2 score</td>
<td>Level of democracy</td>
<td>Polity IV Project, Centre for international Development and Conflict Management</td>
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<td>Ass.dummy</td>
<td>Association dummy</td>
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<td>Ass.dummy*FDI</td>
<td>Association Interaction dummy</td>
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<td>AMDL*FDI</td>
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<td>NAMDL*polity</td>
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Source: Own Calculation, WDI (2011).
Searching For A “EU Foreign Policy” during the Arab Spring – Member States’ Branding Practices in Libya in the Absence of a Common Position

Inez Weitershausen

Introduction

When faced with a political crisis, such as the Arab uprisings of 2011, states can respond by acting either unilaterally or in a cooperative manner with other states. With regard to the latter option they can do so ad hoc through forming an alliance with like-minded partners, or when possible, by cooperating with them through making use of previously created institutions. Institutionalist theories suggest that this second option can be a particularly attractive one, given the many ways in which institutions are able to facilitate cooperation (Keohane 2005). The latter encourage states to mutually adjust their positions and thus arrive at an outcome that is more favourable to all of them. More specifically, international organisations (IOs) can take on a number of tasks dependent on the issue area and the powers which have been delegated to them, ranging from the gathering and provision of information to monitoring activities or even the sanctioning of non-compliant behaviour. According to institutionalists, insights in these benefits of IOs as well as the fact that their creation and maintaining usually require substantial resources, should thus encourage states to act rationally and to make use of these institutions whenever possible. In practice, however, it is often found that states circumvent IOs, do not comply with their rules and rather engage in unilateral action – in particular when enforcement powers and sanctioning mechanisms are weak and incentives for non-compliance are high. Insufficiencies in the institutional design and cost-benefit calculations regarding the value of institutional action vs. unilateral action are therefore the main causes for states’ abundance of previously created institutions and decisions to pursue their national interests without further adjusting them to those of others (Koremenos, Lipson Snidal 2001).

In the area of foreign policy, the institutions of the European Union have undergone numerous reforms in order to become more attractive forums for MS and to encourage the latter to make use of them. The latest innovations in this regard were introduced through the Treaty of Lisbon (ToL). Yet, given the heavily-criticized response of the EU or its member states (MS) to the events commonly referred to as the Arab uprisings or “Arab Spring”, it does not seem far-fetched to assume that the institutional design is still not sufficiently tailored to engage MS in foreign policy cooperation and enthuse them for the idea of delegating authority to the supranational level. While the international public and citizens across Europe and North Africa became most aware of this fact when MS diverged on the question of military intervention in Libya in 2011, numerous instances can be identified in which the expected mutual gains from cooperation simply did not outweigh those associated with a unilateral, national response. Only in very few occasions such as delivering humanitarian aid and with regard to formulating a new common policy response to the...
European neighbourhood, MS felt the need to act in a joint effort. Here they were aware that their respective national interests could best be realized by relying on the EU framework because the latter possessed the relevant expertise and infrastructure (as in the case of ECHO) or because a community response seemed “appropriate”. In other instances, where national positions diverged considerably and no immediate added value was identified from an EU or institutional response, MS hence relied on other paths for action. Cooperation through institutions during the Arab uprisings was therefore a result of rational calculations of costs and benefits rather than because they felt a strong desire for a common foreign policy or because they were bound by a general belief in the European project.

This is not to suggest that there are not any single politicians or decision-makers who – usually based in Brussels – are indeed deeply committed to the European idea and who are thus influenced by normative considerations of the non-material value of the EU. Yet, overall, these individuals are outnumbered by those driven by more practical considerations regarding the expected value of any action for the national – or their very personal – benefit. Even this latter group is however aware that the EU has become a reality and can in fact be used as an effective vehicle for national interests. For this reason, also among politicians with a rather low personal affinity to the European project there is hence an incentive to draw on the EU when they deem this to serve their (national or personal) interests. Such processes have described as “uploading” activities in the debate on “Europeanisation”, “Brusselization” or “EU-isation” (Radaelli 2000, 2007; Wallace 2000, Wong 2005) and have included inter alia activities such as externalizing national problems to the community level (Menon 2009) or using the “shield effect” of foreign policy cooperation against eventual negative consequences in cases of controversial policies (Tonra 2000).

From a rationalist institutionalist perspective, this projection of national preferences to the EU level can be understood as an important instrument in the tool box of the foreign policy makers as it allows MS to pursue their national interests more effectively in the context of ‘politics of scale’ (Ginsberg 1989). Unsurprisingly, the strategy is used (or at least attempted) by all MS and thus different actors, all of which seek to influence EU institutions, shape ideas and feature policy templates. As a result, foreign policy-making at the EU level (from agenda-setting all the way to implementation) remains to a large extent in the hands of MS and has – due to the unanimity requirement often been characterized as a “lowest common denominator” policy while other have stressed the effects of information sharing and coordination, elite socialization, the increasing replacement of a culture of “bargaining” by “arguing” and ultimately processes of “normative suasion”, as new understandings of appropriateness are internalized (Smith 1998, Wessels and Weiler 1988, Schimmelfennig and Thomas 2009, Tonra 2001, Smith 2004).

Apart from the efforts to shape and influence the institutional level and the preferences of other MS described above, domestic politicians are also becoming increasingly aware of the effect which “EU rhetoric” about values and norms can have on their citizens. The reasons for doing so will be discussed in greater detail below. Yet one can already argued that “branding” national policies and action with the “European” or “EU” label, even though it clearly reflects unilateral approaches rather than community positions, can be a clearly advantageous strategy in order to foster legitimacy and approval among the domestic audience, generate support and create an image of what the EU iis and does among partners. The way in which this phenomenon of using the “EU brand name” has taken place during the Arab uprisings by the “big three” MS in foreign policy, how it was made possible and which concrete goals it was to serve in each case, will be analysed in greater detail in the following.

**Reasons for branding**

In the context of business administration, a brand has been defined as “a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers”23. More broadly, it can be understood as “... nothing...
more or less than the sum of all the mental connections people have around it”.24 As such, a brand promises an added value to any product or service and thus a competitive advantage to a company. The terms “brand” and “added value” have in fact been found to be synonymous.25

While the “brand” term is not as such used in the field of political science and does not form part of the discourse in international relations, the EU itself has, in a different context, identified the advantages of an “EU brand” and found that the latter helps “improving Europe’s internal and worldwide reputation as a social and political entity” that is makes “Europe’s achievements easy to identify for stakeholders and citizens” and that it contributes to “building a sense of common belonging”.26 EU symbols such as the flag, hymn and citizenship are concrete attempts to make the brand more visible. These findings go hand in hand with theories suggesting that in order to be successful, a brand needs to create a clearly-identifiable, favourable “mental picture” of the product and thus trigger positive connotations among customers (De Chernatony 2012, 26).

In the area of foreign policy, however, the EU still has a rather long way to go as it remains unclear to many which concrete policies, activities and objectives distinguish the Union from other actors in the international arena. This is due to the absence of a long-standing foreign policy tradition and institutional weaknesses in formulating common and coherent positions across time and issues, which could eventually merge into a clear strategy to pursue a certain set of objectives (Biscop 2009; Biscop/Howorth/Giegerich 2009; Bendiek/Kramer 2010). Rather, unclear and sometimes contradicting approaches have established an image of the EU in the area of foreign policy which has caused confusion among practitioners and has given rise to numerous efforts to identify and label EU foreign policy. The academic discussion on what defines the EU as an actor in foreign policy reflects that while the EU seeks to establish a picture of itself as a “normative”, “ethical” or “civilian power” (Duchêne 1972, Manners 2002 etc.), the actual “nature of the beast” (Risse-Kappen 1996) remains unclear – as do the consequences or actions associated with it.

In the absence of a concrete code of conduct as to how Europe should react or a large set of coherent precedents establishing how it has acted in the past in similar situations, MS are thus able to declare any given action as representative of those of the Community as a whole. It is not argued here that “branding” is done in order to deceive the public, and the underlying reasons differ as will be shown throughout this paper. In fact contradictory action might well be found in a genuinely different understanding of what is and should constitute and be the purpose of EU action. Yet, it will be pointed out how “EU branding” is a common tool used by all governments investigated here in order to legitimize their action.

Three arguments will be made. Firstly, the multitude of policies existent in the context of the Arab Spring did not simply constitute an “opportunity not seized” by MS, but has rather contributed negatively to the already existing scepticism towards an EU foreign policy – among MS as well as partners. Secondly, the absence of a clear EU profile due to divergent MS’ interests covered poorly by EU rhetoric was further enhanced by the institutions which were not sufficiently able to define and prescribe an “EU line” and thus further contributed to this inconsistent picture. Thirdly, it is argued that MS sought to establish their interpretation of what is and ought to be EU foreign policy not just for the case at hand, i.e. Libya or the Arab uprisings more broadly, but also in order to increase their chances of determining and shaping future EU actions towards the neighbourhood and beyond.

In order to test these arguments, the paper will proceed as follows: A brief description of the failure to cooperate in Libya will illustrate how MS pursued very different policies during this international crisis. General insights into the practise of “EU branding” will be provided, before the interests of the “big three”, i.e. France, the UK and Germany are outlined. By drawing on examples from their respective discourse on intervention in Libya, it will be demonstrated how the different policies were portrayed as representative of “EU” objectives. It will be demonstrated how this practise was further facilitated by the fact that institutions did not provide any clarity either. Final thoughts will tackle the question of which longer-term interests MS might seek to pursue through this strategy and thus how “EU branding” is ultimately used to legitimize a multitude of interests, policies, and actions and what the consequences for the genesis of a common EU identity and foreign policy are.

Unilateral policies in Libya

On March 17 after the vote on Resolution 1973 the headline “Europe split over Libya No Fly Zone” (Dempsey 2011) appeared in this or a similar form in global news and testified to the difficulties of EU MS to agree on common military action vis-à-vis the Gaddafi regime. The discussion on this issue in the first place can be largely traced back to French initiatives. With regard to the establishment of a No-Fly Zone (NFZ), the country had taken unilateral action early on when the well-connected French philosopher and journalist Bernhard-Henry Lévy assisted in establishing informal contacts with the Libyan Interim Transitional National Council (TNC) and in convincing President Sarkozy to recognize the latter without the support and knowledge of other MS on 10 March 2011 (Erlanger 2011). While the French president chose to even leave parts of his own bureaucracy, namely the foreign office, in the dark about this plans, he did establish contacts with his European colleague, UK Prime Minister Cameron and informed him about his diplomatic activities. Having however excluded other MS from his considerations, the latter’s reactions were rather harsh.

Despite the absence of a common European stance on the issue, the intense contacts to the Libyan opposition clearly increased Sarkozy’s willingness to take more action however and the possibility of military intervention started to be debated. Unlike in the diplomatic field where contacts had been established and recognition granted unilaterally, a French “solo run” in the military realm was impossible, given the amount of resources which were needed. Yet, attempts to convince other EU MS proved rather difficult as inter alia the European Council meeting on March 11 had indicated whose final communiqué noticeably failed to mention the possibility of a NFZ (Traynor/Watt 2011). A G8 meeting of foreign ministers on March 14-15 in Paris had further confirmed these concerns that EU MS would not be able to agree on imposing a NFZ, in particular due to the hesitant attitude of Germany and a NFZ was not mentioned in the G8’s concluding statement either.

Given that a purely French-British initiative was also going to lack sufficient resources, the countries focused their attention on the United States. Rather than putting any further effort into trying to convince unwilling European partners, French foreign minister Juppé cancelled at short notice a trip to Germany. He rather concentrated on lobbying the US administration (Dempsey 2011) and on facilitating the contact between the Libyan rebels and US officials. Given that regional support from parts of the Arab world existed and US public opinion seemed to embrace the possibility of intervention under these circumstances, the US eventually voted in favour of UN SC resolution 1973. As the UK, France and Portugal did so as well, only Germany was left with a differing opinion in the SC. The military intervention which followed, however, showed that within the EU Germany was not the only state critical of this decision. While extending the sanctions of UN SC resolution 1970 of 26 February and establishing a ban on all flights in the airspace of Libya “in order to help protect civilians” were widely agreed, the authorization to “take all necessary measures to enforce compliance” (UN Resolution 1973/2011) became a special concern and point of contention. When operation “Unified Protector” was deployed under American leadership on 23 March before its commando was transferred to NATO on 31 March 2011, only Belgium, Denmark, Italy and Spain, committed resources (to varying degree) to the operation alongside France and the UK.

“EU branding”: Reasons and Practise

Given the diverging positions of EU MS statements suggesting that a single EU policy existed seem rather disturbing. Yet the “branding” practise appears reasonable nonetheless given the need of democratically elected for continuous legitimacy among their populations. It is thus little surprising that they sought to “brand” policy choices, in particular when potentially contentious, as “in line” with Europe.

With considerable financial ties to Libya, the action of all “big three” MS was to some degree motivated by material interests which can – dependent on their particular content - be difficult to justify at home and in the international community. Libya's natural resources (and MS' access hereto), the country's role in supporting the EU in dealing with (illegal) migration from Africa, and lucrative business relations, first and foremost in the defence and energy sector were especially determining factors. After abandoning its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Programme and making extensive compensation payments to the families
of the victims of two airline bombings in which Libya had been involved at the end of the 1980s, the country had signed friendship treaties with a number of European states allowing for extensive trade partnerships. The negotiations were led predominantly by the UK and the US and thus guaranteed their companies favourable business relations.

The UK’s controversial “Deal in the Desert” in 2004 is but one piece of evidence of this newly found and lucrative working-relationship which other European states sought to establish to no lesser degree. Indeed, apart from Shell and BP for the UK, the Italian ENI and the Spanish Repsol companies were able to sign valuable (exploratory) drilling agreements with Libya’s National Oil Corporation (NOC). Similarly successful in terms of boosting domestic business interests had been French president Sarkozy. While in 2007 France signed contracts for anti-tank missiles and radio communications equipment, it also profited in combination with other MS from the fact that the European Aerospace and Defence Agency (EADS) sold civilian aircraft to Libya. It were, however, the extensive arms deals between the Gaddafi and the “big three” which proved particularly contentious in the light of the violent crackdowns during the uprisings and which needed to be “legitimised” as much as far as possible. Apart from these reasons which pertained to varying degrees to all three MS, there were also further individual motivations to engage in “EU” rhetoric and branding.

France had shaped initiatives such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the Southern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and played a particularly important role in the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). With regard to Libya, however, its interests also had a strong domestic dimension. After handling the first round of uprisings in Tunisia rather unsuccessfully by siding with the Ben Ali regime and offering support to crack down protesters, France found itself in a position where it could “make up” for these early mistakes, both in the eyes of the international community and European partners. Given the large Tunisian minority and overall Muslim population living in the country, such a gesture was further a wise move to appease French public opinion.

In an effort to “make up” for this unfortunate initial response to the uprisings which risked to challenge the French position in North Africa as a former colonial yet still very influential power, Sarkozy took action in Libya before anyone else on March 10, feeding into his perception of the “go-it-alone president” (Semo/Quatremer 2011). The growing pressure arising from his competitor for the presidential elections 2012, Marine Le Pen, and from his own party as Prime Minister Francois Fillon was becoming increasingly popular, is likely to have further contributed to his willingness to take decisive action (EurActiv 2011). The unilateral recognition of the NTC is evidence hereof and while this move was welcomed enthusiastically by the anti-Gaddafi forces, it caused incomprehension and irritation among European leaders. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte clearly revealed the different approaches persistent in Europe when he declared “I find it a crazy move by France. To jump ahead and say ‘I will recognize a transitional government,’ in the face of any diplomatic practice, is not the solution for Libya” (Watt 2011).

While such criticism must have been anticipated and thus accepted by the French government as costs that were outweighed by the benefits of unilateral action, the accusations did contrast to some degree with the overall positive French attitude towards the EU and the tradition to seek common solutions where possible. It is therefore hardly surprising that the French government made recourse to the EU where possible. While Sarkozy through his early contacts with the Libyan rebels and the NTC had too clearly pursued a unilateral track in order to be able to credibly make recourse to the role and value of a common EU approach, making Libya “Sarkozy’s moment” (Hewitt 2011), the task of engaging the EU through adequate rhetoric was left to other cabinet members. Prime Minister Fillon thus declared in one of his speeches that “it’s above all the Franco-British action which has spearheaded European and even international action” (Fillon 2011). The term “spearheaded” suggests here that while the UK and France might have been more active, their policies were not in contradiction with those of other states, including European partners – a statement which clearly did not reflect reality despite the fact that no vote was cast against UN SC 1973. Similarly, in his speech at the end of the London Conference on Libya on March 29, 2011, foreign minister Juppe declared that “among the 40 participants (…) there was a total unity of outlook” and that “The shades of opinion were really miniscule” (Fillon 2011b). The frequent use of the term “consensus” throughout his intervention does not, however, cover the fact that only a minority of EU MS chose to participate in the NATO intervention.

The UK’s motivation for military action differed from the French one, as the former did not have “a strong client-patron relationship” (Forbes 2011) at the moment of intervention. This fact, however, was likely to be changed if Gaddafi were removed from power with British help. In particular, the hope was that lucrative energy deals could be concluded. After the controversial decision by the Scottish government in August 2009 to release the convicted Lockerbie bomber Abdel Baset al-Megrahi on humanitarian grounds, and announcement of BP to invest $20bn in Libyan oil production over the next 20 years, it had become apparent that the UK was – just as most of its European neighbours – interested in Libya’s natural resources. The Macondo well disaster in the
Gulf of Mexico in May 2010 left BP not only with significant spill-related costs in losses and compensation funds, but also with complaints by its Italian competitor ENI. Supported by the Italian government, ENI demanded that BP refrain from drilling off Libya’s shore in the Mediterranean Sea until the Macando incident was fully investigated. As the UK thus lagged behind Italy and France both in terms of oil production and arms sales, the country was in a position where it “could substantially benefit from new leadership in Tripoli or even just Benghazi” (Forbes 2011). Military intervention in an effort to actively pursue this goal was thus a logical consequence for the UK government. With regard to a later visit by Cameron and Sarkozy in Libya, the Belgium newspaper “Le Soir” argued that “It’s probably no coincidence that these attentions come at the same time as the modest resumption of Libyan oil exports” (Lallemand 2011), thus attesting that the British strategy outlined above had indeed been successful.

The British government’s necessity to cover up these interests was, however, limited as the pursuit of national material interests is overall seen as a duty of the government by which its performance is measured. Furthermore, the level of scepticism towards the EU is generally higher among the British population than in other MS (Harrison/Bruter 2012). Prime Minister Cameron had therefore relatively fewer interests to use EU branding as a strategy to cover up unilateral policies. This became apparent when stating that “I am clear: taking action in Libya is in our national interest and that’s why Britain, with our allies like America and France, and alongside the Arab world, must play our part in responding to this crisis” (Cameron 2011).

Rather, his practise of doing so can be traced back to the fact that Libya was his first war and it was essential to point out the differences to the (in hindsight largely disapproved of) invasion in Iraq under Tony Blair. On February 23 it had become public that British oil workers were stranded in the desert, which is when Cameron called for UN action. A day later he apologized for the government’s handling of the evacuation of British nationals from Libya, which the returning citizens had described as a “disastrous” operation. The same day that Cameron expressed his regrets, he announced that “no options” should be ruled out if internal repression in Libya continued. While the UN SC met on February 26 to consider an arms embargo, travel ban and asset freeze on the Gaddafi regime, the last UK citizens were brought home. Cameron announced two days later, on February 28 that he had asked the Ministry of Defence to “work with our allies on plans for a military no-fly zone”. His various statements in the House of Commons (Cameron 2011a, 2011b, 2011, 2011d)) in which among the European powers only France is usually named explicitly as an ally to the UK demonstrate the relative little weight the EU had for the UK in the Libya situation.

As the EU generally does not constitute an essential part of the British foreign policy discourse, British branding-efforts were hence fewer and less explicit than those of France. Nonetheless, Britain, too, sought to establish its policies as “in line” with the EU. On March 28, Cameron thus stated in a speech at the House of Commons “At the European Council, Europe came together over Libya” and argued that “Europe is now on fully board with this mission” (Cameron 2011e).

For different reasons, France and the UK were hence dependent on gathering sufficient support to enable a “successful” military intervention, while ensuring that there were in fact sufficient “gains” for themselves and engaged in “EU branding”. The rationale was clearly that the more players were getting involved, the more they would have to “share the cake”. It was therefore in the interest of the UK and France to establish an alliance strong and efficient enough to bring about regime change, yet sufficiently limited to make clear who the supportive powers were – a strategy that proofed effective when Cameron and Sarkozy were welcomed as liberators when visiting Libya in September 2011 (Rousselin 2011). Unsurprisingly, it has been argued that the declaration of Germany not to partake in any military action was in fact welcomed by the two major powers (Interview with official in Brussels, 06.06.2011). Against this background, statements such as that by David Cameron that “It’s a moment for Europe to say what we’ve done in the past hasn’t always worked” must be treated with caution (Watt 2011).

Yet also Germany, which was very reluctant towards participating in a military intervention in Libya unless it was solely for the purpose of humanitarian assistance, was particularly active in linking this decision to the EU. The country’s hesitance can be seen in a tradition of scepticism towards military action since the Second World War, and is reflected in the attitude among the Germany population as expressed in the protests against the war in Iraq. Furthermore, Germany’s ties to and stakes in Libya were more limited than those of France and the UK. While Libya’s rich oil and gas resources are self-evidently an attractive feature for all industrialized countries, Germany receives its largest share of raw materials from its Eastern neighbours. Secondly, while migration and security are again topics of principal concern for all MS, Germany’s main focus has traditionally been on the

27 On April 1, 2011, Germany agreed together with its European partners at the European Council on the possibility of deploying an EU military mission to Libya if requested by the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
East. Work-related migration from Libya has been rather limited, and as social and cultural ties between the populations are also rather lose not much family-related migration has taken place either. Of maybe the highest “material” interest for the German government is the potential impact of Libya on the security situation in the Middle East, in particular as Merkel had declared Israel’s security part of the German Staatsraison. As Gaddafi had made Arab unity and the elimination of Israel his main foreign policy goals, the German government was thus principally in favour of any change which would alter or relax this tension. At the same time however, when military intervention was debated at the beginning of March 2011, it was not clear whether a change in government would ultimately imply a change in attitude towards Israel as well. Rather, the fear was that should Libya split into two provinces and no longer be controlled by one (autocratic yet well-known) ruler, the repercussions would be disastrous. It was therefore an important and closely observed gesture when in August 2011 Ahmad Shabani from the Democratic Party of Libya declared that his party supported the two-state solution and that the question was not whether a democratically elected Libyan government would recognise Israel, but rather “whether Israel will recognize us” (Melman 2011).

Against this background, the German government made use of the “branding tool” in order to justify its abstention in the vote on UNSC resolution 1973. While in front of the members of the Bundestag foreign minister Westerwelle explained this decision by stating that he did not want Germany to become a party in a civil war of another country and that a risk-analysis had made the difficult decision inevitable (Westerwelle 2011a), he was quick to state in an interview shortly hereafter that “Germany has not isolated itself. Neither in the Security Council, nor in NATO, nor in the EU. The majority of EU states will not take part in the military operation in Libya” (Westerwelle 2011b). The foreign minister thus tried – much as his colleagues from France and the UK– to explain his country’s action as “in line” with the EU rather than as a unilateral effort.

While France and the UK furthermore appealed to “European” ideas and ideals, underlining how the humanitarian dimension of the intervention which was to protect innocent civilians and their rights to life, safety and even democratic representation was in fact inherently European, Germany made the counter-argument. Westerwelle thus saw “targeted sanctions, political pressure and international isolation” to be more in line with Europe’s non-interventionist tradition. In all three cases, the respective interpretations mirrored public opinion and strategic culture (and thus conveniently the foreign ministers’, heads of states’ and government’s priorities).

In the case of the Libya intervention, the strategy of “EU branding” was thus pursued by all of the “big three”, independent of whether militarily engagement was sought or not. Such a practice makes it of course impossible to identify a single or even “the” EU position and it remains up to the each international partner or interested citizen to determine whether they want to see the French and UK policy of intervention (backed by a UN Resolution yet realized by only a small group of NATO countries) as in the interest of the EU, or whether they favor the position taken by Germany, whose cautious stance triggered substantive criticism while in its consequence of no military engagement mirrored the behavior of most other EU MS.

Given the very different positions that hence fell under the “EU umbrella” or seemed to be legitimizied by the latter, there is reason to conclude that MS have very different interpretations of what action is actually justified by the EU and can be seen to comply with the latter’s values. Alternatively, it can be argued that MS seek to shape or “nationalize” EU FP, its goals and instruments until time and precedents have established a more consistent approach. It seems surprising that the “labelling” such contradicting claims and policies as in line with EU objectives, did not lead to challenges of this practise among MS, in particular as it impacted negatively on the overall picture of the Union as a foreign policy actor. The widespread criticism of the lack of coherence and consistency of the “EU response” to the uprisings is evidence hereof (Brattberg 2011, Koenig 2011). One reason for why the practise was “accepted” nonetheless could be that uncovering a partner’s practise would ultimately also have revealed one’s own activities in this regard.

At the same time, EU institutions did not significantly challenge MS’ “branding” activities either, nor did they provide meaningful guidance, ideas and direction for a common EU FP.
Institutional Contributions to Branding

As stated above, EU institutions seemed to be willing to “play along” with MS as they did little to unveil that the latter were in fact acting unilaterally most of the time. Only occasional statements such as that of Catherine Ashton underlining that MS are sovereign states and act according to their own considerations can be interpreted as a means to establish that in fact none of the states was pursuing a previously defined and clearly identifiable European policy (Ashton, 2011).

While interesting, this is not a surprising outcome, given that EU institutions concerned with the conduct of foreign policy do not have a high degree of independent actoriness and are thus dependent on delegation of authority from the MS as well as on resources provided by the latter. Their space of action is hence rather limited. EU officials are further unlikely to challenge their own positions by pointing out how practises of “EU branding” aimed at covering up national interests inhibit a common approach as EU personnel is determined by MS and thus to a certain degree dependent on the latters’ continuous approval. Excessive criticism was and is thus rather unlikely.

Furthermore, one can hardly detect a unanimous understanding and common interpretations as to what constitutes EU objectives within and among the different institutions themselves, nor seems there to be agreement on adequate ways of pursuing them. The term “turf war” has frequently been deployed in this context (Carroll 2013). With regard to the question of military intervention as it occurred in Libya for instance, the different divisions within the EEAS alone are highly likely to differ, dependent on whether they are mostly concerned with questions of civil cooperation such as the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) and the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD) or rather with military matters as discussed by the European Union Military Staff (EUMS).

The “EU level” of foreign policy thus did little to provide clarity as to what would have constituted “real” EU action. Some analysts did not perceive the EU at all and contemplated “passivity” (Torreblanca 2011), whereas others have found simply that inter-institutional “cooperation is still lacking” (Bendiek 2011). Unsurprisingly, Council President Herman van Rompuy’s statement that the EU should “take credit for action in Libya” (Rettmann 2011) was met with surprise and criticism. It can, however, also be interpreted as an indirect approval of the action that was ultimately undertaken.

HR/VP Ashton, on the other hand, seemed more reluctant with regard to military engagement and is said to have “against the obvious irritation of the French president” (…) “seen to be briefing against a no-fly zone” (Hewitt 2011). From the outside it is difficult to assess whether this can be traced back to her position (as head of the diplomatic arm of the EU’s foreign policy machinery she can be expected to favour non-military solutions over others) or the composition of her team (with German Michael Mann being her spokesperson and Helga Schmidt part of the EEAS senior decision-makers). While it is difficult to leave these and other speculations aside, statements such as “NATO of course is a very different organization [from] the EU, and for me the focus of my work has been on building that long-term approach to the region, to Libya, to other countries, that will help them have the kind of economic and political future that we really want them to see” can be read as a preference for non-military solutions (Ashton 2011).

While MS thus tried to “sell” their respective policy preferences to their domestic audiences through the “EU brand”, institutions contributed to the unclear and incoherent picture the EU painted for itself.

MS long-term objectives (as further reasons for branding)

It has already briefly been suggested above that “EU branding” was ultimately not only used to legitimize particular action taken in Libya, but also to shape EU FP in the long run according to specific national priorities. While it is difficult to distinguish to which extent MS really pursued this as a strategy or whether EU references had simply become part of any national discourse on any planned foreign intervention, the effect of doing so was clearly expected to be positive, also in the long run. If one chooses to see the “branding practice” in the tradition of “uploading” national preferences to the European level as has been done here,
the rationale is one of path dependence. By interpreting the meaning of what constitutes an “EU” policy according to national interests long (and often) enough, MS will eventually create a fait-accompli regarding future policy options. This practise seems particularly useful when not only short-term interests between MS are in conflict with each-other, but long-term strategies and attitudes diverge as well.

It has already been established that France and the UK generally pursue a much more interventionist approach than, for instance, Germany. After the Council meetings in March 2011 where consensus on a military intervention in Libya could not be reached and in the absence of a European army, the pursuit of an EU initiative became an increasingly unattractive, time- and negotiation-intensive option, with an unsure outcome. Accordingly, France and the UK intensified their efforts to bring about an alliance which was capable of intervening effectively and where decision-making processes were less cumbersome. The UN resolution with its “Responsibility to Protect” umbrella as well as the established structures of NATO and the indispensable support of the US thus became the preferred choice for effective military action in the neighbourhood to which both countries clearly had no major objections. In fact, both Sarkozy and Cameron underlined in a letter to the President of the European Council that they were ready to assist the Libyan opposition “with the necessary assistance and cooperation” (…) and “support continued planning to be ready to provide support for all possible contingencies as the situation evolves on the basis of demonstrable need, a clear legal basis and firm regional support”, including a “no-fly zone or other options against air attack” (Sarkozy/Cameron 2011).

Not only did France and the UK thus underline their willingness to make use of their forces and act as reliable European partners to the US, they also both pursued further individual goals. For Euro-sceptic Britain relying on NATO had the positive side effect that EU institutions, including “the ones created with great fanfare by the Lisbon treaty” (Kundnani/Vaisse 2011), were largely circumvented and failed to establish a degree of independent actoriness. France, in the other hand, gained advantage over Germany which had been the main antecedent to French dominance in Europe’s Southern Neighbourhood in the past (Bicchi 2011). The Libya intervention thus served short and long term interests of EU MS which – with a view on domestic approval and intra-EU relations – were best to be covered by EU rhetoric.

Conclusion

The cacophony of European voices during Arab Spring did not simply constitute an “opportunity not seized” by MS, but rather revealed substantial differences and rivalries among MS and thus contributed negatively to the already existing scepticism towards an EU foreign policy – among MS as well as partners. The criticism with which the diverging MS policies were met is an illustration hereof. It was further shown that as institutions did not provide for a clear “EU line”, MS were able to cover their interests by an EU rhetoric that further challenged a common EU identity. Finally, it has been argued that MS sought to establish their interpretation of what is and ought to be EU foreign policy not just for Libya or the Arab uprisings, but also in order to increase their chances of determining and shaping future EU actions towards their neighbourhood and beyond.

The EU response in Libya must thus be understood as a decision by the strongest MS to act independent of the “costs” to the European project. Unconvinced by the institutional design of the CFSP and in particular its military component, France and the UK saw their aims better reached through the well-tried NATO structures and cooperation with the United States. Given the unforeseeable course of military intervention or even of expressing its support through a favourable vote at the UN, German politicians chose not to undertake any risks in this regard and rather sided with the sceptical public opinion.

Though their respective behaviour was thus diametrically opposed, the underlying reasons of the “big three” to act unilaterally while seeking an “EU label” for their action were the same: scepticism regarding the outcomes of a common EU policy with regard to national interests on the one hand, and a necessity for legitimacy due to domestic pressures on the other hand. The consequences of such practices for an “EU global role” however, are likely to be mixed at best.

While the Libyan rebels eventually won against Gaddafi’s forces with assistance from some of the EU MS, and France and the UK “won the war for intervention” at the international (though not the EU level), it has thus been argued that Europe in fact lost the war for a common EU position and increased international standing (Hewitt, 2011; Minoui, Meskens, Labaki 2011). In particular, one might wonder about the consequences of Libya for Europe’s ambitions to establish itself as a power alongside the US and its
credibility towards its neighbourhood as well as rising powers. At the same time, however, there is hope that some lessons have been learned from the Libya intervention. After all, findings by the Council on Foreign Relations have shown that “Europe is doing better in areas where it has been bitterly divided in the past, has failed miserably, but has been forced to put in place adequate tools and to harmonise national positions that were at first very far apart from one another” such as the Balkans (Kundnani/Vaisse 2011; European Council on Foreign Relations 2011). The critical responses from partners and domestic audiences to the uncommon approach may hence eventually lead to more institutional action and less room for MS to interpret the “EU line” according to their own wishes and thus make an end to the practise of “EU branding”.

References


The EU Attempts at Increasing the Efficiency of its Democratization Efforts in the Mediterranean Region in the Aftermath of the Arab Spring

Anastasiia Kudlenko

Abstract

The scale and intensity of changes brought to the countries of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) by the Arab Spring could not have left the EU approach to the region untouched. Democracy building has become one of the key spheres of the European policies calling for immediate reforms. As a result, quite a few new initiatives have been launched and several old ones reviewed to promote democratic reforms across the MENA region. The proposed paper will look at the impact these initiatives have already made and are envisaged to have in the future, as well as analyze the importance of the EU democratization assistance efforts in general.

Introduction

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring the European Union has declared a firm determination to review its approach to the southern neighbourhood with an ambitious aim of creating a ‘democracy partnership’ with the countries of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (Kurki, 2012: 1). For over two decades the EU relations with the region were constructed on the belief that pursuing economic liberalisation with autocratic, yet western-oriented regimes, would eventually lead to the introduction of political reforms. (Balfour, 2012: 28) It was only when the revolutionary movements started to spread across the region, refuting the myth of the ‘Arab exceptionalism’, which denied the compatibility of Islam with democracy, that the EU could no longer support the status quo at the expense of its democratization efforts. Attempting to redeem itself in the eyes of the peoples of the region and the world community, the EU moved away from prioritizing regional security and stability to supporting democratic transitions. (Behr, 2012a: 8)

The seriousness of the EU intentions was confirmed by the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Stefan Füle, who in his speech of February 28, 2011 openly admitted the EU past mistakes: ‘Europe must and will rise to the challenge of supporting democratic transition in North Africa, as it did after the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989. (...) we must show humility about the past. Europe was not vocal enough in defending human rights and local democratic forces in the region. Too many of us fell prey to the assumption that authoritarian regimes were a guarantee of stability in the region. This was

28 M.A. student studying for the double degree in International Masters in Russian, Central and East European Studies at the University of Glasgow and in European Studies in the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.
not even realpolitik. It was, at best, short-termism – and the kind of short-termism that makes the long term ever more difficult to build.’ (Speech by EU Commissioner Füle, 2011) Catherine Ashton, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has echoed these words, while launching the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean on March 8, 2011, by declaring that ‘the European Union has the experience and tools to help the countries in the region as they make the journey to deep democracy’. (EU Commission launches…, 2011)

This paper will try to analyze whether the given promise to support democracy building in the region was kept by the EU and evaluate how successful were its democracy promotion efforts in the two-year period after the Arab Spring. It will look at the EU initiatives in this sphere and argue that they underwent only minor changes in comparison to their earlier versions. I will show that most of the principles, presented by the EU as innovative, had already been included into the official rhetoric previously, which means that their effectiveness largely remained unchanged. In conclusion the article will review several new principles, whose implementation will allow the EU to significantly improve the coherence and efficiency of its democratization policy in the Mediterranean region.

The Promise of Deep Democracy: the EU Official Response to the Arab Spring

When the first protestors took to the streets of Tunis and flooded Tahrir square in Cairo, it was not just the economic grievances they were protesting against. Political reforms featured prominently on the list of their demands too, the same as they did in other MENA countries which joined the revolutionary movement shortly. Thus, democratic aspirations of the Mediterranean countries contributed to the recognition of the historic importance of the Arab Spring by external actors in the region, among them – the EU, which was initially inclined to dismiss it as another example of ‘bread riots’ or revolutions of the have-nots. (Koch, 2011) However, the optimistic beginning of the uprisings does not necessarily guarantee their successful ending or, even, continuation. Two years after the events, it is still difficult to say what kind of future awaits the region: if it falls back to authoritarianism, descends to radicalism or sets on the road to democracy. Moreover, if the most optimistic scenario prevails, and the Arab Spring countries will embark on the democratic journey, it remains unclear what type of democracy each of them will attempt to develop. Every country of the region has its peculiarities, and it is highly unlikely that all of them will pursue one model of democracy. In this respect, the EU may prove very useful for the MENA. Uniting 27 countries with ‘27 different models of democracy’, the EU can offer the region some valuable guidance when it comes to democracy building. (Kurki, 2012: 3) Close geographic location, historical connections and strategic interests of the EU make the cooperation of these two regions even more likely. All these factors notwithstanding, the EU was not very quick to respond to the uprisings, despite what its official documents may state. (EU Response to the Arab Spring: Overview, 2011).

The delayed reaction came as the result of the combination of the EU’s already-mentioned long-term preference for regional stability and its more short-term institutional difficulties. (Behr, 2012b: 78) The responsibility to respond to the Arab Spring was entrusted with the newly-established European External Action Service (EEAS), which was formed only on December 1, 2010 through merging the European Commission’s former DG External Relations and parts of the Council’s foreign relationships apparatus. (Teti, 2012: 269) The EEAS chose the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as the main means for dealing with the reform needs of its MENA partners. (The European Union’s Response…, 2011) Such decision could be partly explained by the fact that the ENP had already been in the process of revision when the revolts broke out in the Mediterranean, since the routine mid-term review of the ENP had been initiated in March 2010, and partly by the poor international record of another ‘pillar of the EU’s Mediterranean policy’ – the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), which had been compromised by its total neglect of political reforms. (Tocci, 2011: 1-2).

The first official reaction to the Arab Spring was released on March 8, 2011 in the form of the Communication ‘A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity’ (PTDSP), jointly prepared by the European Commission and the EU High Representative (HR). It was closely followed by the Communication ‘A New Response to a Changing Environment’ of May 25, 2011. Both documents are of key importance for this paper. COM(2011)200 ‘claims to outline a new framework for EU Democracy Assistance
based on a new conception of democracy, and a new position for democracy in the EU’s external relations.’ (Teti, 2012: 1) With this Communication the HR and the Commission express support for the peoples of the southern neighbourhood who took to the streets with ‘the demand for political participation, dignity, freedom and employment opportunities’, offering them a ‘Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity’. (2011: 2) The latter is to be built on three elements: democratic transformation and institution-building; a stronger partnership with people; and sustainable and inclusive growth.

Differentiation, conditionality and partnership between European and Mediterranean societies were defined as the main themes to be put into the basis of the new ENP. (A Partnership for Democracy…, 2011: 3) The EU promises to respond to the situation in the region in a ‘more focused, innovative and ambitious’ way, ‘addressing the needs of the people and the realities on the ground’. The ‘more for more’ principle is presented by the Communication as the main innovation. The principle presupposes that countries of the region that go further and faster with the reforms will be able to receive greater support from the EU, based on greater differentiation. Simultaneously, it is mentioned that ‘support can be relocated or refocused for those who stall or retrench on agenda reform plans.’ (A Partnership for Democracy…, 2011: 5) This approach is sometimes referred to as a ‘less-for-less’ policy, aimed at punishing democracy laggards. (Fisher 2011:5 in Behr, 2012b: 82) A commitment to adequately monitored, free and fair elections is defined as the entry requirement for the Partnership. (A Partnership for Democracy…, 2011: 5) Democracy and institution building are put on the forefront of the Communication. Despite this, however, the explanation of their new role in the relationship with the MENA takes only one page out of a 12-page document. The section on democracy places special emphasis on judicial reform, transparency and the fight against corruption in the region. Civil society is also identified as an indispensable requirement for the reformation of the Mediterranean. The Communication states that ‘a thriving civil society can help uphold human rights and contribute to democracy building and good governance, playing an important role in checking government excesses.’ (A Partnership for Democracy…, 2011: 5-6).

The document introduces three types of rewards the countries can count on, if they embark on a successful democratization journey: mobility, money and markets, often referred to as the 3Ms. To manage the movement of persons between the EU and the MENA, the document envisages Mobility Partnerships, as well as promises to enhance mobility for particular groups such as students, researchers and business people. What is more, the Communication recognizes the need to overcome economic difficulties as one of the major conditions for improving the democratic situation in the region. The EU shows particular concern over the development of small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), which are meant to play an essential role in job creation. (A Partnership for Democracy…, 2011: 7) Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) will be offered for the countries demonstrating commitment to the implementation of democratic and economic reforms. It is interesting to note that the Communication promises to pay special attention to the youth and women of the region.

‘A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood’, published in May 2011 reiterates positive conditionality (the ‘more for more’ principle), differentiation and closer partnership between the EU and its neighbours as the basis of the ENP. The Commission and the HR not only admit the previous failures of the EU approach to its neighbouring states but also commit to ‘greater flexibility and more tailored responses in dealing with rapidly evolving partners and reform needs – whether they are experiencing fast regime change or a prolonged process of reform and democratic consolidation.’ (2011: 1).

Most importantly, the EU stipulated its commitment to the political reforms of the neighbourhood through:

- supporting ‘deep democracy’, whose establishment requires free and fair elections, freedom of association, expression and assembly, free press and media, the rule of law, fight against corruption, security and law enforcement reforms;
- strengthening partnerships with the civil society; and
- intensifying political and security cooperation (A New Response…, 2011: 1).

The new ENP is also very much focused on inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development in the EU neighbourhood, since without the above democracy will not take root. (The EU’s response…2011: 1) To ensure this growth the EU decides to deepen its cooperation with the international financial institutions (IFI), such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). (A New Response…, 2011: 20) Unsurprisingly, the bigger part of the document is devoted to economic rather than political issues. The new ENP confirms the EU’s interest in providing support to transformation processes in its southern, as well as eastern neighbourhood by working together with the neighbouring countries ‘to anchor the essential values and principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, a market economy and inclusive, sustainable development in their political and economic fabric’ (A New Response…, 2011: 21).
Together with the revision of the already existing policy, the EU managed to offer a new support package for the Mediterranean, with the programme ‘Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth’ (SPRING) being one of the most widely advertised. The flagship initiative with the budget of EUR 350 million, adopted on September 26, 2011, is designed to provide individually-tailored support to the southern neighbourhood countries in the spheres of democratic transformation, institution building and economic growth (EU Response...2011: 2). However, the programme is very unlikely to have a noticeable impact on the region since its budget is very modest. The incentives, offered by the EU, are now being overshadowed by much more generous offers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Behr, 2012b: 84).

To intensify the ways of promoting ‘deep democracy’ in its vicinity, the EU devised two new tools: the Civil Society Facility and the European Endowment for Democracy. (Balfour, 2012: 31) The Civil Society Facility is aimed at strengthening the capacity of civil society (both in the East and in the South) to promote reform and increase public accountability in the neighbourhood. (The EU’s response...2011: 2) The European Endowment for Democracy (EED), largely inspired by the US-funded National Endowment for Democracy (NED), started its work in November 2012, almost two years after the idea to create it had been voiced (Polish diplomat… 2013) The main purpose of the EED is to promote and empower world democracy. (Stamatoukou 2013) It was set up as an autonomous body capable of responding to funding requests of the neighbouring countries, again eastern and southern, more rapidly and flexibly than other EU instruments. (Balfour, 2012: 31) Despite being presented as an important tool for the democratic development of the MENA, currently the EED is supporting political parties, non-registered NGOs, trade unions and other social groups mainly in the countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). (Polish diplomat… 2013) Finally, the EU made an attempt to revive the Union for the Mediterranean by taking on the co-presidency from France and launching the first project – Desalination Facility for the Gaza Strip. (Tocci, 2012: 2).

Therefore, as this section has shown, even though the EU has tried to respond to the Arab Spring with a set of various tools, the major emphasis has been placed on the revision of the ENP. Having put ‘deep democracy’ in the centre of this policy, the Commission and the HR promised the MENA countries tailor-made support in political and economic reforms based on the individual aspirations of each country. They claimed that the new approach to the region, laid out in two Communications adopted in the spring of 2011, would allow the EU to amend its past mistakes and significantly improve its democracy assistance efforts. The extent of innovation of the new ENP is to be analyzed next alongside the evaluation of the ways the new principles are implemented in practice.

'A Qualitative Step Forward’ or ‘Old Wine in New Bottles’: the Significance of Innovations Introduced by the EU’s Response to the Arab Spring on Paper and on the Ground

Following the release of ‘A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity’ and ‘A New Response to a Changing Environment’, the EU Commissioner Stefan Füle and the HR Catherine Ashton have repeatedly referred to the Communications as the EU’s strategic response to the Arab Spring. (Schumacher 2012: 89-90) At first, such claims might seem quite credible, especially taking into account the way these documents describe themselves, e.g. ‘A Partnership for Democracy...’ explicitly states that it is ‘a qualitative step forward’ (2011: 2). However, at a closer inspection it soon becomes apparent that claims of innovation and strategy are more of a declaration than a reflection of the real state of affairs.

The EU democracy promotion practices before the Arab Spring have been known for their increasingly ‘fuzzy liberal nature’ mainly because of the EU’s refusal to define their ideological basis. Not only was it unclear what type of democracy the EU supported, but also what the EU meant by democracy remained a mystery. Even though the new ENP moved away from the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach, little has changed in the EU approach to the political reforms. (Kurki, 2012: 1) While the reluctance of the EU to pin down one model of democracy can be qualified as quite a positive thing, since it makes the Union much more flexible in its democracy-building endeavours, allowing it to rely on the diversity of the democratic experiences of its member-states, the
inability to offer a comprehensive explanation of the main concepts it promotes undermines the efficiency of these same endeavours significantly. (Behr, 2012a: 15) In particular, ill definition of the new EU priorities in its neighbourhood, which comprise deep democracy, people partnerships and inclusive growth, and a lack of comprehensibility in the ‘strategic response’, where terms such as democratization, transition and democratic transformation are used interchangeably, prove that ‘fuzziness’ and vagueness are still inherently present in the EU democracy assistance. (Schumacher 2012: 90).

Like before, current EU initiatives, aimed at the MENA, are built on the ‘enlargement light’ formula which requires the neighbouring countries to demonstrate progress in approximating with the acquis communautaire to make their partnerships with the EU closer and more beneficial. (Behr, 2012b: 84) Yet, the practicality of holding on to the logic of enlargement, when there is no possibility for the partner states to ever join the European Union, is very doubtful. The Arab countries are striving for autonomy, and, by no means, are looking for a new binding relationship, especially not with a ‘declining Europe’. (Behr, 2012b: 85) The positive conditionality, presented as a major innovation of the new ENP, does not help in this respect either. First of all, it does not seem as innovative as the Commission claims it to be, when compared with one of the underlying principles of the pre-uprising European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), expressed in COM(2001)252. The latter states that ‘the EU’s insistence on including essential elements clauses is not intended to signify a negative or punitive approach. They are meant to promote dialogue and positive measures…’ (2001: 9) Second, it is very vaguely defined, the same as benchmarking – another ostensibly innovative feature of the new ENP. PfDSP promises closer political cooperation to those Mediterranean countries that advance towards ‘higher standards of democracy and governance’. The performance of each country is supposed to be measured on the basis of ‘a set of minimum benchmarks’. (A Partnership for Democracy…, 2011: 5) Unfortunately, neither of the Communications identifies these benchmarking criteria, nor explains how they could be evaluated or enforced. What they do, however, is state vague policy goals that leave much room for speculations. (Schumacher 2011: 111).

Since economic growth is named as one of the central requirements for the democratic development of the MENA region, it should also be included into my analysis. Here, the extent of innovation is also less evident than expected. The EU continues relying on the same set of instruments it had used before the Arab Spring, though sometimes it disguises them under new names. Thus, ‘Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas’ are highly reminiscent of the past Euro-Mediterranean trade agreements. What is more, they do not constitute an exclusive development for the South, since they are on offer for the eastern neighbours as well. (Schumacher 2012: 93) This is not to say, that the current initiatives are completely devoid of any new developments. More focus on SMEs as a means of fighting against unemployment is definitely one of them (Kurki, 2012: 8), while the offer of the Mobility Partnerships is another. Mobility Partnerships will be devised to cover visa and legal migration agreements; legal frameworks for (economic) migration; capacity building to manage borders, etc. (A Partnership for Democracy…, 2011: 7) In general, they are meant to enhance the mobility between the MENA and the EU, i.e. one of the incentives, offered by the Commission that bears special value for the citizens of the Arab Spring countries. However, the attractiveness of the offer is downgraded by its predominant aiming at somewhat elitist groups such as researchers, business people and students. (Behr, 2012a: 12).

The limitations of the new EU approach to the Mediterranean can be seen not only on paper but also in practice. Albeit it is too early to speak of a comprehensive evaluation of the Union’s official response to the democratic uprisings, especially taking into account the instability of the region, it is already possible to see how serious the EU is about implementing its declarations. Tunisia is probably the easiest case to analyze, mainly due to the state’s persistent commitment to the political reform. The country is the best example of the ‘more for more’ principle in action: since it is consistently proving to be the model for transition and poses very few difficulties for the Union (Balfour, 2012: 32), it saw almost doubling of the financial assistance from the EU for 2011 – 2013 from EUR 240 to EUR 400 million. It is also the first country with which the Union initiated a new format of cooperation in the form of the EU-Tunisia Task Force. This Task Force was set up to better understand and identify the challenges and needs of Tunisia in its democratic transition process. (Behr, 2012a: 18).

The connection between the democratization endeavours of the Mediterranean countries (or their activities contradicting the idea of the political reform) and the EU corresponding reaction are much harder to trace. Morocco and Jordan are two other countries which are enjoying the privileged relationship with the European Union, even though their successes in the democracy building are much more modest than in Tunisia. What is interesting, sometimes these states have been offered incentives even before implementing any reforms or committing themselves to a certain type of change only on paper, without actually altering anything in practice. For instance, Morocco signed the Euro-Mediterranean Aviation Agreement in December 2010. Yet, it did not launch any noteworthy reform programmes, envisaged by the applicable ENP action plan. Nonetheless, instead of being punished, it was still given rewards similar to those received by Tunisia in the post-revolutionary period. Thus, the EU put the ‘more for more’, or rather ‘less for less’, principle aside to retain good relationship with the country which not only ignored the official EU regulations,
but also kept disregarding political and human rights of its citizens (Schumacher 2012: 94). This, in fact, should not come as a surprise considering the previous history of cooperation between the EU and Morocco (Behr 19). Algeria is another country where the positive conditionality was used without the existence of any sound grounds for it. Being one of the reform laggards, it has still been able to build stronger ties with the European Union (Behr, 2012a: 19). In particular, in 2011 it was granted financial support in the amount of over than EUR 50 million for programmes in cultural heritage, transportation and job market development. This situation was later characterized by Tobias Schumacher as an implementation of a ‘more for less’ arrangement. (2012: 98) The only country against which the EU is consistently using sanctions in response to its poor performance in the field of democratization is Syria. These sanctions have so far ranged from the freezing of financial assets to trade and oil embargoes (Balfour, 2012: 30).

In all other Arab Spring countries the EU was quite timid in resorting to negative conditionality and more often than not opted for an undeserved preferential treatment on the basis of the previous relationship with the country in question, especially if one of the member states had built strong historic ties with it. E.g. France and Spain, who traditionally have a stronger interest in the MENA region, were rigorously advocating the usage of positive conditionality as opposed to the usage of sanctions (Schumacher 2012: 96, 98).

Therefore, the analysis of the two Communications, released by the HR and the Commission in the spring of 2011 as an official response to the Arab uprisings, and a brief overview of their practical application suggest that the EU has not moved very far from its previous approach to the region, despite all the ambitious claims on the part of its highest officials. Neither of the launched initiatives presents a strategy or a ‘qualitative step forward’ in the EU-Mediterranean relations. On the contrary, ‘A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity’ and ‘A New Response to a Changing Environment’ continue the rhetorical tradition established around two decades ago, which partly explains a very limited success the European Union has so far had in dealing with the consequences of the Arab Spring. Two years after these historic events, there is still ‘a need for the EU to step down from its pre-packaged policies to address the real issues on the ground’ (Balfour, 2012: 35). How this can be done will be looked at in the next question.

Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice to Build a ‘Democracy Partnership’ between the EU and the MENA Region

Having defined ‘deep democracy’ as its main priority in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the European Union has not been able to turn big promises into action. What was presented as a ‘strategic response’ to the uprisings turned out to be a new, rather poorly-revamped, version of the old approach to the southern neighbourhood, which almost entirely ignored the post-revolutionary developments on the ground. The inability of the Commission to deliver on its promises has significantly shaken the already unstable position of the European Union in the region. The reluctance to cooperate with the EU has not disappeared from the Mediterranean, and in some cases even deepened, despite the fact that the past mistakes were admitted and new goals were set. As a result, the EU’s reputation of a credible regional actor is slowly deteriorating. The situation, however, can still be turned for better, if the EU finds the way to apply its previous experiences of a rather successful democracy support actor to respond strategically to the Arab Spring.

To improve the efficiency of its democratization efforts in the Mediterranean region the EU should be encouraged to consider:

• to conceptualize its democracy assistance: As the analysis has shown, shift in the official rhetoric from stability and security to deep democracy did not change the fuzzy nature of the EU’s democracy promotion activities. The EU should not expect to convince its neighbours in the necessity to embark on the journey of political reform if it can not offer a clear comprehensive definition of the democracy it promotes, within what limits the latter is contained and why it wants to promote it. As Milia Kurki puts it, ‘the EU should embrace rather than avoid dealing with the ideological nature of democracy promotion’. (2012: 12) This will help the Union to develop an attainable and more plausible democracy support platform which will attract rather than confuse its neighbouring countries.

• to be more outspoken about its own interests: in the aftermath of the Arab Spring the European Union has been increasingly focused on ‘listening to the Arab NGOs more’ and ‘putting the welfare of the local people first’ (Youngs 2011: 3), while
shunning any detailed discussions of its interests. (Behr, 2012a: 27) Such an approach seems to be quite counterintuitive. To pretend that the Union is not pursuing its internal aims while helping the MENA is somewhat hypocritical, to say the least. If it wants to regain trust of the Arab peoples and reach beneficial partnerships with their governments, Europe has to be more open about what it is that it hopes to achieve from its relationship with the Mediterranean.

- **to act as a unified actor:** The effectiveness of the EU actions in the MENA during and after the Arab Spring was seriously undermined by the unilateral actions of some of its member states, mainly France, Italy and Spain (The European Union’s Response…, 2011). If the European Union wishes to improve its position of a credible international actor, which is not simply able to protect its own interests but also capable of supporting the building of a democratic and stable order around the world in general and in its neighbourhood in particular, it should strive for the unanimity between the all-Union and member-state positions.

- **to broaden the network of its civil society partners in the neighbourhood:** The cooperation with the civil society organisations (CSOs) has been defined as one of the staples of the EU democracy assistance programme for Southern Mediterranean. However, the EU has been offering a helping hand mostly to western-style liberal CSOs (e.g. the ones working with youth or women), ignoring the numerous partially illiberal organisations. The EU is trying to avoid contact with the Islamist and military organisations as much as possible, despite the fact that they constitute the majority of the civil society in the Arab world. Finding a way to engage with these actors, without resorting to supporting any radical ideas, will help the EU overcome some of the negative bias towards itself in the region. (Behr 2012a: 26-27) Setting aside some deep-rooted prejudices against Islam could become a good starting point in this respect. The first of the assumptions, the EU could reconsider, is that democracy presupposes secularisation. (Roy 2012: 27)

- **to improve cooperation with other regional and global actors:** The EU is not the only actor interested in the development of the region. The USA, Turkey, the Gulf Cooperation Council are just a few to be taken into account. Each of them can offer the MENA various types of help: from expertise in combining democratic and religious values (Turkey) to significant financial assistance (the GCC countries). (Jones 2013: 56-57) Therefore, building partnerships with them can have a positive impact on the EU’s reputation and record in the region too.

- **to take into account the specifics of the region:** Despite many ambitious declarations to customize and tailor solutions for the Mediterranean problems, the EU mainly disregards the political, economic, socioeconomic, cultural and historic characteristics and developments of the MENA region as well as the individual states located there. (Schumacher 2012: 92-93) The widely advertised ‘more for more’ approach, introduced in place of a ‘one size fits all’ policy, has not as of yet brought any significant enhancements in this sphere. That is why the Commission should continue working on designing the policies specifically for the Arab Spring countries.

- **to step away from the ‘enlargement light’ formula:** If the ‘enlargement light’ approach does not prove to be very effective for the eastern neighbours of the EU which still have a chance of membership, although a very distant one, its usefulness for the countries with no membership possibility whatsoever is hardly detectable. As an alternative, the EU could turn to what Lavenex and Schimmelfennig call a governance model. With its help the EU can promote democratic principles through policy-specific, functional cooperation with third countries. (2011: 886) This is, of course, only one of the options. Others will largely depend on the way the EU will be able to respond to the final suggestion listed below.

- **to develop a strategy for the region:** The European Union may not have the best reputation in the MENA, but its role in the region is still significant. Albeit the Arab governments are not always enthusiastic about the EU’s approach, they are still expecting some support from the Union, ideally in the form of money and labour market access. At the moment the EU finds itself in an extremely uncomfortable position: on the one hand, there is reluctance on the Arab side to develop partnerships with the EU, especially when it comes to political reforms, on the other, there is an expectation of substantial financial assistance. Since the European Union is not able to get out of the predicament with a simple revision of already existent policies for the region, the best solution here is to start developing a new vision for Middle East and North Africa. This vision should take into consideration the needs of the southern neighbours as well as advance European interests. Only if both of the conditions are satisfied can the goal of building (or at least beginning to build) deep democracy in the countries of the Arab Spring be finally reached (Youngs 2011: 1-6).
The Arab Spring, which came as a surprise not only to the media and political analysts but also international actors in the region, has become an impetus for changing the EU’s long-established approach to its southern neighbourhood. After almost two decades of cooperation with autocratic regimes and choosing security and stability over political reforms, the European Union committed itself to supporting the democratic transitions of the Mediterranean. The decision was laid out in two Communications, released one after the other in March and May 2011 respectively: ‘A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity’ and ‘A New Response to a Changing Environment’. According to the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Füle and the EU HR for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton both of the documents were a part of the ‘strategic response’ to the historic events of the late 2010 – early 2011. The detailed analysis of these Communications, however, disproves the claim. Instead of offering a new approach to the challenges facing the MENA in the post-Arab Spring period, the Commission and the HR opted for a mild revision of the pre-uprising policy documents. Even the introduction of several new tools, such as the Civil Society Facility and the European Endowment for Democracy did not make much difference to how the EU dealt with the Mediterranean before and after the Arab Spring.

Promises to support deep democracy, strengthen partnerships with the civil society and encourage economic growth remain largely confined to paper. ‘The EU’s commitment to Arab democracy once again appears to be sidelined by its broader geopolitical goals’. (Behr 2012b: 87) Moreover, the ambitious principle of positive conditionality is not always applied justly, favouring not only the countries committed to the implementation of political and economic reforms, but also the states showing no or very little progress in this filed, mainly as a consequence of them having traditionally close ties with the European Union. Despite loud declarations to adjust its initiatives to the needs and aspirations of each individual Arab country, the Union is still utilizing pre-packaged policies, ignoring the political, economic, cultural and historic specifics of the Middle East and North Africa. Therefore, the gap between official rhetoric and its implementation remains vast. To overcome the existing constraints the European Union has to reconsider its vision of the Mediterranean.

Since the ENP alone does not have the potential to become a reliable instrument for building a peaceful and stable neighbourhood, the EU needs to take a better look at its democracy building initiatives. To improve them it is advised for the EU to try a series of measures, among them: conceptualization of its democracy assistance; articulation of interests, it is pursuing; unification of the official position between all member-states; broadening of the civil society partnerships; better cooperation with other regional and global actors; consideration of the region’s specifics; re-thinking of the ‘enlargement light’ approach, and, most significantly, development of a new strategy for the region. These are just a few principles the EU could take into account. If it decided, however, to keep everything as it is, there is a high risk of wasting a perfect opportunity for the enhancement of its position not only in the Mediterranean, but on the global scene in general.

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The Fall of Authoritarianism and the New Actors in the Arab World
The ongoing processes known as the Arab uprisings consist of parallel dynamics that go beyond the overthrow of tyrannical individuals. Arab autocracies were, and some continue to be, narratives of oppression. Authoritarian rulers, unjust laws and ineffective parliaments have been a major reason for social instability and economic decline (UNDP, 2009). Depleted of their legitimacy, regimes developed and relied on a security apparatus that degenerated into an oppression machine. Loosening the reins of authority, regimes’ supporters argued, could lead to a takeover by radical forces. As a result, the imprisonment of opposition leaders has been common practice. The role of the opposition have often been a negotiated process between the ruler and a given party and other parties were only allowed to exist as long as they do not seriously challenge the existing order. This type of politics evolved in a propitious international context, where the combination of economic and security concerns favoured trends towards short-term domestic stability at the expense of long-term democratic transformation.

Notwithstanding the security apparatus that have been the pillars of those regimes, people in several countries began its demand for freedom, equity, constitutional guarantees, social and economic reforms, the end of corruption and despotism, stirring the fall of some dictators while some continue to resist at the cost of bloody civil wars.

The temptation to deal with these complex set of events as a single and unified phenomenon should be resisted as it is not possible to club the Arab world together under one banner. All these peoples have a common purpose – to end tyranny and a stagnant economy -, but each of these countries needs to be understood in its own terms. These revolutionary processes reflect not only the determination of the populations involved, but also different local conditions and forms of governance (Khoury, 2011). Political leaders targeted by the people have also responded to their demands in different ways: stepping down and/or fleeing as in the Tunisian and Egyptian case; violently repressing the demonstrators as in Libya, Bahrain and Syria; or trying to negotiate limited constitutional reforms as in Jordan, Morocco and Oman (Khoury, 2011).

At the very start, revolutionary processes were devoid of a significant Islamic dimension and meaning (Filiu, 2011, p.25; Bayat, 2011; Volpi, 2012, p.247). No religious actor played the role of guarantor of the revolution and its political spirit, and the majority reacted with caution and hesitation to the events (Tammam and Haenni, 2011). In Egypt the diversity of attitudes that the different self-proclaimed “Muslim” actors adopted during the initial stages of the revolt provides evidence of the irrelevance of the Islamic factor. In Tunisia, where the Islamist party Ennahda had been severely persecuted and its members exiled or jailed for two decades, the absence of religious content was even more notorious (Filiu, 2011, p.98).

Gradually, however, there was an incorporation of Islamic elements into the protests due to Islam importance for individual and collective identity (Filiu, 2011, p.24). According to Roy (2011), Egyptian revolutionaries were perhaps practicing or even devout Muslims, but “they separate their religious faith from their political agendas.” Bayat (2011) believes that, since they have transcended exclusivist Islamist politics that reigned in the region, these are post-Islamic revolutions, which do not mean they are anti-Islamic or secular as a post-Islamist movement aspires to a pious society within a democratic state.

These were leaderless movements, not religiously or ideologically motivated. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood’s position only evolved under pressure from the street and from the group’s younger members. As events unfolded, Mubarak blamed the move-
ment for the upheavals. This made them realize that their only option was the success of the protests, because if the regime was to recover and get back on its feet, they would be the main victims of the restoration of order (Tamam and Haenni, 2011). Although Islamists became important actors, especially in the aftermath of the revolts, their roles depend, to a great extent, on the national contexts, social conditions, composition of the population and their own strength in each specific society.

Even before the elections in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, many in the region believed that the most important struggles would occur among Islamists themselves and not between Islamists and secularists (Shahid and Kirkpatrick, 2011). The situation has become complex as a multitude of Islamist groups formed political parties to run for the elections. In the Egyptian case, even the Salafists and the Sufis formed an array of parties, and the al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (after having revised its doctrine and abandoned violence) also took the opportunity to enter the legal political arena (Ottoway, 2011).

One of the consequences of this cluster of revolutions was the exposure and deepening of the internal divisions within Islamism. Islamism is a complex ideology, comprising different movements, groups, agendas, strategies and tactics. Intense ideological and strategic debates and conflicting agendas and personalities are the result of its growth and expansion to different settings throughout several decades and its attempt to make sense of various political, social and cultural contexts.

This article offers a critical exploration of the impact the new political and social conditions are having on the trends, visions and priorities within Islamism. We will reflect on the implications of the uprisings on Islamist movements’ evolution, either towards its incorporation into the new systems as in the case of political Islamist movements, or its continuous adherence to a violent ethos as it happens in the case of Jihadists in contexts of conflict. The article focuses on the different Islamist responses to the changing political landscape in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries and the consequences of the new conditions for the different movements and for the interactions between them. We will try to assess its significance for intra-Islamist debates and ideological divisions while demonstrating that: first, Islamists are shaped by their local contexts and respond to the evolution of events as any other rational actor, oscillating its stances between moderation/pragmatism and radicalism/ideology according to the environment where they operate; second, Islamist movements, usually deeply divided over strategies, aims, tactics and their understanding of some concepts, are likely to increase their opposition under these new political circumstances; third, electoral success of Islamist parties will put pressure on them to define the relation between theory and practice and is likely to increase divisions between their reformist and conservative wings; fourth, jihadi Islamism decline is a fact, but it remains meaningful as a result of its resilience and the opportunities that failed environments continues to offer for its expansion.

Bearing this in mind, we employed a methodology based in in-depth documental and bibliographical analysis, namely primary sources, such as Islamist documents, websites and pronouncements of their leaders in order to gauge what Islamists are saying and thinking, as well as secondary sources in order to review how scholars and experts are interpreting the facts.

This article is divided into four sections. The first section offers a brief overview of concepts. In the second section one will look at Islamist positions concerning some relevant issues to the understanding of Islamist thinking. The third part of the article is focused on the jihadi response to the uprising and their struggle to come to terms with these events. It follows then some concluding remarks.

Conceptualizing Islamist Activism

Islamists are key actors in the Middle East, but their inclusion in democracy promotion efforts has polarized policymakers and academics. Many critics are concerned about their ultimate goals and question Islamists’ commitment to democracy. According to Nasr (2005,p.13), “Islamists view democracy not as something deeply legitimate, but at best as a tool or tactic that may be useful in gaining the power to build an Islamic state”. The obsession with a supposed “hidden agenda” of Islamists has justified the restriction of their activities and their repression for decades.

For the sake of clarity, it is essential to start with the explanation of some concepts and to distinguish among the various Islamist trends. Islamist groups have different goals, divergent agendas, employ diverse strategies and, consequently, have different impli-
cations for the future of the region. Islamism is not a unified and monolithic phenomenon and to treat it as such would damage it severely.

A distinction between three Islamist tendencies can be brought forward (ICG, 2005). The first is political Islamism, composed of movements that are concerned with political action and whose purpose is to attain power at the national level through political means. This trend includes both the so-called mainstream movements, in the vein of the Muslim Brotherhood, and militant organizations, such as Hamas and Hizballah. The second current is missionary activism or apolitical Islamism, whose purpose is the preservation of Muslim identity, faith and moral order; the best known examples of movements belonging to this tendency is the much diffused Salafiyya, whose adherents aspire to restore Islam’s original purity by embracing the examples of its founding generation, but also the quietest Tabligh Jamaat. These movements reject formal engagement in electoral politics and any political commitment is considered an idol-like distraction from the sole worship of God. The third tendency is radical and jihadi Islamism, composed of activists committed to the defense of the ummah (global community of Muslim believers) against the infidels, defined as the West and local governments. For the Jihadists, only violence is true activism, while others, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, refrain from using violent tactics for strategic reasons, even if they accept them as legitimate.

The lines dividing this three-part typology are often blurred, as Islamist movements are more complex than this division might suggest. An example of this complexity is the salafist Jihadists, individuals that combine the rigid interpretation of the religious texts of the Salafiyya with the violence associated with the doctrine of global jihad. Other Islamists merge salafist doctrine with political activism in a process some authors describe as ideological hybridization (Hegghammer, 2009). From here on, we will devote our analysis to non-violent political Islamists, Salafist groups and jihadi Islamists also referred as Jihadists.

Islamist Debates and Ideological Divisions under the New Political Conditions

The Arab uprising will have important implications for Islamist movements, their views, priorities and strategies. Their positions on different matters reflect their evolution as movements. Under the new social and political circumstances, the debates on the centrality of the state and its character, the legitimacy of democracy, the use of violence, the implementation of Islamic law, the permissibility of jihad and the doctrine of takfir may indeed increase the divide between movements.

Political Islamists proclaim their commitment to democratic norms and procedures, and try to demonstrate their commitment to free and fair elections, the rotation of power and the civic nature of political authority (Pargeter, 210, p.217; ICG, 2005). Considering international developments and the stalemate caused by some of their stances, groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood departed from their earlier ideological visions, gradually adapting to new circumstances by taking pragmatic steps towards recognizing the legitimacy of democracy, the separation of powers and minority rights (Bayat, 2011; Meijer and Bakker, 2012, p.19). Its main thinkers have developed a theoretical defense of democracy, rooted in the principles of shura – consultation - and itjihad - individual interpretation (Lynch, 2010, p.168). Political Islamists’ reference is the state and their goals are mainly nationalistic.

The adoption of these views entails some major conceptual difficulties, namely an obvious tension between the principle of popular sovereignty upheld by democracy and the call for the creation of an Islamic state that theoretically places all sovereignty in God. Usually, these groups try to overcome this impasse, suggesting that Islamic Texts do not specify what form the Islamic State should take, adding that statements such as ‘sovereignty belongs to God’ should be interpreted as referring to what political decisions ought to be like if they are to have validity (Bunzl, 2004, p.107). A decision would be considered valid after checking it against divine law, that is to say that all laws and policies should have an Islamic frame of reference (Ottoway and Hamzawy, 2008, p.7). Political Islamists believe that itjihad should be applied in order to bridge the gap between interpretation of the Islamic law and the reality.

The application of their recently adopted views could also be problematic due to these groups’ social conservatism. For example, the most conservative faction within the Brotherhood sought to bar women or Christians from serving as Egypt’s president through the inclusion of a provision in the Freedom and Justice Party program (Filiu, 2011, p.101). This plan goes against all their
recent claims about the acceptance of political and religious pluralism. As recently as 2006, a Brother within the reformist camp has declared that there would be “no objection to the Islamists handling over authority to others, even if they were not Muslims, so long as they are elected by the people” (Tammam, 2006 cited in Pargeter, 2010, p.219).

A controversial issue has been these movements’ relationship to violence. The Muslim Brotherhood, for instance, has been accused by its critics as acting as an incubator for more radical ideas (Pargeter, 2010, p.178; Lynch, 2010, p.176). Despite some of these groups’ violent past, today they reject resorting to violence. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has explicitly rejected the use of force, because “in this age, with its enormous range of freedom, it is no longer possible to impose principles, methods, ideas or systems from above” (Meijer, 2012, p.55). However, if some groups eschew violence locally, they often have an ambiguous attitude towards other groups’ resort to violence (Ottoway and Hamzawy, 2008, p.7). This seems to be the case of the Egyptian Brotherhood: the group has denounced the use of violence in Egypt but is criticized for refusing to condemn Hamas’ use of violent means against Israeli targets (Feldman, 2008, p.114). The group justifies its position claiming that it accepts the right to wage a defensive jihad, which is recognized in Islamic law and which the Hamas has applied in opposition against Israel and the Sunni resistance in Iraq against American invasion (Meijer and Bakker, 2012, p.15; Pargeter, 2010, p.180, 186). The Brotherhood’s position on jihad reflect wide trends in regional discourse and attitudes: it accepts the centrality of jihad in Muslim life, which is an obligation under specific conditions (Lynch, 2010, p.106). However, such a position continues to invite suspicions in the West and it jeopardizes the relationship with Western countries.

For many decades, political Islamists have benefited from a privileged position, since they posed as the only option to existing regimes, building on the rejection of the status quo, without needing to come up with specific policy prescriptions (Filiu, 2011, p.91). But once competing for elections and taking on the responsibility to govern, they will be forced to take political and economic decisions and to explain measures adopted. Not long ago, some authors have expressed the belief that, in the event of being elected, Islamists would moderate their views (Brown, Hamzawy and Ottoway, 2006, p.19). According to this analysis, they would be under pressure to deliver concrete changes to their constituencies and thus they would become less ideological and more pragmatic. This could also mean, however, that those parties could lose some of their electorate as a result of a lower focus on ideology. Once in power, political Islamists will feel in an acute way the tension in the relationship between theory and practice.

Another important issue shaping Islamist politics are the divisions and the power struggles within Islamist organizations motivated by the new challenges. The Moroccan Justice and Development Party (PJD) and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood have been mentioned as examples of an existing division between a younger, more liberal and reformist oriented generation, and an older generation with more conservative views. This generational gap was obvious in the beginning of the commotion in Egypt: while the younger members of the Brotherhood sided with the population in the streets, the older generation in the leadership of the movement began talks with the vice-president on February 5 (Filiu, 2011, p.39; Tammam and Haenni, 2011). The younger Brothers strongly criticized the elders and the rupture between the street and the senior echelons was total. The new political conditions will likely promote different voices and opinions inside the group, increasing the internal polarization. It is indeed possible that the political triumph of the Muslim Brotherhood and Ennahda will deepen the debates within both movements between the reformist and the conservative wings due to concrete policy options. Different factions will display divergent views and aspirations, as it happened after the 2005 parliamentary elections, which were considered a success for the Egyptian Brotherhood (Filiu, 2011, p.97).

Salafism, which assumed its current profile in the 1980s, is a much diffused movement and to assess its stances towards democracy and violence becomes a complex task. Some Salafists are aligned with the Saudi establishment, while others take a more independent course. Some adopt an apolitical and quietist stance, concentrating on missionary activity – da’wa -, and earning the favor of many regimes; others, instead, articulate a critical attitude against the rulers and the official ulama, even if they condemn open engagement in the political game.

Salafists are usually described as lacking a political program and shying away from politics because it leads to fitna or factionalism. The crucial issue for them is the purity in doctrine and the preservation of Muslim identity and moral, even if this quietist attitude also has political implications (Wiktowicz, 2006; Amghar, 2007). Salafists aspire to the instauration of Islamic States with the full implementation of sharia, a precondition to assure public morality in society. However, the strictest among the Salafists declare their hostility to the idea of nationalism, being the ummah their reference for action.

The Salafists bitterly oppose the Muslim Brotherhood and groups alike, criticizing their political activism and their desire to commit with the system and other political groups (ICG, 2005; Boubekeur and Roy, 2012, p.5; Meijer, 2009, p.21). Thus some Brothers, disenchanted with the legalist path followed by the Brotherhood, have joined the ranks of salafist movements, both in
the Middle East and in Europe (Amghar, 2007, pp.48-49). But Salafists have also been criticized by political Islamists because of their apparent lack of interest in improving political conditions. Already in the 1930s, the Egyptian Brotherhood blamed the local Salafists, the Jam‘iyya al-Shar‘iyya, for being more interested in rituals and doctrine than in liberating the country from British occupation (Lia, 1989, pp. 59-60). Another example is Hamas’ portrayal of Salafists as collaborators with Israel, because its leaders do not get involved in political issues and thus can be framed as supporting the occupation (Hroub, 2009).

Roy (1994, pp.76-77), naming these groups neofundamentalists, stated that they “have maintained the idealism of Islamism, the millenarism, and the demand for social justice”, adding that “when conditions permit, they advance under their own banner onto the political scene, forming parties and running for office.” In fact, we have been witnessing a process of repoliticization of some Salafist groups in Egypt and Tunisia during and after the revolts (Boubeker and Roy, 2012: 11). Salafist groups opposed the protests at first and. In Egypt, only the reformist trend supported them from the start (Tammam and Haenni, 2011). After the fall of the regime, Salafists regrouped in mosques and on the street with the message that Democracy was haram (Bayat, 2011). Yet these groups recognized the need to adapt their behaviour to the new political environment and so they have started to become increasingly engaged in the Egyptian political scene, galvanizing some support by capitalizing on moral and religious issues. This transformation stems from expediency rather than an ideological evolution. Salafists try to apply their creed to the political arena and to impose to society their ideas on social justice and the right of God alone to legislate (Wiktorowicz, 2006: 208).

An explanation for the emergence of this political dimension of Salafism in nowadays’ Egypt and Tunisia, and its subsequent involvement in the political sphere, could indeed be provided by the relationship between salafist groups and political Islamists. Political Islamists’ flexible and pragmatic approach fits better societies where political issues and institutions are more structured. They have a nationalist agenda while Salafists usually insist on the idea of transnational community of believers. Meijer (2009: 21) suggests that “where nationalist causes are dominant… or ethnic strife is strong… or politics has been more evolved… the Brotherhood will be dominant, whereas Salafism, for its deterritorialised, deculturised, and apolitical character will be prevalent in an environment where these issues are non-existent, have not evolved or have failed, and where the population is devastated and radicalized.”

In Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan, the political field is a privileged arena to fight for influence and compete for people and resources. Political parties’ activism puts pressure on salafist groups to formulate political views in order to respond to changes in the political and social fields and to find a position in the ongoing competition for authority. In these contexts, Salafists try to build up their position as the only legitimate representatives of Islam, accusing political Islamists of not being “sufficiently” Islamic. With such an attempt at eroding their authority, Salafists seek to pull both the states and political Islamists to the right of the political spectrum through political pressure and shows of strength in the public space. Instead, in countries where political institutions are lacking, they use vigilantism and preaching to challenge the powers that be (McCants, 2012). In order to maintain their most conservative constituencies, the Muslim Brotherhood and Ennahda will have to keep up with some aspects of their ideology and avoid compromising beyond a certain point with both domestic actors and external actors, who are perceived as too liberal or too westernized. Despite including a wide spectrum of views, these parties may be forced to move towards conservative positions if they feel Salafists are seriously challenging their leadership. There is a growing hostility between Ennahda and Tunisian Salafists, for instance, because the latter accuse the former of being a western ally due to the new regime’s response to some incidents involving Salafists, namely the attack on the U.S. embassy in Tunis.

Authors such as Bayat (2011) and Roy (2011) believe that these revolutions transcend the Islamist politics and that both societies and the Islamist parties affected by revolutionary dynamics are moving towards post-Islamism. However, this move will depend to some extent on how Salafist forces will evolve and how that evolution will affect the relationship with those parties.

Salafists originally are not violent and they reject all kinds of revolutionary activism against the powers in place, which explains their early appeals for calm during the 2011 protests. They oppose jihadi Islamists and their fight against Muslim rulers even if they do not object the fight against the “far enemy”, that is, the U.S., Israel and western allies (ICG, 2005, pp.4-5).

Its attitudes towards politics and violence bring out the tensions and paradoxes within the salafist movement itself (Meijer, 2009, p.22). Missionary Salafists - or purist Salafis (Wiktorowicz, 2006) – political Salafists – more politically minded and focused on contemporary issues – and jihadi Salafists – with a violent orientation - are deeply divided on issues related to the politicization of salafist creed and the use of violence.
Salafists did not compromise their position towards the regime and their safety in the beginning of the upheavals, but they are reaping the rewards of the new political freedoms. Political transitions entail a great deal of uncertainties and insecurities and so, Salafists are adjusting their strategies in order to exploit existential fears and potential doubts about the future. Their messages about the crisis of Muslim identity and public morality resonate especially among the rural population and the lower middle class that fear political instability, economic decline, cultural infiltration and moral deterioration.

Jihadi Islamists consider contemporary Arab states a form of jahiliyya (“ignorance” of monotheism and divine law) and support the use of violence to establish Islamic states and, eventually, to restore the Caliphate. Jihadists consider the participation in democratic procedures a form of polytheism and they reject the coexistence with non-Muslims since it would violate the principle of al-wala’ wa-l-baraa’ (loyalty to Muslims and disavowal of infidels). They share with the Salafists the belief in the tawhid (the unity of God) and the obligation to follow the Qur’an and the guidance of the Prophet and his companions. They refuse any compromise with other political forces or societies as this would imply the rejection of hakimiyya (or God’s sovereignty).

Jihadists criticize both political and apolitical Islamists. They condemn the political activism of the former and their engagement in the political game, since this means the acceptance of man-made laws and the disavowal of the goal of establishing an Islamic state. Jihadists have a total disdain for these movements’ gradual approach to change through education, social work and elections. Ayman al-Zawahiri’s essay The Bitter Harvest, written around 1989, constitutes an attack against the Brotherhood and reveals this clash within Islamism (Hatina, 2012). Already during the Sadat assassination trials, al-Zawahiri had asserted that the Brotherhood had too often cooperated with the authorities in Cairo and that such a strategy would weaken the organization, because its members would forget the true mission of replacing government with an Islamic State (Aboul-Enein, 2004, p.10). Likewise, for many supporters of the global jihad, Hamas is an obstacle in the way of infiltration in Gaza of groups inspired or affiliated with Al Qaeda that seek to enforce a stricter version of Islamic law.

Jihadi Islamists also contest the apolitical form of Islamism since they are hostile to any action that restricts itself to da’wa: jihad should be placed at the center of the doctrine, both in its defensive or offensive forms. They criticize, for instance, the quietist form of Salafism for its relationship with regimes that undermines the independence and legitimacy of Islamic interpretation (Wiktorowocz, 2006, p.227).

Jihadists’ focus on violence does not prevent internal disagreements over its strategic utility and its object (Moghadam and Fishman, 2010, p.12). They disagree over whether to prioritize the “near enemy” – Muslim regimes – or the “far enemy”. After the Iraq invasion, there was a reorientation of the debate with the unification of the two concepts: the U.S. became both the near and the far enemy (Brooke, 2010, p.56). One should also note that this strategic reorientation was affected by the relationship between Al Qaeda central and its local affiliates, who usually espouse local agendas (Brooke, 2010, p.45).

Jihadists are also divided on the targets of violence and techniques. They have debated the legitimacy of violence against other Muslims and the use of excessive violence. The killing of fellow Muslims is related to the doctrine of takfir, that is, the act of Muslims declaring other Muslims to be infidels, thereby rendering them subject of attack (Moghadam and Fishman, 2010, p.13). While political Islamists have rejected this doctrine long ago – the Muslim Brotherhood has repudiated it in the late 1960s –, Jihadists have embraced takfiri method in full fervor. However, these Islamists are not anchoring their violence in the classical Islamic tradition, according to which Muslims should not kill other Muslims (Hafez, 2010, p.20).

The electoral successes of Islamist parties in some countries are fueling the debates between Jihadists and political Islamists on these issues. A recent declaration from a Mauritanian jihadi-salafi ideologist discussing if Muhammad Morsi should be considered a kafir (unbeliever) is revealing of the ongoing ideological and strategic struggle within Islamism. Apparently, in a 2011 interview Morsi declared that “there is no difference between Islamic creed and Christian creed” (Al-Shinqiti, 2013), meaning that the Brotherhood would even consider a coalition with Christians after the elections (Bunzel, 2013). When questioned if takfir should be pronounced on Morsi, Al-Shinqiti’s answer was ambiguous. He said that Morsi’s statement was indicative of kafir, but he enjoyed immunity because of two recent “fabricated obstacles” to takfir: Morsi is the president of a country and he is also an Islamist. The preacher avoids a direct answer for jihadi strategic reasons: for the time being, Jihadists in Egypt should take advantage of the politically freer environment and focus on spreading their message, avoiding confrontation with other Muslims; they should, however, refrain from showing loyalty to the Brotherhood government. He believes that this permissive environment will eventually end and clashes with the Brotherhood will be inevitable in order to establish an Islamic state. Al-Shinqiti believes that Morsi is indeed a kafir, because “any ruler adopting the system of democracy… is an apostate” (Al-Shinqiti, 2012), but he refrains from openly declare takfir on him so that jihadi-salafi organizations in Egypt escape repression and become stronger.
Despite a common ideological foundation, political Islamists, Salafists and jihadi Islamists have a relationship of competition, not cooperation. When they analyze the reality, they display divergent views on several issues and under new conditions these movements will evolve and adapt their behaviour in order to take advantage of events.

**The Jihadists’ Struggle for Relevance**

Islamists’ responses to the uprising revealed already fractures within the Islamist community. The revolts to ouster entrenched dictators came as a surprise to Islamists and their reactions – or lack thereof - reflect their astonishment. Jihadists’ interpretation of events is important considering that the Arab uprisings provided Jihadism with both challenges and opportunities, and it is the movement responses to these and its strategic choices that will determine its trajectory.

Jihadists, especially those with a global agenda, reacted through different elements to the revolts. Some released statements supporting the opposition movements, while a few argued that the success of a revolution was not determined by how autocrats were overthrown, but by whether the succeeding government imposes the Jihadists’ conception of Islamic law (Fishman, 2011). In a January 26 statement concerning the uprising in Tunisia, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) declared that “the unjust, apostate corruptor ran away, but the system of cooperativeness, apostasy, injustice, corruption and suppression remains in the country… so if the man-made religion doesn’t step off and become replaced by the transcendent religion, and if the [Islamic] Doctrine and the switched-off sharia don’t return… then the duty upon all Muslims in Tunisia is to be ready and not lay down their weapons.” (AQIM, 2011).

This concern with the political future of the countries where the governments have fallen was also expressed by al-Zawahiri. In his messages, he introduced the revolutions as the first step in an ongoing struggle for greater social justice and urged Muslims to ensure that a proper form of governance takes the place of unjust rulers, advising against the ills of democracy and secular governance (al-Zawahiri, 2011c; Lahoud, 2011; Holbrook, 2012).

Trying to interpret these events in the context of their own struggle and to adjust their message to address the new conditions, jihadist leaders painted the enemies of the revolutions and their own enemies as one and the same (Wilner, 2011, p.55). Therefore, the downfall of tyrants represents also defeats to the U.S., which depended on these dictators to suppress Islam (Jenkins, 2012, p.6). The 9/11 attacks had caused America to lose influence over the Arab people, because its grasp over the Arab regimes was weakened (al-Zawahiri, 2011c). Jihadi strategy of confronting the “far enemy” had therefore culminated in the Arab popular revolts. Al-Zawahiri also suggested that it was al-Qaeda opposition to Arab leaders that had provided the “vanguard of resistance” and had first drawn attention to their injustices (al-Zawahiri, 2011c; Maher and Neumann, 2012, p.9).

These revolutions were bad news for the radical strand of Islamism and have demonstrated its lack of appeal among Muslim masses. As stated by Ashour (2011), “unarmed civil resistance delivered a heavy blow to Jihadism and significantly undermined its rationale (that armed activism is the most effective and most legitimate tool for change).” Jihadists revealed to be disconnected from the social, political and geopolitical struggle of the local populations in the Middle East (Roy, 2011) as they sought to frame the events as a fight for the ummah and for the establishment of “a free Muslim state in the Muslim homeland that… rules with sharia” (al-Zawahiri, 2011a).

As its strategy of violent activism was rejected by an overwhelming majority of Muslims, jihadist organizations seem weaker than ever before. Moreover, the removal of secular dictatorships called the jihadist narrative into question, since it has relied on the unpopularity of these regimes to promote its own form of governance. Jihadism depended on corrupt leaders to recruit the disaffected and so, recruitment opportunities for these groups are likely to decline in the near-term. “Ironically”, wrote Lahoud, “the jihadist narrative enjoyed greater credibility under the autocratic regimes that they have devoted their lives to oust through jihad” (Lahoud, 2011). Al-Qaeda “soft power” was indeed severely damaged by the political transformation in the Arab world.
However, Jihadists try to capitalize on the instability in the Arab world to spread their influence. On the one hand, its leaders hope to exploit possible disappointments with the new elected government in Tunisia, Egypt and other countries. On the other hand, the continuing turmoil, mainly in Libya and Syria, has offered Jihadism some immediate opportunities to expand its activities.

In both cases, as well as in Yemen, groups affiliated with Al Qaeda are trying to get geopolitical advantages and exploit situations of chaos and political vacuum to consolidate its power base. Al-Qaeda’s affiliates in Africa are reemerging as important terrorist threats. The currents of unrest that could revivify a pool of extremism in North Africa run deep, starting with the returnees from Afghanistan who helped fuel the war in Algeria and the rise of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad in the 1990s; the North Africans who went to fight in Iraq a decade later as AQIM was a major provider of foreign fighters (Mudd, 2011, p.7; Brown, 2010, p.97); and, more recently, the battle-hardened Islamist fighters returning from Libya that are contributing to the growing instability in North and West Africa (Nossiter et al., 2013). The situation in Syria is appealing to many Jihadists from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and even from western countries. Instability in Yemen has also strengthened al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), mainly in the South of the country. There continue to be many underlying grievances that jihadi groups will continue to exploit and according to a U.S. Lieutenant Colonel “if this grievance narrative resonates among an extremely small minority of people who are willing to act on it, the threat remains significant, even if it’s diminished” (Busa, 2012).

The most pragmatic approach to the events was indeed offered by Anwar Al-Awlaki, who believed that the nature of the emerging governments was not important, because greater freedom in the region would inevitably provide Jihadists with new opportunities to operate: “our mujahidin brothers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and the rest of the Muslim world will get a chance to breathe again after three decades of suffocation” (al-Awlaki, 2011).

Conclusion

The fall of authoritarian regimes and the new political landscape in the MENA region will likely feature a vigorous competition between Islamist views, each presenting a different direction for the future of each country. Islamists clash over doctrine, strategies and tactics and disagreements between different movements or within the same movement are striking. The outcome of this competition will have both implications for the prospects of regional political development and for the relationship between those countries and the West.

All Islamists share the general goal of promoting Islamic identity and ultimately establishing an Islamic State, assigning an important role to sharia. Yet, there are significant differences in their conception of sharia, state and society. The revolts are providing political Islamists with the opportunity to participate in democratic processes. Since their view of an Islamic state differs significantly from the salafist and mainly the jihadist view, in the new regional context this represents a strong challenge to these groups. Jihadists condemn Islamist parties’ methodology as a “symptom of a modern day disease” and accuse its leaders of inventing a version of Islam that pleases western governments (al-Zawahiri, 2012). Salafists’ participation in the political game is also challenging political Islamists, who lose the exclusivity of representation of the Islamist label.

So far the opposition between Islamist trends was restricted mostly to theoretical debates featured in its leaders’ pronouncements. But Islamists are being forced to adapt their discourses and strategies to the reality. The way they put into practice their thinking and their strategies is important, because that, and not their texts and written statements, will define their nature and their place in the Islamist nebula. Also, this need to cope with the new conditions will likely increase the debates along generational lines within different groups.

In places where institutions were not entirely disrupted and electoral participation delivered results, Jihadism was declared obsolete. The economic performance and the ability to keep the reputation of its leaders clean are critical for the new governments’ survival and for containing the appeal of more radical movements. However, the conflicts in Libya and Syria made it obvious that violent tactics still had a role to play and that jihadi organizations were establishing safe havens not far from Europe.

The current power struggles between Islamist groups is endangering the institutional stability of several states. In Tunisia and Egypt a growing opposition between political Islamists and Salafists is assuming the form of an existential confrontation with
mutual attacks between them. In case of continuous turmoil – adding to the already existing grievances –, Jihadists may be positioned to capitalize on the instability in order to spread their influence and reap the rewards of their temporarily non-confrontational strategy.

The evolution of Islamist trends and the way they influence each other is important for the formulation of European policies. The way European authorities approach these organizations is important, considering both the intense interactions with our southern neighborhood and the Muslim communities in Europe. All the above mentioned Islamist trends have a solid presence in Europe and the theoretical and strategic debates and disagreements over practices may be reflected in European soil. After all, many internal disputes started within national branches of Islamist movements in the lands of origin were transported to Europe in the past (Meijer and Bakker, 2012, p.16).

If, as Baylocq (2012) wrote, ideology and practices are determined more by circumstances than by texts written by the historical leaders, then current conditions might contribute to reshape Islamism and Islamist strands into a whole new configuration.

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The Arab Uprisings through the Eyes of Young Arabs in Europe
Valeria Rosato and Pina Sodano

Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the Arab Uprisings through the eyes of a particular category: the young Arabs in Europe. We present the results of a sociological research carried out on a sample of young Arab immigrants resident in Italy using qualitative techniques. The analysis focuses on their opinions and attitudes towards the Arab Uprisings and in particular to the role played by Europe before, during and after the more critical stage of the riots.

The choice was determined by a fundamental ‘bridge role’ that, in our opinion, a specific category of migrants could play between the European Union and the States of the Southern Mediterranean. Indeed, one of the principal aims of the European partnership policy towards the North Africa and the Middle East countries (MENA) is to support locally led domestic transitions. Inside this strategy considerable importance is given to the cooperation between the EU and State partners on immigration issues. In particular, it seeks to strengthen the so-called ‘mobility partnerships’ with the aim of promoting the mobility of local élites in order to encourage domestic development (Echague, Michou and Mikail, 2011).

Therefore, the present research is a pilot study that aims to elaborate a preliminary analysis on a small casual sample of young Arab immigrants living in Italy. It would represent a first step towards a future deeper knowledge of an increasing cultural élite which in the future could play a crucial role both in the internal processes of European integration and in EU foreign policy strategies in the Southern Mediterranean region.

The first question to be answered is: when we talk about young Arabs in Europe who exactly are we referring? What do we really know about them? So it’s important first of all, to define clearly the object of our analysis.

The literature on immigrant youth so-called of ‘second’ and ‘third generation’ in Europe is exterminated (Vertoyec and Rogers, 1998). It refers to those young people, children of immigrants, born and/or grown in the host country. There are numerous studies on the phenomena of immigration and integration and, in particular, about Islam and Europe encounter (Lewis and Shnapper, 1994; Allievi and Nielsen, 2003; Pinto, 2006). On the contrary there is an insufficient attention to the specific category of young Arabs who chose to emigrate to a European country after completing their education in their native countries, often with high levels of specialization, or that emigrate to Europe to further perfect their training. In the present study we therefore refer to a specific category that could fall within the more general ‘skilled migration’ (Mahroum, 2001) but that specifically represents a sort of ‘transmigrant’ cultural élite.

The choice to analyze the opinions and the attitudes of these young people is based on some preliminary considerations: first of all they are individuals born and socialized in their native countries and are therefore characterized by a strong identity, and

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30 Ph. D. students in Sociology in European and International Studies, Department of International Studies, University “Roma TRE”, Rome.
31 ‘Europe’ is a very wide cultural area and a political project very complex and highly differentiated that it is not easy to define uniquely and accurately. As Beck argues, ‘Europe’ does not exist, there is only the ‘europeanization’ as a process of institutional permanent transformation. At this preliminary stage of the research the concept of ‘Europe’ is used to indicate in a general way the European Union and its member countries.
consequently, given their high levels of education, they show a good ability to engage intercultural dialogue. According to our hypothesis, this particular category could play, now and especially in the future, a fundamental linking role between Europe and the Arab world due to their ability to contribute to a mature comparison between different cultures, both inside and outside the European context.

‘Second’ and ‘Third generation’ young immigrants, on one side, they embody par excellence the ‘hybrid’ identity that symbolize actual Western societies and they play a crucial role in the rising ‘European Islam’ (Ramadan 1999, 2003; Nielsen, 2000); on the other side, they show weaker bonds with their parents’ native countries and lower ability to understand their complex ongoing dynamics.

Instead, those young Arabs referred to as ‘proactive transmigrants’ show a greater effectiveness in developing a space for dialogue and mutual exchange within European societies, but they especially engage in activism at international level. Such a phenomenon of networking is able to bring Europe closer to the realities of their countries.

Therefore, we are speaking about a category of young immigrants that is quite different both from the so-called ‘first generation’ of immigrants in European countries (in the 1980s and the 1990s), and the ‘second generation’ category. From the first it differs mainly in three aspects: 1. level of education, 2. communication tools and 3. motivations in the decision to emigrate. The choice to emigrate is not experienced as a constraint or as a final choice, but it is seems to be flexible and open, carried on with great awareness and critical attitude both towards their native countries and the new hosting societies. These young people appear to conceive different possibilities about their arrangement, like to settle permanently in a foreign country or to come back to their countries and furthermore making it possible to move easily between different places, that is, to modify their choices according to the best opportunities. That attitude might be defined as cosmopolitan.

But, as we said before, they even differ significantly from the ‘second generation’ young Arabs who have not chosen by themselves to migrate and that, despite the different strategies of adaptation with the host society (Khosrokhavar, 1997), are mainly socialized to Western culture. The tension between the desire for integration and refusal total assimilation leads them to develop new iden-titarian forms through an original synthesis between the values of European culture and Islamic values (Roy 2002; Salih, 2004). On the contrary, the young Arab transmigrants show a strong national identity and a solid link with the native country.

Their perspective above Europe is therefore particularly interesting because it helps to understand which image and idea of Europe are popular within the Arab world, a key element to address the European institutions in choosing the best foreign policies in the area. Therefore in our opinion, this sort of privileged perspectives should be object of deep analysis in order to well understand all their potentialities.

In the present study, we consider the great wave of uprising which involved several Arab countries as an important test in order to prove our hypothesis of the ‘bridge role’ that this category of young transmigrants could play between the two Mediterranean shores. The political turmoil that from Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan squares and streets inevitably spread globally, has shown strongly the identity and potential of this emerging category of young Arabs living into European territory.

In order to analyze this phenomenon we developed a semi-structured interview to investigate the following dimensions: 1. features of the migratory movement, 2. opinion and attitude towards Europe 3. activism during the warm phases of the Arab revolutions, 4. opinion on EU’s role in the Arab world.

Through the analysis32 of these four interdependent dimensions, we will try to outline a first profile of this group of young Arabs, focusing, on one side, on aspects about identities and values related to the relationship with Europe, and on the other side, on their potential to create spaces and networks of political activism both within the host society and outside with their native countries.

32 We used the technique of the content analysis extracting separate sentences of the text for further classification and grouping into categories.
Young Arab Transmigrants:  
a Preliminary Conceptualization

The upheavals occurred in North Africa and in the Middle East, the so-called ‘Arab Revolutions’, have also produced their effects in other countries, such as Italy, due to the initiative and participation of many Arab communities resident in the country, although in variable ways and intensity. Every Arab immigrant could not avoid dealing with the revolts in their countries, thus producing, along with other Arabs or alone, reactions, actions, different efforts whose analysis may assume a great interest.

Evaluating the intensification, because of the Arab Springs, of the relationships among Arabs living in Italy and their connections with those living in their native countries, and above all the creation of new extensive and intense networks, we considered to use a recent analytical approach, the so-called ‘Transnationalism’, defined as “the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together the native country and that of settlement” [A.Tr.] (Glick Schiller and al., 1992:1). That is a perspective that focuses on the relations, movements and activities that connect migrants with the places of origin and with other migrant’s destinations.33

The Arab Springs are inextricably linked to the persistence of political regimes that have encouraged strong social discrimination, segregation, growing impoverishment of large segments of the local population and persistent restrictions on fundamental rights, such as freedom of speech and expression. Therefore, social injustices have played a decisive role, together with the economic reasons that could not explain by themselves the complexity of a phenomenon so wide and radical.

It is useful to mention, for instance, that over the last few years many countries in North Africa have experienced a major economic development, but restricted only to limited and privileged groups of population. It is worth remembering that over 10 percent of the population in Libya, Syria and Egypt has an income per capita that is about 60 percent less than the national median income (CESPI, 2012). The concept of trasnationalism is relatively new in the academic fields. This approach shows how the migrant community is still connected in different way, (economic, social, politically) to the native country. It’s clear how this phenomenon has produced consequences that spread far beyond the regional borders, involving different countries, among which inevitably those of the wider Mediterranean area, and particularly Italy. For instance, some official data on Libya conflict are immediately evident: its outbreak on February 2011 resulted in a significant movement of the civilian population, especially from those areas most affected by violence, starting from the coastal regions. According to evaluations made in 2012 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2012), the uprisings in Libya have caused the emigration of about 660,000 citizens, while 550,000 people have been displaced within the same country (about 10 percent of the local population). The traditional migratory flows from the countries affected by the ‘Arab Springs’ shown a radical change in its characteristics, becoming a movement of population mainly composed of men fleeing from places where conflict was particularly harsh and dangerous.

The Arab uprisings affected the migratory routes generating a migration that, according to the 2012 Caritas-Migrantes Statistical Immigration Dossier, led over 60,000 people on the Italian coast during the year 2011 only. On the basis of official data from Istat (Italian Institute of Statistics), the Tunisian community has doubled over eleven years, rising from 59,528 in 2001 to 122,595 residents on January 1st, 2012. It constitutes now, in the Italian territory, the eighth foreign community by width, which is 34% of the total residents (regular). This is a very young community with an average age of only 28-29 years in a national context where the average is 44 years. The second largest African community residing in Italy is the Egyptian one, counting 11,145 people.

The increased complexity of the migratory flows that connect the two shores of the Mediterranean, especially Italy and the North African countries affected by the phenomenon of Arab Springs, requires an accurate reflection to better understand the implications that such flows have produced on Arab communities already in the Italian territory. In this case, the analysis of the complex network affecting the Arab communities in Italy is interesting in order to understand how they have reacted to the protracted riots, strengthening or weakening their transnational relations.

The present analysis mainly concerns young Arab males, in particular from North Africa and the Middle East, interviewed from September to November 2012. The choice of a semi-structured questionnaire allowed us to formulate an interview where subjects were free to explain their opinion and reflections. In the research were involved 12 men and 2 women (4 Egyptians, 3 Tunisians, 3 Palestinians, 1 Syrian, 1 Jordanian, 1 Lebanese woman and 1 Moroccan woman), whose age is between forty and twenty-six.

33 Portes, 2007.
The sample was quite heterogeneous, both for nationality and regarding the reasons to emigrate, furthermore some of them have had the opportunity to stay, even for short periods, in other European countries, such as France, England, Slovenia, Sweden and Norway. The research outputs allowed to formulate two categories which may be very useful in order to better understand the role that their Arab migrant communities carried out during the period of the riots. The first category could be defined ‘traditional’ migrants and includes those migrants who have had a relationship that could be called ‘passive’ with the Arab Springs. Namely this group have followed, the various stages of revolutions mainly through the traditional media like satellite TV, in particular Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya channels.

These interviewees declare to use the following sources of information: television, daily and monthly newspapers in Italian and Arabic, and the relational network of friends and family. The most common media used is generally the mobile phone, while new communication technologies such as email, social networks, blogs or Skype are less used or totally unused. Their exchange of views regarding to the Arab revolutions were generally limited to the closest family, friend and working environments. That is they have followed the evolution of events through a constant updating, but they have not changed, expanded, or built new relationships. This category of migrants didn’t play any socially or politically active role neither in the host society nor in their native countries. So, for these features this first group may be differentiate from the second one that shows, in our opinion, a stronger transnational character. We defined this category as ‘proactive’ transmigrants. This second category is composed by three sub-categories: a) ‘political’ transmigrants b) ‘social’ transmigrants c) ‘symbolic’ transmigrants.

a) The analysis of ‘political’ transnationalism and the concept of ‘political’ transmigrant, according to the most qualified sociological studies is characterized by the formation of groups in order to support the development of native communities and allowing the migrant to continue to play a political role, as protagonist, in the country of birth as well as, in the country of destination. The literature has noted a significant increase since the 1990s of the ‘hometown association’ (Vertovec, 2004) that are considered the clearest demonstration of this process of institutionalization of transnational networks.

This particular category is characterized by migrants who generally are well integrated in the host country, with high levels of education and with high professional occupations. These data show that, on the theoretical level, the relations with the native contexts may last, even get stronger during extraordinary events like the Arab revolutions case demonstrates. These kind of occasions shows to act as an intensifier mean of the efforts by migrants inside their host societies. For instance, Eva Ostergaard-Nielsen (2003) shows the activism of the immigrant communities in the European context analysing a wide range of phenomena of politically participation concerning crucial national questions, such as election campaigns and voting abroad, injustices committed by the government and support the projects of associations operating in the native countries.

During the uprisings these young Arab activists have tried to engage political propaganda organizing public meetings in institutional and symbolic places, such as embassies, central squares, etc. They were able to create transnational networks and promoting special events through the use of traditional media and in particular of innovative media like social networks. A young Tunisian interviewed states: “During the revolution I was in Italy and I was very active to open a wall on Facebook against the Regime of Ben Ali, I was even threatened by the Tunisian Embassy. I organized with some of my compatriots especially students a manifestation in the 13th of January in front of the Tunisian Embassy”. Then, the ‘political’ transmigrant is able to establish new relationships or to strength the existing ones both with their compatriots living in the same territory, often involving them in political activities and with groups and associations operating in the native country. The strong emotional involvement that characterized their political activism has facilitated the raise of a particular empathy between young Arabs and European people. In this case the same young Tunisian says: “During the revolution I received a lot of phone calls and videos to communicate it to my friends in Italy so that to show to the world how people were called in all over Tunisia. It was a good coordination between my relatives and friends who live in Tunisia and who live abroad”. Also a Syrian boy underlines this aspect of mutual sympathy: “I was in contact with my Syrian friends, before last summer I spend one month August 2011, in Syria and I spoke with them. Here in Italy, me and a group of Italian friends, we organized meetings in the Syrian Embassy or manifestation in the street”. And a young Palestinian says: “I was in London and spent a lot of time with political activism groups and academic activities and protests in front embassies, we communicate via social networks and in some occasions we met in meetings and conferences in Europe”. As Castells affirms, when people reaches a saturation level of injustices, the social movements increase their hope of change and they try to rebel against oppression and violence imitating and reproducing other popular protests active in different places of the world (Castells, 2012).

b) The ‘social’ transmigrant is the migrant that play a determined role with a constant social commitment, but without a political reference. This category try to make aware societies through a solidarity activism aimed, for instance, to raise funds in order to
support families that are experiencing very difficult and dangerous periods. Regarding to the Arab revolution a young Tunisian tells: “once started the revolution in Tahrir Square, I with other friends have been in contact with the Egyptian ‘brothers’ 34, to support them with their help”. He participated in demonstrations, offering opinions and advices to their compatriots via social networks and sending money to who necessitated.

Usually they organize cultural events to promote culture, arts and traditions of their own country, so they seem emotional involved with the revolutionary events but less politically exposed compared with the precedent category of ‘political’ transmigrants. A young Tunisian affirms: “I was in Italy and talked a lot about the Tunisian revolution with my Italian friends. Unfortunately the Italian media were out of date they didn’t even know what was happening in Tunisia, they were talking about a “War of Bread”. I explained to my Italian friends that what was happening in Tunisia was not a famine but young people who were asking for their rights, work, dignity, liberties, freedom of speech also against political corruption and dictatorship. I sent a lot of videos to my Italian friends so that they can understand the causes of the Arab revolutions which have more or less the same goals”.

c) Finally, the ‘symbolic’ transmigrant refers exclusively to a specific symbolic dimension of the transnationalism. They are migrants who reveal a strong identity and a passionate sense of belonging to their native country, which is amplified during the period of uprisings. Very often they formed ‘community of sentiment’, that is groups that begin to imagine and feel something together (Appadurai, 1996:8), they live together the collective experiences across distances, through common emotional conditions that directly affect their personality and influence social relations. This manifestation of emotional belonging and the sharing of particular events involving the migrant and his countryman resident in the native country is an important new element interesting to explore deeply.

They usually exhibit ethnic symbols like flags, medals, special clothing, tattoos or particular haircuts and specific symbolic material such as documentaries, videos and audios that recall immediately the common causes that keep close the two sides of the migration. This category of transmigrants often use new media, in particular they use internet, email and social networks (on which they post photos, songs, videos that recall the identity of their native country) that help them to maintain a constant and immediate connection with their relationship residing in the native country. As states a young Palestinian: “although physically I’m far away from my country, my heart and my mind they are there”.

Europe and Arab Revolutions through the Eyes of Young Arab Transmigrants

In recent years, the increasing emigration from Arab countries to Europe put the relations between Islam and the West at the center of the debate and the political issues (Brown, 2010). The delicate challenge that the rising ‘European Islam’ (Roy, 1998; AlSayyad and Castells, 2002; Maniscalco, 2011) launches to Europe is twofold: on one side to manage the integration processes within its societies and the other side to develop and implement a clear foreign policy towards the Sothern Mediterranean region.

The strong transnational character of Islam requires, therefore, a special focus to the links between the Muslim immigrant population and their native countries. In particular, there are two stages that suggest, in our opinion, a change of vision and approach of the West towards the growing relations between local communities and immigrant communities, especially young immigrants.

The first stage is undoubtedly identified in the explosion and spread of international Islamist terrorism. The September 11, 2001, and for Europe in particular the March 11, 2004 and the July 7 2005, with the terroristic attacks in Madrid and London, are the dates that have opened the season of suspicion, of the widespread ‘Islamophobia’, the close surveillance of Muslim communities in Europe and in particular on their relations with the native countries according to counter-terrorism strategies (EUMC, 2006; Hall, 2010). In particular, what created a great dismay and anxiety was precisely the phenomenon of the so-called ‘homegrown terrorists’, that is the affiliation to Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism by young people born and grown in Western countries (Roy, 2007). A second stage, which we believe would signal a positive change, it could be identified in the season of ‘Arab revolutions’ that has characterized the course of the entire 2011. Since that time, in front of the contagious popular uprising against

34 Is interesting to note the use of the word ‘brother’ that underline the feelings of solidarity between young Arabs who come from different countries.
authoritarian regimes that inflamed part of North Africa and the Middle East, the West has begun to appreciate, albeit sometimes in an instrumental way, the activism and the participation especially of young people (Murphy, 2012). The courage shown by this youth demanding rights and engaging the hard repressions by authoritarian regimes, it has started to change the view and attitude of the West towards the Arab population, bringing to support the democratic transition processes (Khosrokhavar 2012; Boserup and Tassinari, 2012) and to enhance the capacity, especially of these young people, to create networks of political activism on a global level (Castells, 2012).

It is precisely for this new consideration given to young Arabs that we believe crucial to direct our attention to that particular category of young Arab immigrants who moving across Europe and being actively involved aptly in the public sphere of the host society (Jonker and Amiraux, 2006); they could give a vital contribution to the promotion of the dialogue and the respect between different cultures creating ‘bridges’ between Europe and the native countries.

To analyze and to understand their views and attitudes towards Europe is therefore the objective of this study that certainly not presumed to be exhaustive on this phenomenon given the limited size of the sample, but that could be a useful starting point for developing further and deeper analysis.

The sample, as we have seen, is very heterogeneous, especially with regard to the nationality, and this allows us to extrapolate interesting reflections comparing the views that young North African and Middle Eastern youth have of Europe.

The first question addressed to the interviewees concerned the possible will and principle reasons in designing their future in Italy. The majority of them showed an open attitude to a constant change. In particular, they expressed their willingness and ability to move to other countries, also going on over Europe in order to catch better opportunities. As we stated before, it is a very homogeneous sample in terms of level of education, for the most part this young immigrants are graduates or they accomplished with higher specialist qualifications (Master and PhD), and consequently they are full of expectations and with determination they aim for an ever better training and professional achievement. With the exception of a small number of interviewees who declare the desire to return to their country because they consider transient the migratory experience, a sort of sacrifice in order to return sooner or later to the native country and to build a future there. But, it is no a coincidence however, that these three individuals compared with the other interviewees, they have in common an older age (around 40 years), a longer period of stay in Italy (from 10 to 13 years) and a migration experience more alike to the early stages of the labor migration (Bohning, 1984; Castels and Miller, 1993), characterized by the displacement of only young men workers to sustain in the distance their families remained in the native country.

The majority of the interviewees confirms that they don’t experienced their immigrate status as frustrating, but rather as an opportunity in full cosmopolitan spirit. In this sense, cosmopolitanism, as Beck argues, means an attitude that combines a positive feeling towards diversity but without denying their own identity (Beck, 2004).

Young Arabs interviewees tend to confirm this ‘cosmopolitan’ attitude in responding to questions that put them directly to compare their identity with the ‘Other’, in this case the European identity. It has been asked them to indicate which values of European culture they shared and which ones they criticized and if they liked to become European citizens. It is very interesting to note that, despite the different geographical origins, the sample expressed unanimously, on one side a strong identity and a strong national pride and on the other a strong admiration for the civil rights guaranteed by European countries constitutions.

At the question about the wish to obtain the European citizenship, only four interviewees respond positively while the remaining ones, they respond negatively or they express an attitude of indecision. In particular, for some of them the European citizenship is seen as a simple ‘convenience’, that is a useful mean against discrimination. A young Tunisian man states he wants to become a European citizen but clarifies: “because if you are a European citizen in the eyes of the world you are a ‘human being’ with all rights recognized”. Even a Syrian boy underlines: “I want to be European but not like mentality”. Most of them in fact show proudly a strong sense of belonging to their country and they affirm they don’t need ‘additional’ citizenship: “I have a strong sense of belonging to my country, Tunisia, and I don’t need further citizenships” (Tunisian boy). The cosmopolitan attitude is confirmed by the tendency to feel a strong identity but at the same time to develop senses of belonging even most extensive and inclusive, in this sense some of them perceive even too restrictive a possible European citizenship: “I am already a citizen of the Euro-Mediterranean region which is wider than the European citizenship” (young Tunisian), and also “I want to be a citizen of the world” (young Palestinian).
The cosmopolitan vision and attitude of strong opening is further confirmed by the responses to question concerning the values and principles of European culture. Even in this case, it is unexpected the concordance expressed by the sample indicating the civil and political liberties guaranteed by the European constitutions like principle value shared. The word ‘freedom’ is central in the answers of all interviewees. It seems to emerge a unanimous hymn to freedom, probably even more pronounced due to the particular ‘revolutionary’ situation in the Arab world, but that does not absolutely mean an uncritical acceptance of European culture and its principles. In fact, many are the aspects they judge negatively like corruption, excessive individualism and consumerism. These elements are of course associated with the wider Western culture and seem perceived as alarming deviations of the concept of freedom. It could be assert that this group of young Arab transmigrants, despite sharing an ideal level values of freedom and democracy, in reflecting on their personal experiences of migration, clearly demonstrate a critical and problematic attitude towards the host society.

The critical attitude, but with a strong constructive emphasis, of young Arab immigrants is also evident from opinions expressed by interviewees about the relationship between Europe and the Arab countries. In particular, it was asked them to judge the attitude of the European Union during the various national crises and to indicate the role that, in their opinion, EU should play in the future in the Arab world.

With regard to the management of the most critical phase of the revolutions, the judgment observed is on the whole negative, between those who label European intervention as too ‘hesitant’ and blunt, and those who frankly denounced it as motivated until now uniquely on economic and geostrategic interests. Many interviewees pointed out the ambiguity and hypocrisy that have characterized the positions of the different European countries, ranging from the support to the various authoritarian regimes, to the expression of solidarity with the people in revolt and the formal support of the democratic transition processes.

The European Union has officially made self-criticism admitting the ambiguous attitude shown towards many of its neighborhood countries, and re-launching on March 2011, a new partnership strategy in the MENA region, the so-called ‘Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean’ (EU Commission, 2011). But despite the good intentions, these new EU declarations, according to many analysts, only risk to be inspired from the existing strategies formulated from 1995 to 2008, and then to fail if they are not supported by a strong leadership and a clear vision in the long term (Echague, Michou, Mikail, 2011).

With regard to the position of our interviewees, as expected, to be more critical and skeptical towards a positive and decisive EU role are mainly young people who come from Middle Eastern countries (Palestinians and Syrians in particular) who perceive Europe as more ‘distant’ and marked by an ancillary attitude with regards to United States. But despite these harshly critical positions, all the interviewees recognize the important role that the EU should have inside the entire South Mediterranean area and they wish for an increasing cooperation in both economic and political levels. It is interesting to note that the term most commonly used by them, in this case, is precisely the word ‘partner’. This highlighted the importance, supported by our interviewees, of implementing a real neighborhood policy, free from arrogant and hypocrite attitudes by Europe, in which the relationship can be indeed based on a fair and equal partnership (Perthes, 2011). The hope, therefore, even expressed by these young people, is that the much-vaunted ‘partnership’ from the paper can turn into reality.

To achieve this objective and clearly delineate its democracy promotion strategy the EU should be able, in our opinion, to seize this extraordinary opportunity of ‘Arab politicization’ (Boserup, Tassinari, 2012) also through the enhancement of the ‘bridge’ role performed by these young Arabs ‘proactive’ transmigrants.

**Conclusion**

This first analysis seems to support our initial hypothesis concerning the ‘bridge’ role between Europe and the Arab World performed by this group of young ‘proactive’ transmigrants and that begins to emerge as a result of the political turmoil and the changes taking place in different MENA countries.
The first element to emphasize is the remarkable uniformity of opinions expressed by interviewees in spite their different nationalities and experiences. Most of them show a clear will to communicate and to participate actively into the European public sphere but maintaining strong ties with their native countries and establishing networks of transnational activism through the wise use of new communication media.

These young Arabs are characterized by strong national identity but show an open mind, which contemplates mutual respect and a mature attitude both inside intercultural debate within European societies and within the debate concerning the relations between the EU and the Arab world.

Accordingly to these preliminary reflections emerged from this pilot study, we consider very interesting to make further research, more extensive and systematic, in order to better delineate the profile of this category of young Arab ‘proactive’ transmigrants. Future analysis should focus their opinions and their attitudes, the relationships established with other categories of immigrants in the European territory and the real dynamics and the potential impacts generated by their action.

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Social Networking Websites and Collective Action in the Arab Spring. Case study: Bahrain
Seyed Hossein Zarhani35

Introduction

Some media called overthrowing President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt as “Face-book revolution”.

There are so many journalistic analysis and comments about the role and position of social media

However, in spite of the prominence of “Twitter revolutions” and “Facebook protests” in media broadcasting of Arab spring, there is very little academic investigation on the role of social networking websites on collective actions. (Agarwal, Merlyna, & Wigand, 2011, p. 225) Mere journalistic accounts on such actions are unavoidably constructed on anecdotes rather than well designed scientific research.

Current events in different authoritarian regimes, such as the Arab states like Tunisia, Bahrain and Egypt, attract a considerable amount of attention to a developing phenomenon in collective action. Some scholars believe that people in those countries organized themselves through different social networking websites, such as Twitter and Facebook, for political protest and resistance.

The importance of this study is its try to investigate on the role of the social media on the collective action, from a multidisciplinary perspective in a non-Western context, explicitly during The Arab Spring in Bahrain. It should be mentioned; most of the limited scientific works on the role of social media on The Arab Spring focused on Egypt, Libya or Tunisia. In the 2011-2012 “The Arab Spring” protests, more than breakdown of three regimes, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, but there was a significant sociopolitical mobilization in Bahrain.

Despite of some reforms in Bahrain in the end of 1990s and first years of the new century, the Kingdom of Bahrain is still considered as one of authoritarian states with non-free political structure (Freedon in the world, 2013). Moreover Bahrain remains among the world’s 10 worst places for Journalists (Puddington, 2013). In addition, the Al-Khalifa family, which belongs to Bahrain’s Sunni Muslim minority, has ruled the Shiite-majority Island in the Persian Gulf for more than two centuries. After independent in 1971, Shiite majority population remained marginalized in the political structure.

The focus of the research is on political use of social media by opposition political movements in Bahrain and its impact on collective action. The new aspects of this study are first, to connect theories of political mobilization and collective actions with an analysis into the ongoing political changes in The Arab Spring from the perspective of the emergence of the Internet as an accelerator, medium and the public sphere for political activities. Much of the discussion about the Internet and democracy and social change is related with how it promotes (Rheingold, 1993); (Grossmann, 1995); (Browning, 2002). In contrary, limited studies

35 Ph. D. Candidate, University of Heidelberg.
have talked about the significance of Internet on political change and process of democratization in the Middle East region as the non-Western context. It should be noticed that most of the researches on the relation of Internet and the process of democratization, concentrate mainly on China (Kalathil & and Boas, 2001); (Zhou, 2006); (Kluver & Qiu, 2003).

This paper with a focus on Bahrain as a less discussed part of the Arab uprising stresses on cyberspace. In this investigation, importance of space (Lefebvre, 1991) and cyberspace is analyzed. The analysis includes both real networks of flows of information over the Internet and the physical linkages between cyberspace, Internet cafés, mosques, Shia community institution and other printed news media and collective actions and social movements in real contexts protests and uprisings. This research is pioneering in using sociological concepts of virtual public sphere as keys to understanding how the Internet can become an accelerator of political deliberation and mobilization in a closed authoritarian state like Bahrain not only through information flows but also through the emergence of new tools for the organization of protests. The overall theme of this research is the growing impact of electronic media (digital networked technologies) in authoritarian regimes with a focus on Bahrain especially after 2011.

**Literature Review**

It can be noted that much of the early literature on the political use of the Internet is highly optimistic. This is rooted in positive interpretation on role of media in social changes, which portrays wider exposure to all forms of media, including newspapers and radio, as an unavoidable complement and contributor to progressive political development. (Lerner, 1958), (Schudson, 1989), (Gamson, 1992); (Blumler, McLeod, & Rosengren, 1992). The Internet, in this utopian part of debate, is considered to have positive influences on political participation, civil society and democracy (Hague & Loader, 1999); (Locke, 1999); (Kamarck & Nye, 1999). Optimistic researchers would claim for a positive relation between the Internet and democracy (Tsagarousianou, Tambini, & Bryan, 1998) (pal, cynthia, & Toronto, 1999); (Ferdinand, 2000); (Hague & Loader, 1999); (Hof, Horrocks, & Tops, 2000). Prevalent expressions like digital protest or cyber-democracy all reflect the idea that the Internet strengthens the democratic process. (pal, cynthia, & Toronto, 1999)

But more than this optimistic and utopian points of views, many scholars have tried to analyze the relationship between the Internet and political participation in a democratic context, they often times have found the partial effects of Internet use on mobilizing the public (Bimber, 1998). Some scholars found that active Internet users are individuals who are active even before their use of the Internet (Owen & Davis, 1998).

Studies on how the Internet and social media can change a political system include a wide collection of opinions from modest alterations such as voting online (Mulgan, 1994); (Allen, 1995); (Freeman, 1997) to more ambitious ones such as the emergence of direct democracy and a new public sphere (Toffler, 1994); (Negroponte, 1995); (Rheingold, 1993). But most of the investigation on the Internet and politics has been limited to western democratic countries.

A growing literature in the last few years has started to analyze the presumed role of the ICTs in bringing about a new wave of democratization. Given the potential significance of the information and communication technologies to democratization in the authoritarian regime, surprisingly little empirical research has been conducted on how the ICTs trigger democratization in authoritarian regimes. Authoritarian systems in Asia, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa are thought to be under new threat in recent years, threatened by the social media. In such regimes all over the world, where national media are strongly controlled, not only websites of oppositional groups are flourishing, but also they are active in emerging social media.

Although most of research on internet and politics have been conducted in Western democratic states, the Internet's mobilizing impacts are even more celebrated in recently emerging democracies or authoritarian contexts (Spassov & Todorov, 2004), (Simon, Corrales, & Wolfensberger, 2002). For instance, scholars have argued that the Internet had a essential effect in the breakdown of the Suharto government in Indonesia (Hill & Sen, 2000). The Internet's democratizing role has also repeatedly been mentioned in the studies of the Internet in China (Zhou, 2006), (Zheng & Wu, 2005), (Tang & Jorba, 2012) where individuals were seldom able to find information and express their ideas easily before the Internet's accessibility.
Recently the role and position of internet in Muslim societies is more investigated. Hussain and Howard (2012, p. 220) in their comparative studies on four Muslim societies (Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt and Indonesia) conclude that “citizens in all four countries have been able to greatly increase the level of international news content in their news diets. Second, a growing portion of the public uses social networking applications in their communications, independent of direct state control. Third, civil society actors have flourished online, even when the state has cracked down domestically. Finally, women have been drawn into political discourse online in ways not available to them in offline spaces.”

Before Arab uprising most of studies on the relationship between Internet and political mobilization and democratization in the Middle East concentrated on Iran. After 2009 disputed presidential election, the Green Movement used social media for communication and mobilization. There are the limit works on the relationship of green movement and internet. Majority of this works mention positive role of social media in political mobilization during Green Movement. (Kamalipour, 2010) (Dabashi, 2011) Cross (2010) believes that the effect of social media on the Green Movement was ambiguous, since it both helped and hindered its aims; that is, it increased the challenge to the regime, but also increased revenues used to defuse that very challenge. In addition Morozov (2009) noted, “A Twitter revolution is only possible in a regime where the state apparatus is completely ignorant of the Internet and has no virtual presence of its own. However, most authoritarian states are now moving in the opposite direction, eagerly exploiting cyberspace for their own strategic purposes”.

Finally there is a limited academic literature on role of social media in political mobilization during recent The Arab Spring and most of them concentrate on Egypt or Tunisia.

Fox and Ramos, in their book, iPolitics (2011, p. 3), mention that “YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have been critical organizing tools in the recent citizen protests in Northern Africa and the Middle East” (Fox and Ramos 2012, 2)

In working report that published by “The project on Information Technology and Political Islam” (Howard P. , Hussain, Mari, Mazaid, Freelon, & Duffy, 2011) after analyzing over 3 million tweets, gigabytes of YouTube content and thousands of blog posts, a new study finds that “Social media played a central role in shaping political debates in the Arab Spring. A spike in online revolutionary conversations often preceded major events on the ground. Social media helped spread democratic ideas across international borders.”

Comparing between Saudi Arabia and Egypt during The Arab Spring Samin (2011, p. 9) concludes “the use of the Internet and social media can help empower democratic movements in the Middle East to resist non-democratic regimes. But it will not produce the same outcome in every Middle Eastern country”.

In one of most serious efforts to transcend the pluralized debate between cyber-utopians and tech-skeptics regarding digital’s media role in the 2011 Arab Springs, Howard and Hussain (2013) based on six stage model of protest mobilization conclude “in spite of different political outcomes, but that does not diminish the important role of digital media in the Arab Spring”. (Howard & Hussain, 2013, p. 125).

Theoretical Considerations and Definitions

Researchers from a varied range of disciplines, among them sociology, political science and communication, are seeking to understand the changes that social networking websites offer in the way people communicate and cooperate for collective action.

Following Howard and Hussain’s study on Egypt and Tunisia (2013), this research uses the six stage model of protest mobilization for examining of the role of social media on protests in Bahrain.

“Six-stage model of protest mobilization includes these stages: a capacity phase that involves the diffusion and entrenchment of digital media over many years in local and diasporic communities; a preparation phase that activists learning to use digital media in creative ways to find each other build solidarity around shared grievances, and identify collective political goals. An ignition
phase that involves some inciting incident, usually ignored by main stream, state-controlled media, that enrages the public and is leveraged by civil societies group. A phase of street protests that are coordinated digitally, a phase of international buy-in, during which digital media are used to draw in International governments, global diasporas, and overseas news agencies; a climax phase in which the state either cracks down, protesters and elites reach a stalemate or public demands are met; and then a final denouncement of a post –protest information war between winners and losers in social change” (Howard & Hussain, 2013, p. 124)

![Figure 1- a six stage model of protest mobilization drawn by the author based on (Howard & Hussain, 2013)](image)

Importantly, as an operational definition of ‘social media,’ this paper include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and social networking sites not specifically named but potentially used in the events described throughout the paper. This study also include camera phone images and videos under the rubric of social media throughout the work, since the widespread effect of such images and videos is truly realized only when they are uploaded and disseminated through the aforementioned social networking sites.

**Bahrain as a Case Study**

Bahrain, small Arab state situated in a bay on the southwestern coast of the Persian Gulf. The country has a population more than 1.2 million, of whom about 560,000 are Bahrainis. (Bahrain’s Census and Demographic Statistics, 2010) The remaining 650,000 are migrant workers, largely from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Philippines and India.

The population is more than four-fifths Muslim and includes both the Sunni and the Shiite sects, with the latter in the majority. (Crystal, 2012) Approximately 64% of the 560000 local inhabitants are Shias, according to the king’s figures. (Andersen, 2012, p. 10)

The ruling royal family and many of the political, military and economic elites are Sunni, and this difference has been a fundamental source of political and social tension. Al Khalifa 1783 capture of Bahrain from the Safavid Persian Empire is immortalized for all who see the island in the ubiquitous references to the conqueror (“al-Fhtih”) himself, Ahmad bin Muhammad Al Khalifa. (Gengler, 2011, p. 53) For the British Empire the Persian Gulf states played a significant role as a location between Britain and India and were British protectorates from 1820 to 1971, when Britain withdrew from the Persian Gulf. (Andersen, 2012, p. 5)

Following Sunni Al Khalifa conquest of this island, they invited Sunni tribes to settle in Island (Nakash, 2006, p. 56). The percentage of Shiite majority has decreased throughout the last decade, and the balance has been transformed as part of a planned effort to naturalize immigrants from Yemen, Egypt, the Palestinian Territories and particularly Syria. (Andersen, 2012, p. 10)

In 1971, Bahrain became independent from Britain and in 1973 the new state had its first parliamentary election. However, two years later the constitution was suspended and the assembly dissolved by the late Amir, Isa bin Salman-al-Khalifa after it rejected the State Security Law. The ruling families issued a wide ranging State Security Law in 1975. It permitted the government summary powers to arrest and hold people without trial for three years and extend it. The Parliament’s elected members, united in opposition to these steps, insisting they ought to have been submitted for their approval; therefore, the Bahraini parliament was dissolved and it remained closed for nearly 30 years.
Al Khalifa royal family is not supported by the Shiite majority of the country’s citizenry. Power in Bahrain is concentrated in the hands of the Sunni royal family, political and business elites, and the military-security establishment. They have marginalized, at times through violent means, those of the Shiite Muslim creed, who are basically second-class citizens. (Barany, 2013, p. 20)

Political activism and protests is not new phenomena to Bahrain's society. As Nakash stated (2006, p. 69) “The role of Shiites in leading an uprising that cut across sectarian lines constituted a novelty in Bahrain’s modern history.”

Periodic outbreaks of major social unrest have alternated with periods of détente in cycles dating back to the 1920s. Sustained and organised campaigns for more rights occurred at regular intervals in 1921–23, 1934–35, 1938, 1947–48, 1953–56, 1965, and 1975, with the 1950s being notable for the creation of a non-sectarian social movement that openly challenged the ruler, Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, and his longstanding British advisor, Sir Charles Belgrave. (Peterson J. E., 2001)

Before the 2011 unrest, there are so many examples of political conflict between the Shia Majority and government. The latest in a long history of conflict between the Al Khalifa regime and its population took place from 1994 to 1999.

The causes of this unrest were much the same as had led to earlier periods of dissension: the refusal of the ruling family to countenance effective political participation in the system, economic deprivation, and systemic government discrimination against the majority Shia population. (Peterson J., 2004) Moreover, Shia Majority that was influenced by immigration of foreign workers and Sunni immigrants during the different stages in Bahrain’s history strongly motivated for protests (Gengler, 2011).

**The Capacity Phase: Internet Penetration in Bahrain and the Rise of the Social Media**

Bahrain has been connected to the internet since 1995 and presently has one of the highest internet penetration rates in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region.

Based on World Bank development indicators (2012), number of internet users in Bahrain has increased speedily, from a penetration rate of 28 percent in 2006 to 77 percent in 2011.
According to the United Nations’ e-Government Readiness report of 2010, Bahrain ranks first on the telecommunications infrastructure index in the Middle East (AmelInfo.com, 2010). The index is a measure of the population’s connectivity in fixed telephony, mobile, internet, online, personal computing and television.

According to Arab Advisors Group at the 5th Annual Media and Telecoms Convergence Conference based on Total Country Connectivity Measure (TCCM) Bahrain achieved impressive score of 210.4% connectivity per person - dwarfing the regional average of 135.37% (AMEinfo.com, 2008).

As figure 3 depicts, Bahrain among GCC states has second rank of percentage of Internet penetration. Comparing with Bahrain, just Qatar has a higher level of internet penetration.
During the Arab Spring so many Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes encounter with social protest. As Howard and Hussain (2013) called it 'Democracy Fourth Wave' extended in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain. As they stress on the role of social media protest mobilization, their study concentrates on proliferation of technology in Arab world. According to them since 2000, technology proliferation has been particularly rapid in the Arab world. This has resulted in improved informational literacy, particularly in large cities (Howard & Hussain, 2013, S. 27).

The significant point is Bahrain has the highest level of internet penetration among all Arabic states that are involved with social protests. Based on Figure 4 after Bahrain, Egypt and Tunisia have the highest level of internet penetration.
According to Bahrain’s Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (Telecommunications markets indicators in the Kingdom of Bahrain, 2012) the number of broadband subscribers with broadband speed in excess of 2Mpbs has doubled between 2009 and 2010. Mobile broadband represents 44% of the broadband customers’ base in 2011.

Another important aspect on internet penetration in Bahrain is level of access to social media. Bahrain’s online community has increased speedily in recent years, especially in social media. By the end of 2011, the number of Bahraini users on Facebook extended 315,000 with a penetration of 45 percent (Bahrain Facebook Statistics, 2013). Around 62,000 Bahraini users were active on Twitter as of March 2011. (Freedom on the net, Bahrain, 2012)

**Preparation Phase:**
**Inspiration by Tunisia and Egypt**

No one could have expected that Mohammad Bouazizi would play an important role in unleashing a wave of protests against the authoritarian regimes in the Arab world. Yet, after the young vegetable merchant committed suicide by self-immolation in front of a municipal building in Tunisia and set himself on fire on December 17, 2010, anti-dictatorship passion spread across North Africa and the Middle East.

Ben Ali and Mubarak regimes in Tunisia and Egypt soon fell, civil war broke out in Libya, and protestors took to the streets in Algeria, Morocco, Syria and Yemen. It was in this context of rising tension in the region that Bahraini organizers planned a day of protest on 14 February 2011. The focus of the planned protest aimed at obtaining more political participation and accountability, rather than opposing the status of the King or the ruling family in Bahrain. (Ulrichsen, 2013)
It also followed in the wake of the popular uprisings that swept away the Ben Ali and Mubarak regimes in Tunisia and Egypt. The inspirational sight of largely non-violent demonstrations that were organized by social media, defying political suppression and refusing to submit to the security regimes that had kept authoritarian leaders in power for decades, was transformative. Cafes in Manama that usually showed Lebanese music videos were instead filled with images from Tahrir Square in Cairo that transfixed their audiences; the same was happening elsewhere throughout the region. (Lynch, 2012)

Preliminary in late January 2011, ideas began to circulate on a number of online forums and social networking websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, which included calls for demonstrations to demand political, economic and social reforms in Bahrain. These protests were intended to follow the popular uprisings that had erupted first in Tunisia and then in Egypt. (Bassiouni, Rodley, Al-Awadhi, Kirsch, & Arsanjani, 2011, p. 65)

The Ignition Phase:
Anniversary of the Forgotten National Charter

Sheikh Hamad, who succeeded his father, Amir Isa, in 1999 wanted to defuse tensions between government and opposition. He declared a general amnesty, dissolved the State Security Courts, abolished the State Security Law and assured democratic reforms. In 2000 Sheikh Hamad introduced a plan to establish the National Action Charter. It was submitted subsequently for approval in a national referendum and was overwhelmingly accepted by society with 98.4 percent of Bahrainis voting in favor. This referendum held on 14 February 2001.

On December 16, 2002, State of Bahrain converted to Kingdom of Bahrain and Sheikh Hamad was called as King Hamad. In the other hand, opposing to obvious assurances by the king to consult the opposition leaders and other political players in amending the old constitution, he individually promulgated a rewritten one in February 2002. In the opposition's eyes, it was a significant step backward. Based on the suspended constitution, constitutional amendments required a 2/3 vote in parliament. However, the King made many amendments and changes in 2002 constitution, without the approval of parliament and the public. For example in the 1973 constitution a member of the National Assembly (Parliament) shall have the right to initiate bills, but in the new version, just the Prime Minister shall present bills to the Chamber of Deputies.

The primary promise of a unicameral elected legislature was later weakened by the addition of an upper house of royal appointees. Low confidence in the sincerity of the political opening also led to a variety of political groups boycotting the 2002 election. (Ulrichsen, 2013)

In 14 February 2011, encouraged by successive mass uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, thousands of Bahraini citizens took to the streets to call for the ouster of the ruling Al Khalifa Family. The date chosen for the start of protests, February 14, marked 10 year anniversary of Bahrain’s 2001 national charter referendum. Although the king had introduced the new constitution; but protesters felt the 2002 constitution was not designed according to the National Charter. They believed on the false promises of political reform in Bahrain. The date was symbolic as it noticed the tenth anniversary of the referendum that had approved the National Action Charter in 2001.

The Street Protest Phase:
Facebook and Organizing

According to the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) (Bassiouni, Rodley, Al-Awadhi, Kirsch, & Arsanjani, 2011, p. 65) “a Facebook page called “February 14th Revolution in Bahrain” was established to call for mass protests throughout
Bahrain on 14 February 2011. The page quickly gained popularity and several thousand people joined it. The date for the proposed demonstrations was chosen to coincide with both the tenth anniversary of the referendum on the National Action Charter, which was held on 14-15 February 2001, and the ninth anniversary of the day on which the current Constitution was promulgated and Bahrain was declared a constitutional monarchy”.

“Inspired by Tunisia and Egypt, this Facebook page called for a “day of rage” in Manama, 14 February; tens of thousands joined. Particularly because protesters limited demands to political and democratic reforms, refraining from directly criticizing King Hamad, the harsh response surprised and radicalized many. The security forces’ heavy-handed repression failed to silence them; funeral marches carried the protests into the countryside, mobilizing all segments of society. Seven died over four days (14-17 February), but protesters eventually gained control of Pearl Square, where they camped for weeks”. (International Crisis Group, 2011, p. 6)

Meanwhile, the Facebook users continued to organizing of protests. As the BICI reported (Bassiouni, Rodley, Al-Awadhi, Kirsch, & Arsanjani, 2011, p. 81) on February 19th “a demonstration of around 600 people was recorded on Suwaifiya Road, which leads to the Manama police headquarters. Police confronted these protesters and dispersed them using the standard procedures of firing tear gas and rubber bullets. A smaller gathering of approximately 200 people was also recorded in the Dar Kulaib district in the area adjacent to the University of Bahrain. Many of these demonstrations and gatherings were organized via internet-based social networking websites such as Twitter and Facebook. In addition, text messages were sent via mobile phone to encourage people to join demonstrations”.

Nowadays, opposition group’s pages gather so many followers and fans in the Facebook. They are still publishing photos, videos and news about unrest and crackdown of movements. According to Socialbakers’ data (Bahrain Facebook Statistics, 2013) among top 10 Facebook pages with Bahrainis fan, there are six opposition pages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name of page</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Number of fans</th>
<th>Number of local fans</th>
<th>Opposition group or anti government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ينطولا قافولا ةيعمج ةيمالسإلا</td>
<td>Al Wefaq National Islamic Society</td>
<td>83715</td>
<td>61704</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bahrain City Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td>175094</td>
<td>60632</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Viva Bahrain</td>
<td></td>
<td>69343</td>
<td>56496</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>رياربف 14 كمتش</td>
<td>Network of February 14</td>
<td>61560</td>
<td>46909</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ةروث بابش فالتئإ 14 فريرف</td>
<td>The coalition of youth of 14 February revolution</td>
<td>62751</td>
<td>46449</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ةروث 14 ةروف 14 ةروف ةروف ةروف</td>
<td>Revolution of February 14 in Bahrain</td>
<td>93169</td>
<td>45181</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Oasis Bahrain</td>
<td></td>
<td>59671</td>
<td>44929</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>نيرحبلا ىقتلم</td>
<td>Bahrain Forum</td>
<td>74558</td>
<td>44384</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>نيرحبلا ىقتلم</td>
<td>Bahrain Forum</td>
<td>52741</td>
<td>31827</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>نيرحبلا ىقتلم</td>
<td>Nseej News</td>
<td>38410</td>
<td>31741</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Top 10 Facebook Page in 2013, drawn by the author, based on Socialbakers (Bahrain Facebook Statistics, 2013)

These empirical evidences suggest that the growth of social media in the Bahrain and the shift in usage trends has played a critical role in mobilization, empowerment and shaping of opinions in Bahrain’s protests.
The Phase of International Buy-in: the Citizen Journalism and Media

Social media provide wide ranged possibilities for individuals to participate in the observation, production, distribution and interpretation of news (Gillmor, 2004). The networked and distributed social media platforms potentially enlarge the variety of actors involved in the construction of the news.

Thus, in reorganizing resources from print to online, newspapers not only have altered longstanding patterns of news production, but they also have opened the “gates, in many cases, to user-generated content enabling, if not always embracing, such things as comments, photos/videos, reader blogs, and even reader-assembled news articles. This evolving spectrum of user contributions to news content can be generically referred to as “citizen journalism”. (Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasorsa, 2010, p. 164)

Internet provides, if not a substitute medium, then a parallel one, a low-cost distribution mechanism that is newspaper delivery truck, paper boy, and radio and TV transmitter all in one. (Kelly, 2009, p. 6)

Manuel Castells (2007, p. 246) describes this phenomenon as the rise of ‘mass self-communication’, now rapidly evolving in these new media spaces. “The diffusion of Internet, mobile communication, digital media, and a variety of tools of social software,” he writes, “have prompted the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication that connect local and global in chosen time”

Not only the political opposition used social media for political mobilization against the regime; the evidences suggest that they used social media to connect with others outside their countries and send more realistic image about what happened in Bahrain. In many cases, these connections helped inform Western news stories about events on the ground, which in turn spread the news about ongoing events throughout the region.

During the protests, these activists have played a significant part in conveying information to protesters and to the outside world, using Twitter, Facebook, online forums and other websites.

They released so many photos and movies in social media especially YouTube and Facebook. At the first stage of protests, when state controlled TV and some regional media like Al Arabia which dependent to Saudi Arabia, did not cover this unrest, the amateur videos reflected the realities in Bahrain. The social media activists uploaded so many videos of the largest rally on February 22 at the Pearl Roundabout.

Moreover, after the systematic security crackdown, social media activists tried to show different aspects of violation of human rights. For example, they uploaded a video that appears to show Bahraini police throwing tear gas into a home after trying to kick down the door. In another video, one citizen shows that how Bahrain police throw stun grenades at women and child.

However, these citizen-Journalists faced with different risks. Ahmed Ismael Hassan AlSamadi, 22, was shot on 31 March while filming the crackdown of security forces on a demonstration in the village of Salmabad, southwest of the capital of Bahrain, Manama. (Reporters Without Borders, 2012) Hassan regularly filmed demonstrations, documenting abuses by police who have been cracking down ruthlessly on all forms of anti-government protest since February last year.
The Climax Phase
and Crackdown of Movement

While normal Bahraini citizens and netizens are greatly empowered by new communication technologies to set their own political agenda and collectively organize activities to protest against government’s policies and structure, Bahrain’s authorities have become gradually politically alert to this new political and online development.

The Freedom House reports:” Since February 2011, most live broadcasting websites that were popular among protesters Has been blocked. PalTalk, a chatting service that was used to conduct political seminars with prominent guests and mass online audiences, has been blocked since June 2011” (Frdoom on the net, Bahrain, 2012, p. 4)

Moreover, “access to the video-sharing site YouTube, social-networking site Facebook, and the micro blogging site Twitter is available, although individual pages on each of those platforms are often blocked. According to some estimates, the IAA has blocked and shut down more than 1,000 websites, including human rights websites, blogs, online forums,31 and individual pages from social media networks, focusing on sites that are critical of the Bahraini government, parliament, and ruling family. In 2011, YouTube pages containing videos of torture testimonies or police attacks against civilians were blocked, as were other webpage”. (Frdoom on the net, Bahrain, 2012, p. 3)

During these two years, Security forces used excessive force to disperse anti-government protests. Authorities imprisoned human rights activists and individuals for participating in peaceful protests and criticizing regime. (Human rights watch , 2013)

Conclusion

The rise of the Internet has led to a growing literature on the probable effects of emerging ICTs on collective action especially in authoritarian states. The case of Arab spring especially Bahrain offers a remarkable instance of the political potential of the internet.

This study on political mobilization and protests in Bahrain after 2011 is replete with examples of how social media, such as the Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, have assisted political opposition movements to challenge an authoritarian regime. The expansion of the internet within the ongoing conflict between Shiite majority in Bahrain and the government shows its growing importance in the politics of Middle East.

In this study, we did not assume that social media itself can overthrow any authoritarian regime. However in the framework of six-stage model of protest, this study shows that how in the historical and context cleavage between Shiite majority and Sunni ruling elites, development of ICT and rise of social media, provide the potential of political use of internet. This model explains how the revolution in Tunisia and Egypt inspired Bahraini citizens. They learned how they could use the social media for organizing and mobilization. This research considers the role of social media in the Bahrain’s protest as an essential catalyst as it facilitated accelerating the protest mobilization. This capability is mostly attributed social media being more socially rooted and difficult to control compared to the printed media or visual media.

Moreover, Social media such as forums, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other communication tools allows people to reflect the local events in global scale. The Bahraini activist used the social media to display violation of human rights and crackdown of protests.

Final conclusion of this article is that in Bahrainis protestors through social networking websites were structuring themselves in horizontal, decentralized networks capable of rapid and even spontaneous action that appear to be far cheaper and even easier to maintain than traditional movement infrastructure. In the authoritarian regimes like Bahrain that government controls civil society; nevertheless Bahraini protestors through social media establishes uncontrolled virtual spaces of interaction, opinion building and mobilization, attracting thousands of citizens.
Therefore, the social media has a positive association with all kinds of the political mobilization, conventional or rebelling and facilitate the process of democratization through the development of the public sphere. The main result of this paper is that Social media has a positive impact on the facilitation of collective action in Bahrain after 2011.

References


Introduction

Since the colonial period, a new way of understanding the social and political life emerged in response to the policy of assimilation conducted by the European countries. The new proposal was based on the desire of recovering the Islamic essence that Muslims lost in favour of western lifestyles, which were far from their traditional values (Khader, 2009). The promoters of this trend were the Salafi scholars who, at the end of the nineteenth century, exerted a major influence on Hasan al-Banna (Rahnama, 1994), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. The establishment of this organization meant the beginning of the ideological trend that adopted the name of Islamism in Europe (Mitchell, 1993). After an initial period of violence, moderate representatives of the movement in the Middle East opted for a peaceful performance which led to the division between what is known today as radical Islam and moderate Islamism or political Islam. Thanks to the pragmatic approach recently adopted, they have become the main political force in countries like Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco.

In the 1950s this movement also started to extend its influence in Europe. Its ideology was imported by students from Arab countries and consolidated by political exiles in different European cities as a consequence of the repression initiated by authoritarian regimes against the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Jankowski, 2002) and later on Syria (Álvarez-Ossorio, 2009). So the presence in Europe of some of the most significant figures of political Islam such as Said Ramadan (Israeli, 2008; Castaño 2013a), Isam al-Attar (Pargeter, 2010) and Hasan al-Turabi (Lavergne, Weissman, 2003) encouraged the appearance of Islamist groups that were progressively adopting a relevant role among the Muslim community. It is true that, initially, they did not count on massive popular support and their influence was limited to the academic world (Silvestri, 2011). However, over the years, they were hogging a prominent political role that served as a benchmark for European governments when authorities began to approach Islam (Vidino, 2011), giving rise to a tendency that was followed by EU institutions. Hence, although political Islam has not been able to constitute a mass movement, in Europe it has become a leading force in the democratization processes.

Following this context and taking as reference the existence of Islamist groups in Europe and in the Arab world, the aim of this paper is to stress the contradictory position adopted by the European Union and by national governments towards Islamist organizations. In this sense, it is necessary to highlight the contrast between the proximity expressed by European policymakers to the political Islam inside their frontiers. On the other hand, it is worth observing the indifference displayed by the EU towards moderate Islamist groups in southern Mediterranean countries, which for years were ignored and on certain occasions were considered as radical formations close to international terrorist networks.
The Presence of Political Islam in the European Union

Apart from the relationship maintained by Amin al-Husseini (the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem) with Nazi Germany (Morse, 2003; Patterson, 2011), the first evidences that certify the presence of Islamist representatives in Europe can be found in the university associations integrated by Arab students in the 1950s (Boubekeur, 2007). During these years several young Arabs came to Europe with the aim of completing their education. Many of them had sympathized with Islamist movements in their home countries and once they arrived to Europe they found the support of prominent Islamist figures (Maréchal, 2008; Vidino, 2010). One of the pioneers was Said Ramadan who had played a key role in the expansion of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East and, after going to Geneva, he started a campaign to extend the influence of Islamist ideology to Germany and Great Britain (Johnson, 2010). Meanwhile, Isam al-Attar, the leader of the Brotherhood in Syria, was expelled from his own country and decided to seek refuge in the German border city of Aachen (Parteger, 2010), where he contributed to reinforce the Islamist presence in central Europe through his active contribution to small Islamic associations. These small associations established links among them, resulting in the appearance of more complex entities concerned about matters related to the daily life of Muslims in Europe. In this evolution it is important emphasize the new approach provided by the second generations who, especially since the 1980s, started to demand their rights as European citizens, at the same time as they preserved their identity as Muslims (Crul, Schneider, Leile, 2012).

For the time being in the Arab world, the repression exerted by the authoritarian regimes against Islamist groups led several members of political Islam organizations to abandon their own countries and to follow the path marked by the promoters of this ideological trend in Europe (Cesari, 2004). Then, they opted to seek refuge in different European cities where they were able to extend their activities. However, on this occasion, and despite the fact that most of these new immigrants were integrated in Islamist structures present in Europe, many of them remained involved in the political issues of their home countries (Burgat, 1996; Lavergne, Weissman, 2003). In this regard, it is convenient to underline in Europe the concurrency of two discourses within the Arab political Islam, one addressed to integrate Islamic traditions in Europe, and another that, during years, was aimed to strengthen the work of opposition against totalitarian regimes, especially in Tunisia and Syria (Castaño, 2013b). Both of these tendencies found in Europe a space of freedom where they could conduct their performance without restrictions thanks to the democratic atmosphere existing in Europe, unknown in the Arab world.

In addition, along with the Arab political Islam, since the 1960s two other Islamist currents came to Europe. They found their origins in the Indian Subcontinent and in Turkey, and were represented by Jamaat-i-Islami (Nasr, 1994; Jackson, 2011) and Milli Görüş (Avci, 2006). Currently, these organizations are not completely integrated in the Informal International Islamist network composed by Arab groups close to the movement of the Muslim Brotherhoods, and their influence must be situated far from the impact achieved by the Arab political Islam.

Thus, the Islamist presence in Europe should not be interpreted as a homogeneous movement driven by relevant Islamist organizations in the Middle East, though it responds to a spontaneous process initiated by the followers of this ideological stream who established their residence in Europe. So, if anything characterizes the European Political Islam, it is its formal independence and the diversity of discourses presented by different groups, conditioned by the context in which each organization has had to defend its interests (Maréchal, 2008). This formal independence does not prevent the existence of a permanent ideological influence of the most important Islamist thinkers and, in some cases, the recognition of the headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo as an institutional reference (Vidino, 2010).

In Europe there are several entities identified with Islamist principles, though two of them have been responsible of the emergence of a supranational European body acting as an umbrella group to bring together European Islamic institutions in order to defend the rights of Muslims in the EU. These are the Union of Islamic Organizations in France (UIOF) (Venner, 2005) and the Islamic Community of Germany (IGD) (Johnson, 2010). The contacts initiated by these national organizations gave rise to the foundation of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE) in 1989 (Silvestri, 2010). This entity sought to appear as the leading advocate of Muslim interests in Europe. For this goal, FIOE has taken advantage of its higher organizational skills located in an upper level regarding other Islamic trends in the West (Merley, 2008). This strategy has made it become a reference for the EU institutions, due in part to the difficulties encountered by European authorities to find an interlocutor who was able to represent the whole Muslim community.
Before delving into the role adopted by FIOE, it is necessary to make a brief reference to the political activity developed by the most prominent Islamist national organizations in institutional processes. Despite the small social support reached by political Islam, the political plan was focused on fostering the Islam public activity, and it allowed them to get a significant position in the representation of the Islamic community (Maréchal, 2006). So, the first time Muslims expressed their claims in public was during the demonstrations that took place in Brussels in 1986, coinciding with the rejection of American attacks on Libya (Dassetto, 1996). But the real confirmation of the fact that Muslims had arrived to Europe to stay came with the protests generated after the publication of the book The Satanic Verses, when thousands of Muslims who demanded the banning of the book (Pipes, Malik, 2010) took to the streets. The answer from the Islamic community led European political leaders to see the true dimension of a problem that had hitherto been ignored. That same year, a national debate on the wearing of Islamic headscarves in schools was held in France (Koonz, 2009). The UOIF acted as an advocate for the cause, thus becoming a benchmark for many Muslims in France who, although not feeling identified with the discourse deployed by the Islamists, saw in this entity a strong organization that was able to fight for the rights of Muslims in Europe. On the other hand, it is also remarkable to observe the prominence adopted years later by the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) in the demonstrations called to express its opposition to the war in Iraq and to the British government’s stance toward the Palestinian cause (Whine, 2005).

Considering the success obtained by Islamist groups in Europe and observing the climate of freedom in which they have been working from the beginning, it is convenient to analyze the passive attitude adopted by the majority of the European governments toward the ascent of political Islam, and the indifference expressed from the European Commission and the European Parliament, which until the 1990s did not promote policies addressed to advance the integration of Muslims (Massignon, 2007). Thus, for a long time policymakers saw the presence of Muslims in Europe as an external issue, conditioned by a temporary need of manpower (Tapinos, 1993). This approach provoked that Muslim workers remained excluded from the rest of the society and, in many cases, they started to develop a parallel community in their neighbourhoods (Laurence, 2012). While, initially, Islamist organizations were integrated by a selective group coming from universities, since the 1980s, the process of expansion started by the political Islam led them to find new followers among Muslims living in Europe. During this time they came into contact with disadvantaged Islamic people who, in some instances, understood the proposals of political Islam as the proper way to get out of their complicated situation. In this respect, Islamist groups following the strategy implemented by other formations in North Africa and in the Middle East developed a complete social program aimed to help Muslims in different matters and to promote an Islamic culture across new generations (Castaño, 2013c). Thanks to this program the representatives of political Islam created a permanent link with the whole community expanding their ideology and their particular interpretation of Islam among all Muslims. In addition, their activism gave these groups a relevant impact on media, placing them in a prominent position to negotiate with authorities, becoming preferred interlocutors for the majority of national governments and for EU institutions (Silvestri, 2010b).

In the 1990s European governments understood that the presence of Islam in Europe should be interpreted as a reality within the European society, leading their policymakers to promote the integration of the Muslims in their countries through programs to institutionalize the practice of Islamic worship (Potz, Wieshaider, 2004). The attitude adopted by governments was moved to the EU authorities who initiated an approach to the religious minorities aimed to provide the European Union with a social component beyond the economic nature that for years had been dominating the integration process. However, in this attempt to approach Islam, the EU encountered the same problem that had hindered the institutionalization in the Member States (Ferrari, 2005), due to the absence of a supranational entity able to representing the interests of all Muslims, making the presence of Islam in religious forums of dialogue insignificant. To overcome this situation, the European Parliament tried to create an artificial Council composed by Islamic institutions, which following the Parliament criteria had greater recognition in their own countries. So in 1996 the Muslim Council for Cooperation in Europe (MCCE) was established in Strasbourg (Massignon, 2007), with the presence of some organizations related to the Islamist ideology, such as the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD) and the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (UCIDE). Nevertheless, and although this institution was long regarded as the main representative of Muslims in Europe, a large sector of Islamic people did not feel identified with this Council.

Once the MCCE started to work, it was included in “Soul of Europe” (European Commission, 2010), a EU project created to foster the dialogue with religious groups. This forum had been founded in 1994 but due to the absence of a representative body of Muslims, the Islamic religion was not represented until three years later. In the following years the Muslim Council for Cooperation in Europe continued being the main reference for the European institutions in initiatives launched from the Commission to promote contacts between the EU and religious communities (Tatary, 2008), like, for example, the “Biannual Briefing Sessions” promoted by Jacques Santer and the Group of Policy Advisors (GOPA), established under the presidency of Romano Prodi. However, since 2001 the prominence of the MCCE began to decrease as a consequence of the terrorist attacks performed by jihadist groups in Western countries (Acharya, 2013). Then, the election of José Manuel Durao Barroso as president of the European Commission
led several changes in the strategy developed by the EU to approach Islam. In this regard, Durão Barroso sought to broaden the representation of Muslims in Europe by trying to offer to various Islamic groups the opportunity to express their proposals in European Institutions. So, with the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA), the Commission intended to approach other Islamic supranational groups whose presence was consolidated in Europe (Silvestri, 2009).

In this way, due to the absence of supranational Islamic entities in Europe, the only option to expand the Islamic representation in the EU was limited to the conservative trends. Since the late 1980s these groups had started a process of internationalization with the creation of European organizations which at that moment responded to the demands expressed by Durao Barroso (Santostino, 2008). Therefore, the new situation allowed the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) to emerge as an ideal representative of Muslims in Europe. FEMYSO is an entity promoted in 1996 by FIOE and belongs to the informal network of the Muslim Brothers. This organization tried to provide a renewed image of political Islam in the West, far from the linkages presented by some senior members of the movement with Islamist movements in their home countries. Although FEMYSO has kept a formal independence from FIOE, their contacts have been continuous and both federations have maintained the same goals to advance islamization in Europe (Khan, 2013). In 2007, after observing the new position adopted by European Union towards Islam, FIOE chose to move its headquarters from Markfield in Great Britain to Brussels, seeking with this decision to increase its presence in European institutions (Merley, 2008).

From this moment the European political Islam tried to enhance its integrative character committed to European values by showing the pragmatic position that since its inception has characterized the Islamists (Sayeed, 2010). This attitude of being able to integrate Islam into the Community acquis was interpreted by the European authorities as an ideological evolution within political Islam and enabled organizations like FIOE and FEMYSO to reach a prominent position in the representation of Muslims in the EU (Hamid, Kadlec, 2010). However, various analysts have questioned the rapprochement of these groups to the European institutions, considering this stance as a strategy aimed to achieve the recognition of authorities (Vidino, 2010; Pargeter, 2010; Rubin, 2010). Actually, going back to the history of Islamist movements, it is reasonable to make this assertion because, since the very beginning, many of these associations have placed their short-term objectives over their ideological principles in order to advance their political ambitions. In this regard, they have developed a moderate discourse adapted to the need of European policymakers. Nevertheless, as several Islamist leaders have stated, the real goal of political Islam is to move forward into global islamization (Steinberg, Hartung, 2005), an assertion that has given rise to a controversial debate in which the existence of a double speak within European political Islam has been denounced (Fourest, 2004; Curtis, 2010). This polemic resulted in the emergence of two trends in the European society, defined by Lorenzo Vidino as optimists and pessimists (Vidino, 2010). The former group consider that the new generation of Islamists educated in Europe have adopted a commitment to democratic values and their goal is to integrate Islam in social and political structures. On the other hand, the latter, the pessimists, believe that the approach of Islamists to European values responds to a strategy addressed to place political Islam as the main interlocutor with institutions. To obtain this reward they use a discourse which is far from their real ideology.

Since the year 2000, in their wish to consolidate their hegemony in Europe, FIOE leaders began to work on the elaboration of a document intended to become a guideline for all European Muslims. This document tried to offer an integrative view of Islam that promoted the coexistence between the Muslim community and the rest of the European citizenship. The Muslims of Europe Charter (Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, 2002) was presented for the first time in Brussels in 2002 and had an excellent reception in the European Parliament. In this sense, it is convenient to emphasize the statements of Mario Mauro, the vice-president of the Parliament who said “The charter amounts to a code of good conduct for Muslims in Europe which commits them to taking part in building a united society (Kichler, Philips, 2008).” Thus, the text expressed a commitment to moving towards a multicultural society in which all beliefs could be represented. In respect of violence, it showed a total rejection to terrorist attacks. However, following the attitude adopted by the majority of Islamist organizations, the document justified the concept of defensive jihad used by Hamas in Palestine (Singh, 2011) and other insurgents groups in Iraq and Afghanistan. In sum, the goal of this Charter was to identify the European Islam with European values, moving away from the influence exerted by foreign Islamist trends and trying to get the recognition of Islam as a reality inside Europe. Actually, the influence of Arab Islamist organizations is still present, but the European Islamist entities refuse to state in public their belonging to any external movement, thus conserving their double speak.

The rapprochement of the EU to political Islam has found a critical response both in Muslim communities and in a large part of the European society who consider that Islamist movements represent a reduced percentage of Muslims in Europe (Marchal, 2008). The inclusion of these groups as one of the most influential interlocutors in the EU implies the evolution of European Islam toward the most conservative positions. Therefore, the tactic followed by European policymakers to approach Islam can give rise to two
interpretations; one related to the ignorance of European authorities towards the reality of Islam in Europe, and another that finds
the answer in the pragmatism shown by European leaders, who chose the easy way to solve the problem of the representation of
Islam in the EU, seeking the approximation to the most consolidated Islamic groups, despite the fact that they do not represent
all Muslims. Nevertheless, with this policy, European policymakers have prevented Muslims from being able to elect their own
representatives, leaving the negotiations about Islamic issues in the hands of conservative entities.

European Policy towards Southern Mediterranean Countries and the Exclusion of Political Islam

While political Islam in Europe managed to become a referent for various governments and for the EU institutions, the situation of
its sister organizations in the Arab world was very different, especially after the triumph of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria
in the early 1990s (Martinez, 1998). The presence of secular leaders in power in the majority of southern Mediterranean countries
relegated the Islamist issue to a secondary role, being excluded from public life. Nevertheless, the failure of these regimes added
to the relevant social work developed by moderate Islamist groups, led political Islam to obtain a significant presence in Arab
society. Since the 1970s, many of these organizations that in the past had been related to violent actions chose to abandon the direct
confrontation against governments and adopted a democratic discourse addressed to delegitimize totalitarian leaders (Khan,
2006). This new approach allowed them in the 1990s to appear as the most solid political opposition force.

For a long time the social support reached by political Islam was ignored, considering it was limited to a small percentage of
the population. However, the reality was far from the scenario showed by Arab governments, which in any case presented the
Islamist advance as a menace to democratic process in the Mediterranean (Behr, 2013), giving rise to a general rejection towards
this tendency both from the Arab rulers and the European leaders (El-Shobaki, Martin, 2010). Hence, as Timo Behr asserts:
“Islamist parties were observed by EU as essentialist, arguing that Islamic tradition is incompatible with the European concept
of democracy” (Behr, 2010). This position was confirmed with the rejection expressed by Hamas to the Oslo Accords (Ma'oz,
1999: Caridi, 2009). But beyond the possible involvement of political Islam into the democratic system, the European authorities
feared the Islamist presence in power structures could weaken their privileged position in the region. This situation led EU
policymakers to strengthen the cooperation with authoritarian governments in order to limit the presence of these movements in
the social and political arena. With this action Europe signed a tacit agreement with southern Mediterranean countries in which
Arab governments were committed to protecting the European interests in the region, while European leaders avoided interfering
in local affairs, giving the Arab rulers total freedom to restrict the political impact of the opposition groups (Archick, 2006). This
accord excluded moderate Islamist organizations, which sometimes were presented by Arab governments as the political wing of
the jihadist groups, creating a monolithic vision of this trend based on their anti-European stance and their willingness to end with
democratic regimes.

In 1995, the Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Barcelona took place in this context, which meant the launch of a new project from
the EU to promote ties with the Mediterranean countries (Vasconcelos, Joffê, 2000). On this occasion, after several failed attempts
to approach the Arab world, the European proposal sought to prioritize issues that had remained until then in the background,
offered a preferential space to social, political and cultural matters. These elements were placed at the same level of economic
issues that for years had dominated relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Despite all, European policies
remained focused on economic issues, stressing again the error of believing that an economic development would solve political
and social problems (Chorou, 2005). Therefore, the measures taken by the Member States of the EU were aimed to foster economic
liberalization, to ensure the free trade and to guarantee the good government in the region in its wish to achieve regional stability.
In this scenario Islamist forces were excluded from the North-South dialogue, and over a long period they were still regarded as a
threat to the stability of the zone and to the European interests in these countries.

The line of cooperation established by the European governments and the Arab leaders, led EU authorities to ignore the social
reality in Arab countries and to initiate a strategy for the Mediterranean that ignored the importance of an Islamist component in the
region. Meanwhile, in these years political Islam continued spreading its ideology among people, due to the inefficiency showed by
The situation created after September 11, and later in Madrid and London, led European leaders to start a new policy of approximation to Islam. This new approach evolved from the simplistic and alarmist view of Islamism towards a plural perspective in which Europe highlighted the presence of moderate forces inside this ideological trend (Emerson, Youngs, 2007). Following this theory, the Islamist presence in North Africa and in the Middle East was placed as a matter to be treated in the EU, at the same time as the European leaders tried to maintain their excellent relations with authoritarian rulers who still remained in power. Nevertheless, the threat of Islamic terrorism caused a shift within the European Union position toward political Islam in MENA. The first effort to rapprochement moderate Islamist groups was focused on promoting the dialogue in order to prevent the climate of confrontation in the Arab world. In this regard, Romano Prodi’s words, President of the European Commission during these years, should be noted: “We must avoid at all cost the association between terrorism and the Arab and Islamic world (European Commission, 2001)”. Based on the new EU approach to Islam, informal meetings among representatives of European governments and Islamist forces began to be held. These contacts were addressed to prepare the ground for a possible rise of these groups in the political arena. The attitude adopted by European leaders toward moderate Islam found an important influence in the policy pursued by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) after they came into power in Turkey (Behr, 2010). This triumph confirmed the theories developed by several analysts who argued the possible integration of Islamists in democratic systems (Esposito, Voll, 1996; Dalacoura, 2011). In this respect, the first proposal aimed to promote democracy in the southern Mediterranean was adopted within the framework of the Barcelona Process, after the meeting celebrated in Valencia in 2002 (Euromed, 2002). “Dialogue among Cultures” tried to revitalize the third basket of the process that sought an approximation to civil society, and meant the first step in the creation of The Anna Lindh Foundation. Then, based on the plan set out in Valencia, in April 2004 the foreign ministers of the EU meeting in Luxembourg presented an initiative to establish a formal dialogue with the Islamist opposition forces intended to foster democratic transition in the Mediterranean countries. The conclusions of this proposal were confirmed in the document signed in Brussels two months later with the name “Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East” (Assemburg, 2009).

Despite initial efforts, the proposal encountered many difficulties to find the necessary social and political involvement to advance in its goals (El-Shobaki, Martin, 2010), due to its unpopularity and the rejection extended among public opinion, especially after the recent inclusion of Hamas on the EU list of terrorist organizations. A year later the Council adopted the “European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism” (Council of European Union, 2005) in which it recognized the need to provide a political presence to moderate Islam forces as a counterbalance to the distorted vision of Islam extended by al-Qaeda and other radical formations. The European Parliament resolution of 10 May 2007, “Resolutions on reforms in the Arab World,” confirmed the willingness of the EU to move forward in the approach towards political Islam claiming that “the moderation of Islamism depends on both the stability of the institutional framework in which they evolve and the opportunities which the latter offers to influence policy-making” (European Parliament Resolution, 2007). Similarly, and outside the context of the European Union, the approach to Islamists was one of the central questions of the Alliance of Civilizations promoted by former Spanish President Jose Luis Rodríguez Zapatero.

Although the various initiatives launched from the EU institutions and the general recognition of the need to include representatives of Islamist forces in the negotiations with the Arab countries, these proposals were in any case reflected in concrete actions and the conversations of European leaders with Islamist groups always remained at an informal level. This position, reluctant to deepen in negotiations with Islamists forces, was confirmed after the victory of Hamas in 2006 (Brown, 2008), when the DG for External Relations (REFLEX) established a Task Force on Political Islam. The proposals arising from this project were not approved by the Council, which was influenced by popular sentiment raised as consequence of the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London and rejected the new strategy formulated by the Commission (VVA, 2011). This meant that in spite of the good intentions expressed by EU leaders to give voice to political Islam within official channels of negotiation, the real situation made that the Islamist presence was considered a menace because of the possible break of balance in the region. For this reason the
programmes promoted by the EU have remained on paper and were not implemented at any time. So, the line of approach to social issues in the Arab world has continued the former parameters and has been limited to civil society and secular actors (Behr, 2010).

In these circumstances, the approximation to Islamist groups has been focused on legalized groups such as the Justice and Development Party in Morocco or those in an ambiguous situation (Castaño, 2013a). In this sense we are considering those groups whose existence is acknowledged by political authorities and which are involved in social and political affairs, but prevented them from constituting themselves as political parties, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or the Algerian Islamist groups. Furthermore, it can be seen how the European authorities avoided producing a diplomatic conflict with Tunisian and Syrian governments, where both al-Nahda and the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood remained outlawed, the former until the Arab Spring, while the latter continues combating the government of Assad. Nevertheless, these contacts of the EU with Islamic institutions were not limited to national groups, but also to other supranational organizations as the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), whose contacts had already started in 1999. On the other hand, the absence of a previous evaluation and the existence of a contradictory position are relevant in the conversations established between EU representatives and Islamist groups. So, at the time of negotiating with these organizations, while Hizbullah has been accepted by several countries as a democratic force (Cidipal, 2013), since 2006 the negotiations with Hamas have been conditioned to the recognition of Israel and to the abandonment of weapons. These circumstances have generated a comparative grievance between these two formations which in recent years have maintained a structure composed by an armed wing and a political force (Assemburg, 2009).

Conclusion

The approach carried out by the EU towards European political Islam does not respond to the will to give Islamists a dominant role in the negotiations, but to the need to find a valid partner to advance the integration of Islam in Europe. These institutions defended their European character and showed a discourse committed to the EU values favoring their presence in the institutions. However, to understand the presence of FEMYSO and FIOE in Brussels, along with the requisite of finding a valid interlocutor, it is necessary to consider other factors like the organizational capacity presented by these groups or their conciliatory attitude. These conditions enabled them to respond to the requirements of the EU. Likewise, it is essential to mention the position taken by European leaders who, in some cases driven by ignorance and in others by pragmatism, granted the representatives of the conservative Islamic trends the responsibility to defend the interests of the Muslim community at several institutions.

On the other hand, the same moderate Islamic trend, which in Europe has become the main interlocutor with the institutions, appears in the Arab countries as the only political alternative to the totalitarian regimes that for decades had been ruling in the southern Mediterranean. In this regard, the anti-Western stance expressed by political Islam made European leaders afraid of the possible rise of Islamist groups that might endanger their position in the region. This concern prompted the creation of alliances with Arab rulers aimed to preserving the interests of both parts and to avoid the expansion of the moderate Islamist ideology. Nevertheless, European politicians were aware of the democratic deficit presented by these countries and the need to promote a shift towards democratization, which in most cases would give Islamist parties a leading role in the political life. Thus, since 2001, the European institutions and the governments of the Member States began an approach to these groups.

Thus, to answer the question raised, the contradictory position taken by the European Union towards political Islam, beyond considering that the EU has established a differentiation between European and Arab Islam, stands the strategic plan traced from the EU conditioned by the diverse contexts in which Islamist groups have had to develop their activities. So while in Europe its objectives remain focused on obtaining the recognition of Islam, in southern Mediterranean countries its major social support placed these formations as a proper option for social and political change. Therefore, the European authorities seek to protect firstly their interests in Europe, where they tried to attract Islamist groups for their cause in order to curb the social conflict caused by the Muslim presence. While in the Arab countries the privileged position reached by the European powers in this region led to strengthening of the alliances with totalitarian leaders better than giving prominence to Islamist groups. These organizations had expressed their opposition to the intervention performed by Western powers in internal matters, showing an attitude that could jeopardize the economic interests of the EU Member States in the area.
In this context, the EU has tried to ignore the social reality of these countries, seeking to prolong a situation that they knew would end up collapsing from its own weight. Thus, far from acting against Islamic groups, European leaders preferred to keep a tacit agreement with Arab totalitarian rulers. At the same time and far from the official channels, the relations between the EU and Arab Islamist groups have been happening over the past decade, confirming that the EU has not shown a systematic refusal towards political Islam. This rejection has been motivated by the EU particular interests in the region and the fear of a possible political change contrary to their position in the Mediterranean basin. Therefore, those circumstances have determined the policy of rapprochement carried out by the EU and its Member States with Arab countries.

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THE NEW SECURITY AND GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT
Lebanon and the “Arab Spring”
Alessandra Frusciante

The legend of the Cedar of Lebanon, as told by Grazia Deledda in her last collection of novels, says that Cedar trees flower for the first time after one hundred years. When her novel was published posthumously, in 1939, Lebanon had not yet gained its independence, but its national emblem, the Cedar tree, was already featured in the middle of all its former colonizers’ flags.

Thus, the Cedar tree, which is the national emblem and gave its name to Lebanon’s revolution in 2005, is a strong, resistant and long-lived plant that grows very slowly, but the events following the “Arab Spring” may make Lebanese people lose hope to see their future blossoming.

Lebanon, over the past fifty years, has experienced a long civil war (which was indeed an international conflict) and has been involved many times in Middle Eastern tensions. Nevertheless, public opinion and foreign affairs analysts were very enthusiastic about the first signs of the “Arab Spring”. On the one hand, they thought that the Arab uprisings originated and were inspired by the “Cedar revolution” which successfully ended a 30-year Syrian occupation; on the other, they considered Lebanon to be immune to events in the region.

The fall of two of the most long-lived dictators, Ben Ali and Mubarak, and the similar uprisings in the other Arab countries, made Lebanese people (and mainly international public opinion) hope that a forthcoming and inexorable process of democratization was starting in North African and Middle-Eastern countries, and Lebanese politicians tried to look at these new prospects with a positive but detached eye. But as the uprisings reached Syria, at the end of March 2011, the public debate in Lebanon became exacerbated and increasingly anxious, revealing to the world, once again, the weakness and precariousness of Lebanese national unity and institutions.

At this point in the story, it would be useful to take three steps back, to understand several important moments in Lebanon’s history. The first step takes us back to Ta’if (Saudi Arabia) in 1989, October 22nd, when the surviving members of Lebanon’s 1972 Parliament signed the “National Reconciliation Accord”. The agreement that successfully ended the Civil War and salvaged Lebanese national unity, which was in tatters, established the principle of mutual coexistence between the nation’s different sects (and their proper political representation) and restructured the National Pact political system by transferring some of the prerogatives from the Maronite Christian community to the Muslim one, to achieve an equal distribution of power.

In addition, the Ta’if Accord called for the establishment of special relations between Lebanon and Syria, laying the foundations for the Treaty of “brotherhood, cooperation, and coordination” signed by the two countries on May 22nd, 1991. This pact legitimized the Syrian military presence in Lebanon and stipulated that Lebanon would not constitute a threat to Syria’s security and that Syria was responsible for protecting Lebanon from external threats. In brief, it established a kind of protectorate in Lebanon exercised by Syria. In this way, with the international community’s compliance, a new period of peace and relative stability was launched (albeit with limited sovereignty), called “pax syriana”.

In this period, Lebanon was ruled by Rafik Hariri, a Sunni Muslim business tycoon, appreciated by Syria and supported by Saudi Arabia. Undoubtedly, Syrian protection had played an important part in Lebanon’s normalization but, at the same time, it had crystallized some complex issues inherited from the Civil War such as: Syrian military presence with 40,000 troops in the territory of Lebanon; Israeli military occupation of the South; demilitarization of Hezbollah; the thorny problem related to over 400,000 Palestine refugees in Lebanon, deprived of basic rights due to concerns about the potential disruption to Lebanon’s fragile sectarian balance caused naturalizing the mainly Muslim population.

The second step takes us back to New York, September 11th, 2001. Anti-Muslim radicalism and the implementation of a new United States strategy in the Middle East followed the attacks. The neo-conservatives, who were prominent in the Bush administration,
influenced US foreign policy goals which consisted in regime changes and democratization of the Middle East, even supported by US troops. In this new strategy, a strong Syria was no longer useful; Hezbollah, the Shi’a Islamic militant group with a paramilitary wing and political party fully integrated into the Cedar country’s democratic game, was added to the terrorist blacklist; and Syria, without appeal, was added by George W. Bush to the group of countries in the “axis of evil”, claiming its aim was to develop weapons of mass destruction. These acts started to undermine the precarious balance of power in Lebanon.

The third step takes us back to Beirut, February 2005, when the “Cedar revolution” took place. Rafik Hariri, former Lebanese prime minister in the early years of the 21st century, became the federator of the anti-Syrian parties and movements. After the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon, in May 2000, Syrian military occupation, (with its president Assad considered weaker and isolated by the international community) as perceived by most of the Lebanese people, was no longer admissible.

The Lebanese political scene has, since then, started to be gradually but deeply polarized. This polarization has given rise to two blocks, each of which had an across-the-board participation: on the one hand, the block against the Syrian military occupation and the paramilitary wing of Hezbollah; on the other, the block agreeing with Damascus Government influence and rejecting Western interference. The seemingly steady framework of the relations between Syria and Lebanon started to creak, and the international community began to take note of Lebanese affairs.

The US, in particular, was very dynamic: the “Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act” passed into law on December 12, 2003. The bill’s stated purpose was to end what the US saw as Syrian support for terrorism, to end Syria’s presence in Lebanon, to stop Syria’s alleged development of weapon of mass destruction. In addition, the US sponsored the United Nations Security Council resolution no. 1559, adopted on 2 September 2004, which called upon Lebanon to establish its sovereignty over all of its land and called upon “foreign forces” (Israel and Syria) to withdraw from Lebanon and to cease intervening in the internal politics of Lebanon. The resolution also called on all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias to disband.

The international pressures and the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, perpetrated on 14 February 2005, made the domestic political scene become more and more incandescent. Some days after, tens of thousands of Lebanese protestors held a rally at the site of the assassination calling for an end to Syrian occupation and blaming Syria and the pro-Syrian president Émile Lahoud for the murder. What we now know as the “Cedar revolution” got under way. Following the demonstrations, Syrian troops completely withdrew from Lebanon on 26 April 2005.

The process of polarization, which had already started, was reinforced. The schism in the Lebanese political and social scene gave birth to the “March 8th” (pro-Syrian) and the “March 14th” (anti-Syrian) blocks. The former was a coalition of various political parties including, at the beginning, Hezbollah, Amal, the Ba’ath Socialist Party and Syrian Social Nationalist Party. Then, although the Free Patriotic Movement, led by Michel Aoun, was the basis of the March 14th Alliance, in February 2006 it joined the rival March 8th Alliance, becoming one of its principal coalition partners; and, in 2011, also the Progressive Socialist Party, led by Walid Jumblatt, left the March 14 Alliance, giving the March 8th block the majority in the parliament.

The March 14th block mainly consists of the Sunni Muslims of Future Movement led by Saad Hariri, younger son of Rafik Hariri, and two Maronite forces: Lebanese Phalanges led by Amin Gemayel (who was killed in 2006), and the Lebanese Forces led by Samir Geagea.

In terms of political composition, there is an important distinction between the two blocks: the first mainly comprises Shi’a parties and movements and the second is mainly formed by Sunni ones. Moreover, both alliances have an across-the-board participation, considering the traditional sectarian divisions: in both there are Maronite, Armenian and Druze parties and in both Sunni and Shi’a minor parties coexist. This does not mean that a new “cleavage” (pro-Syrian/anti-Syrian) has completely replaced the traditional one (Christian/Muslim), exacerbated during the Civil War, but that the already complex Lebanese political scene has become increasingly problematic. The two new alliances do not have uncrossable boundaries and their lack of homogeneity must not be underestimated because it is in contrast with the traditional distribution of power based on confessionalism that from the 1943 “Gentlemen’s agreement” ruled the political scene in Lebanon.

It may also be useful to remember that the unique institutional system, while always considering confessional divisions, has always been keen (albeit less in this period) to conceal statistics about how many belong to each confessional community. In this context, Lebanon appears like a tightrope walker: it is always about to fall to its death, if there are external pressures, and has only its own strength and the unique institutional system as a tool to maintain its equilibrium and go on.
Until the Arab Spring blossomed, Lebanese politicians faced many internal and external challenges in a context of increasing violence that made them remember the Civil War years. Among the external challenges the most dangerous was certainly the Israel’s disproportional use of military force, in retaliation for the kidnapping of two soldiers perpetrated by some Hezbollah militants. After cross-border fighting between Israeli and Hezbollah forces, a real conflict broke out in July 2006, which severely damaged Lebanese civil infrastructure, and without the international diplomatic intervention, thanks to Italian initiative, it could have become a regional war with incalculable effects.

The internal challenges concerned the adjustment of the electoral system and how to distribute power in the light of changes in the Lebanese political system and the former protector Syria’s isolation and weakness in the international context. The anti-Syrian block won two important elections in 2005, after the Cedar revolution, and in 2009, after the Doha agreement that ended an 18-month political crisis in Lebanon, establishing a truce among the parties. But, in both terms of office, the March 14th Alliance, despite the Government of national unity, was unable to solve the main issues that were causing violence and instability.

In reality, several issues had compounded the already problematic situation, such as the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon by an agreement between the United Nations and the Lebanese Republic pursuant to Security Council resolution 1664 in 2006, for prosecution, under Lebanese law, of criminal acts of those responsible for the assassination of Rafik Hariri. Establishment of the Special Tribunal came under several criticism: the issue was even more divisive than Hezbollah’s militarization.

The first pronouncements, albeit non-definitive, implicated Hezbollah (supported by Syria), which provoked popular demonstrations and counterdemonstrations and the paralysis of the Government due to the boycott of the March 8th alliance ministers, until its final crisis on January 12th 2011.

That said, the Tribunal can be considered as an exceptional case in international law. For example, it was the only tribunal established ad hoc to try a crime of terrorism in Lebanese national law: this resulted in the hybrid quality of the court that allows the international community to give value to new laws but through the domestic means of a State. Moreover, in the case of Lebanon, the UN have ignored the domestic disagreement and constitutional impasse that was a result of the impending establishment of the Resolution 1757. Through the consequent enforcement, the UN has silently taken one side, which greatly harms the UN’s legitimacy and credibility to the opposing factions of the Lebanese political scene. Further, the Shi’a parties contested the fact that the Tribunal had high costs (more than 150 million dollars in three years, half of which was paid for by Lebanon) and a large number of employees, only 10 percent of whom were able to speak Arabic. In the end, Wikileaks disclosed some US diplomatic cables exposing backstage manoeuvres surrounding a UN investigation into the murder of Rafik Hariri, stoking new controversy around the probe.

When the opposition ministers announced their resignation on January 12th 2011, because prime minister Saad Hariri refused to reject the Special Tribunal, the Arab Spring wind has just started to blow. Thus, while in the rest of the Arab world, popular demonstrations made long-lived regimes fall in the name of freedom, justice and democracy, in Lebanon the two blocks re-opened their consultation to form a new government.

In this phase, Lebanese politicians avoided firing up local demonstrations with the aim of obtaining political advantages in the decision-making process. Indeed, they started getting worried about the incipient instability in Syria. In particular, Hezbollah, which held the balance of power, after five months of consultations made the other parties of the March 8th block agree to the nomination of Najib Mikati, Lebanese former prime minister in 2005 for three months, member of the National Assembly from 2009 elected in the March 14th Alliance before gradually distancing himself from its official political line.

The new government, with 18 ministries out of 30 given over to the March 8th Alliance, was one of the few, since the Ta’if Agreement, without the support of all parties. In other words, it was not a national unity government although the situation was perceived as a national emergency. In this phase Lebanese politicians, albeit continuing their normal dialectics between Majority and Minority, were determined to stay far away from their nearby Arab uprisings.

As long as the “Arab Spring” was perceived as a popular uprising against tyrannical and corrupted regimes, which seemed to be characterized by laity and inspired by western ideals, they had no real fear that Lebanon could have been involved. The Lebanese ruling class was truly worried only about Assad’s increasing difficulty in maintaining public order. The March 8th Government

38 Dayla Badran, *The Special Tribunal for Lebanon: Changing the Norms for the UN’s Security Council?*, Academia.edu, 2011.
took several steps to dissociate itself from any role in the Syrian crisis such as the decision to abstain from voting for Syria’s expulsion from the Arab League and to refuse to participate in the Friends of Syria conference.39

After the initial enthusiastic welcome from international public opinion, in the second half of 2012, after the Arab Spring a long winter came, metaphorically speaking. The conflict between democracy and tyranny got gradually but relentlessly confessionalized and turned into a conflict between Sunni and Shi’a Muslim and between their foreign sponsors, respectively: Gulf petro-monarchies (led by Saudi Arabia and Qatar) and the Iranian Government.

There are two main strategic objectives that the players involved in this tragic game are striving towards: the first is to invert confessional discriminations (that, for example, Shi’a adepts suffer when living in a Sunni majority country and vice-versa); and the second is to obtain access to the huge oil and gas fields off-shore, located in the Levant basin which covers the territorial waters of Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Cyprus. The natural gas reserves are estimated to be about 17 trillion cubic feet and it is said that the fields contain 600 million barrels of oil beneath the gas layer. Lebanon is exactly in the eye of the storm where an illusory calm, when everything around is in turmoil, is destined soon to disappear.

In this context, the two Lebanese blocks, which are only based on recognition or rejection of Syria’s special relationship with their country, seem unable to contain the damage. In addition, Christian, lay, socialist and liberal forces have been progressively marginalized. In particular, the main Christian forces are experiencing an identity crisis: General Aoun, traditionally anti-Syrian, find himself defending Assad’s regime against the “Zionist plot”, while Samir Geagea, who stands for Christian isolationism, find himself attending, together with Salafi militants, the anti-Syrian manifestations.

During 2012, the main communities did not seem to want to arrive at the point of no return. Especially Hezbollah, whose paramilitary wing would be able to make the Lebanese Armed Forces surrender, at first strongly avoided being involved in clashes in confessionally mixed areas. As the months passed, foreign responsibilities in destabilization surfaced and Lebanon became increasingly strategic as a logistic, military and financing base for both factions. It is difficult to say how significant the contribution of each community is to its external sponsor.

Another indicator of how the situation has heated up is the decision made by the National Assembly on May 31st 2013 to postpone elections until November 2014. This 17-month extension is the first time parliament has lengthened its mandate since the Civil War. It comes after two months of failed negotiations over a new electoral law, along with prime minister designate Tammam Salam’s inability to form a Government.

Hezbollah’s earlier self-control has counted for nothing, because now the Shi’a militants are deeply involved in the Syrian Civil war, fighting together with Assad’s army. After a long period in which loyalist troops have been in trouble, at the end of June 2013 they recaptured, with the help of Hezbollah, the strategic town of Qusayr about 35 kilometres south of Homs, situated in a mountainous area overlooking Syria’s border with Lebanon which lies 15 kilometres to the southwest. This conquest was important mainly for two reasons: it is a strategic area with industries, refineries, oil and gas pipelines, and it also represents the definitive involvement of Lebanon in the Syrian epilogue, whatever that may be.

In this context the conclusive issue for Lebanon is not whether or not to free themselves of the Syrian “protectorate”, because its influence will go on even if the rebels win, but whether to take the side of Iran or the Gulf Petro-monarchies and their western allies, or the side of a Sunni or Shi’a pan-Islamism.

Unfortunately Lebanon is “constitutionally” unable to choose. Its roots can only anchor the Cedar’s country to the ground and support it. Thus, as its history has shown, others will choose its destiny.

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Sectarianism and State Building in Lebanon and Syria
Bilal Hamade40

Introduction

Sectarianism has become a constant in debates about state building and democratization efforts in the Arab world. In the Levant area these debates are most evident in Lebanon and in Syria.

Lebanon is infamous for its sectarian political system that constantly breaks down, the political elites and parties claim to have accepted the need to abolish sectarianism from state affairs but are struggling to do so, given the domestic and regional complexities. In Syria, the regime promoted and benefited from a mutant version of a secular national identity yet some of the opposition is using the sectarian card to mobilize Sunni support inside and outside Syria, both of which undermine the emergence of a civic national identity that is hoped to be attained as a result of the crisis. Meanwhile, the conflict is becoming more protracted. This will consequently affect the emergence of a national identity built on civic participation with the absence of trust, confidence and consensus on all levels, elitist and populace. This paper analyzes the implications of sectarian rhetoric and practices on state building and national identities in the Levant area by using comparative approach to sectarianism in Lebanon and Syria. Following that, an analysis of the best political systems to deal with the sectarian divide in both Lebanon and Syria will be presented, ending with recommendations to help these two countries transition to a system of civic democracy.

“rather than Iraq, it could be Syria that ends up collapsing…Syria is but a Levantine version of the former Yugoslavia-without the intellectual class which that other post-Ottoman state could claim at the time of its break-up (since Hafez al-Assad's rule was so much more stultifying than Tito's). In Syria, as in the former Yugoslavia, each sect and religion has a specific geography…As President Bush humiliates Assad's son-and-successor into weakness, will Syria become a larger version of Civil War-era Lebanon?”

(Robert D. Kaplan, March 20, 2005, Opinion Journal)

Reading Mr. Kaplan's analysis, one cannot but admire his piercing view anticipating in 2005 what's happening in Syria today. Sectarianism is on the rise and old communal antagonisms resurfaced. Sectarian clashes, targeting and kidnappings, as well as internal displacement of people on sectarian basis attest to this reality. Adversely both sides of the conflict, the regime and the opposition, deny any sectarian label to their struggle against the other. Indeed, the regime refers to opposition militants as terrorists, while opposition members refer to the regime as tyrannical and illegitimate.

In reality, religious/sectarian tensions have reached alarming proportions throughout the country. A considerable portion of minorities such as the Christians, Druze, Alawites, as well as Sunni secularists and loyalists are supporting the regime in fear of the “Islamist threat”. A threat that is real and exploited by the regime to garner support. On the other hand, Islamist factions of the opposition and many of their allies are also using the sectarian card to mobilize supporters inside and outside Syria. So far, they were very successful in doing so by highlighting the Alawite identity of the regime which inflames Sunni sensitivities inside and
outside Syria. Both camps are competing over the largest group, the undecided ones; those living an identity crisis compounding nationalism, religious identity, secular orientations, and pan-Arabism.

To reformulate Kaplan’s question has Syria become a larger version of civil war Lebanon? The Syrian conflict is definitely acquiring all the characteristics of a civil war, as described by the United Nations. The two countries do share demographical, religious, and geopolitical communalities.

However where they differ is in their approach to sectarianism. Lebanon has always had an open and clear dialogue on sectarianism between its communities. Even though this dialogue tended to turn violent at certain junctures in history, it still happened. It was out in the open and communities were outspoken about their fears and ambitions. In Syria this did not happen but the recent conflict helped bring out underlying sectarian tensions hundreds of years old. Moreover, no matter what the outcome of the conflict is, the post conflict authority has to deal with the sectarian issue.

Consequently, will the political mobilization against the decade long authoritarian practices lead to an integrative and civic version of national identities or will it give way to populist, sectarian, and radical forms of identity politics? And how will that affect the nature of the state to come?

To try and answer these questions, this paper will adopt a comparative approach that analyzes political systems and sectarianism in both Lebanon and Syria. This will allow the identification of transferable aspects and experiences that regulate the relations of sects with the state amidst the severe sectarian divide present in both countries. Theories of primordial and instrumental political identity will be introduced in the second chapter to analyze sectarianism in the Levant area. The third chapter will discuss consociationalism, a power sharing system for deeply divided societies, its shortcomings and benefits in the Lebanese context. The integrationist model will also be introduced as an alternative system that can advance civic democracy in both Lebanon and Syria.

**Sectarianism in the Levant**

“The sectarian spirit; adherence or excessive attachment to a particular sect or party, esp. in religion; hence often, adherence or excessive attachment to, or undue favouring of, a particular ‘denomination’”

Sectarianism as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary- (OED 1989).

Until recently, national identity in the Levant area has rarely been associated with sectarianism, except in Lebanon of course. However, with the developments that followed September 11 and the Iraq invasion, sectarian identities have become more and more politicized. Warnings about the “Lebanonization” of Iraq or “Lebanonization” of Syria grew louder- Lebanonization here refers to the process whereby the countries rediscover and institutionalize their sectarian identities and differences, after long periods of secular, or seemingly secular, authoritarian rule.

After all Lebanese sectarianism has its roots in the Arabic culture as Hanna Kassis argues. He traces sectarianism back to the concept of *Asabiya* (a spirit of kinship), predominantly existent in the Arab world. *Asabiya* suggests a relationship based on “paternal consanguinity” but was later on modified by the institution of Wala’a, meaning loyalty, which extended the solidarity of the group beyond the confines of a blood relationship (Kassis 1985, 217).

The progression of the Asabiya, which is based on a blood relationship, to Wala’a (loyalty) is similar to Weber’s view where he perceives ethnic groups as the product of a belief in a shared social narrative.

Ethnic groups are those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type of blood or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for group formation; furthermore it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists.

(As cited in Zenonas 2004)
The connection between Kassis’s and Weber’s positions is reflective of the similarity shared by ethnic and sectarian groups all over the world as they are both the product of politicized social identities. Moreover, many debates within ethnic studies are very similar to those on sectarianism. One key debate that is particularly beneficial to this research concerns the instrumentality or the primordiality of social identity.

The primordialist theory considers ethnicity as deeply affective and emotional; it has a coercive nature for individuals. Primordialists perceive ethnicity as ontological and essentialist. As a result, ethnicity defines the actors and their actions. In contrast, the instrumentalist theory views ethnicity as a social construct produced by historical forces. In Bruce Berman’s words, instrumentalist ethnicity is “…political, contingent, situational, and circumstantial” (Berman 1998, 309). Pressing beyond the anthropological differences, Thomas Hylland Eriksen presents a more socio-political view on the matter. Eriksen argues that the differences between groups are relative to the importance given to the cultural differences between them. He presents four typical variations of politicized ethnic groups: urban ethnic minorities, indigenous people, proto-nations, and ethnic groups in plural societies. The most relevant group for this research is the last one, ethnic groups in plural societies. The plural societies referred to here designate colonially created states with culturally heterogeneous populations. The groups in these countries consider themselves highly distinctive because they usually do not have the option of secession; in this case, ethnicity tends to be articulated as group competition (Eriksen 1993, 12-14).

In Lebanon, sectarianism has historically been dealt with as primordial, both by the Lebanese and the foreign powers. Starting in 1841, The Ottomans designed a political system based on their view of the peoples of Mount Lebanon. They saw them as almost ontologically tribal, seditious, sectarian and conflict-seeking (Makdissi, 2000, 85). Accordingly, they introduced the first sectarian-based political and administrative system that institutionalized communalism: Nizam al- qa’immaqamiyas (The system of the two districts), this set the basis for the Mutassarifiya system in 1860. In Syria, the Ottomans viewed the Sunni Muslims as their subjects and they dealt with other minorities differently. While they gave the Christians and Jews their rights under the Millet system, they persecuted the Alawites and Ismailies. The Druze were given special status and a form of autonomy.

With the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I the new colonial powers used a divide and conquer strategy. Grand Syria was geographically divided and the modern states of Lebanon and Syria were created. They also empowered the minorities, for example, they gave Alawites and Druze their own local governments in Syria, while in Lebanon they gave many privileges to the Catholic Maronites, and helped the Shiites community form into an institutionalized sect. Under the French administration the Lebanese wrote their constitution based on a purely primordial view of sectarianism and hence instituted the Lebanese confessional system. These strategies were aimed at weakening the nationalistic pan-Arab sentiments and rhetoric at the time against foreign occupation and to weaken the biggest bloc: the Sunni Arabs.

In the Postcolonial period, Lebanon and Syria experienced different trajectories when it comes to sect-state relations. The political current in Syria was nationalistic and the rhetoric transcended all sectarian differences succeeding in unifying all the Syrians. This, however, was followed by a series of political turmoil that only ended by the accession of Hafez al-Assad to power in 1970. Coming from a minority, the Alawites, Assad played very smart politics. He fully adopted and propagated the pan-arab secular rhetoric, established excellent relations with business classes in Damascus and Aleppo, and created famously ruthless police and intelligence agencies. Surrounding himself with Alawite and Sunni loyalists, he made sure to silence any sectarian objection to his rule, see the Hama massacre in 1982. Despite the relatively better position of the Alawites under Hafez al-Assad compare to the era of the ottomans and the French, they were still one of the poorest communities in Syria, and still are until today. The privileges given to his close clique had more to do with forming a trusted junta than advancing a sectarian cause. Bashar al-Assad however was not as smart as his father in disallowing his competitors to exploit the sectarian card. The discourse used by Islamist forces in Syria today mainly concentrates on this point and uses it to mobilize Sunni Arabs and non-Arabs.

In postcolonial Lebanon, the confessional system started to endure internal and external pressure. The first breakdown of the system happened in 1958 when, disagreeing over policies regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, the leftist forces mainly Muslims, and Right wings mainly Christians soon clashed. The turmoil lasted for more than 15 years before the big explosion in 1975 that marked the beginning of a bloody civil war in Lebanon. With the war ending in 1990, the Lebanese agreed about the importance of abolishing sectarianism from their system and set it as a clause in the constitution. No advancement has been made about this so far and presently the country still suffers from the same divisions affected mainly by state policies regarding external affairs, including the Arab-Israeli conflict, Iranian American rivalry, Hezbollah’s arms, and lately the Syrian crisis.
The Syrian regime has benefited from its secular mutant identity to prolong its autocratic rule. The Assads have endorsed, and at many junctions exploited, Pan-Arab causes and rhetoric to justify their practices. Before the start of the Syrian crisis, Bashar al-Assad ranked amongst the most popular political figures in the Arab world in different polls. The secularization policies applied in Syria by the Assads to maintain their rule had a direct impact on the fabric of the Syrian society. The civil war has severely damaged the national identity in Syria as much as it did to the economy and infrastructure. Although different in some respects, this is very similar of what Lebanon endured throughout its history. What we might be witnessing in Syria is the formation of a protracted social conflict, Lebanese style.

From the unfolding of events in Syria, it seems that any post-conflict authority has to comfort sects. Inclusion in the state will be definitely one of the options. Therefore, the section below will present the two systems that provide such accommodation; one is based in the consociational theory and the other in the integrationist theory. Since Lebanon has had and continue to have a consociational political system based on sectarianism, it will be presented below to assess its pros and cons, and thereafter of the possibility of it being implemented in Syria.

Power-sharing Systems in the Levant

Up until the breakout of the civil war in 1975, Lebanon was regarded to some extent as a successful model of “consociational democracy,” a term coined by Arendt Lijphart in 1968 to describe systems that use negotiated democracies to deal with deep divides within society. The consociational theory has evolved immensely over the years, and has been reshaped by criticism as well as facts. By 1999, the characteristics of consociational democracy were nine: (1) executive power sharing in broad coalition cabinets; (2) executive-legislative balance of power; (3) multiparty system; (4) proportional representation; (5) interest group coalitions; (6) federal and decentralized government; (7) strong bicameralism; (8) constitutional rigidity; and (9) central bank independence (Lijphart 1999, 34-41).

These characteristics can be an indicator of a successful consociational system, if coupled with favourable conditions. These conditions have changed over time. Michael Kerr has concisely stated them as follows: socioeconomic equality; external threats that will unify the population; overarching loyalty to the state; segmental isolation; small population size; small number of segments; elite tradition; and no majority segments (2006, 27-28).

Some of the characteristics of consociational system can be found in Lebanon, such as executive power sharing in broad coalition cabinets, executive-legislative balance of power, multiparty system, and central bank independence. The other characteristics - interest group coalitions; federal and decentralized government; strong bicameralism; (8) constitutional rigidity- are missing. As for the favourable conditions, most of them are rarely found within Lebanon. External threats usually divide the population, the loyalty to the state is weak, and the number of segments is large in proportion to the small size of the population. Hence, the favourable conditions argument is heavily critiqued since these conditions can be present or absent, dispensable or indispensable, important or unimportant, depending on the particular situation (As cited in Van-Schendelen 2008, 19).

The confessional system, consociationalism in its Lebanese version, links representation in the state to religious affiliation. The controversy surrounding this form of political system revolves around its sustainability: How could it be the best system of governance if it continuously breaks down? On the other end of the spectrum, however, a realistic question poses itself: What is the alternative? Is the confessional system not the most practical system for such a complex and deeply divided society? The following section lays out the debate surrounding these questions and explores the foundations of the confessional system.
The Lebanese Confessional State

In deconstructing the Lebanese sectarian system, the relationship of the state to the sects must be reassessed. Michel Chiha’s sigha (formula) had dominated the political and intellectual spheres during Lebanon’s first republic under colonial rule. Michel Chiha, considered the engineer of the 1926 Lebanese constitution, advocated a formula along the motto La diversité est notre destin, “Diversity is our destiny.” Chiha had a primordial perception of communal and sectarian identity, a perception from which he argued that Lebanon is a “unique” country, where various groups can peacefully coexist. He attempted to find a middle ground between Muslims who were calling for secession from the newly created state of Grand Lebanon and the Maronite Christians advocating for their Phoenician heritage (Firro 2003). This vision served as the basis of the constitution and the state. The invented concept of a “unique” Lebanon had automatically “ideologized” and sanctified the system of governance. It became taboo to question it after this point (Amel 1985, 16).

Sects were viewed as independent entities in Modern Lebanon. Consequently, they became micro-states. Rabatt proposes that religious ethnicities grew to become the identity of the country’s inhabitants. The relationship between the state and the sects has become one of mutual nurturing; the sectarian state cannot stand without the agreement of its sects, and the sects need the recognition of the state. Antoine Masarrah defends this view, saying that the state is an arbitrator that organizes the relationship between different sects. In Lebanon, the state has become subservient to the sects. It is a balancing tool, ensuring each sect receives its fair share in the resources of the country (Firro 2003, 45-46).

Mehdi Amel, a Lebanese Marxist intellectual, has responded to this by raising many questions about the nature of this balancing act that Massara talks about, and how it is achieved. Is it a balance of equality between the sects? Is it a balance in participation? Furthermore, does participation mean equality? Is this even possible to achieve? Does failure to achieve this disable the role of the state? How can the state implement equality between the sects if, in itself, the state is nothing but an arena where sectarian forces compete? In order to achieve this balancing role, is the state supposed to be above and far removed from sectarianism? Is the state supposed to be away from sectarian control, so that it is in a neutral position when mediating sectarian relationships (Amel 1985)?

Amel does not view al-ta’ifa (the sect) as an entity. Rather, it is “…a political relationship determined by a certain historical form of the class struggle which is controlled by the bourgeoisie in the political absence of its class alternative” (Amel 1985, 275). He continues to argue that as long as the state has a sectarian identity, as is the case currently, it will fail to produce a balance of equality or participation. What it will achieve will be an illusionary balance, a hegemonic balance, where one sect dominates the uncontested Lebanese sigha (formula). Indeed, this was the case ever since the creation of Modern Lebanon. Before and shortly after 1945, the Maronites and the Sunnis were the hegemonic sects. It can be argued that the Shiite sect is the dominant one today, especially since Hezbollah (the main Shiite party) has a particularly influential military wing, and has become a major regional player.

Within Lebanon, both nationalism and sectarianism are seen as two contradictory concepts. As Alex Havemann states, “…[i]n Lebanon, confessionalism and nationalism (ta’ifiyya wal qawmiyya) are the two determinants or opposite poles for viewing, writing and approaching history” (Havemann 2002, 50). In the same respect, the influential historian Kamal Salibi wrote a book called House of Many Mansions, wherein he argues that “…the religious communities in Lebanon were essentially tribes, or in any case behaved as tribes, and the game that came to be played between them was a tribal game” (Salibi 2003, 55).

Many other writers have perceived sectarianism as a ‘stain’ on the forehead of the nation. Ussama Makdissi suggests that there is a whole historiography that can be generated on that topic alone. In a way, the binary logic between sectarianism and nationalism became a part of the political culture of the country (Makdisi 2000, 6). Indeed, Lebanese society seems unresolved towards its reality; on one hand, the Lebanese despise and complain about sectarianism, while on the other hand, they do very little to abandon a way of life infested with sectarian practices. Concerning this, Jamal Nassar wonders whether expanding unrest with Lebanon’s sectarian culture will eventually lead to its demise; and subsequently, the country can adapt a secular culture. Or, perhaps, is it doomed to remain confessional (Nassar 1995, 3-4).

Muhlbacher argues that the Lebanese national identity is still in process, as Lebanon has achieved a considerable “sense of nation -hood” based on a shared feeling of belonging that has been nurtured by the country’s active civil society, its democratic history
compared to its Arab neighbours, and its power-sharing apparatus. She suggests that the best way to reformulate this national identity is by starting at the grassroots level, by separating sectarianism from political consciousness (Muhlbacher 2009, 444).

The views on the essence of the Lebanese identity influence how scholars perceive the Lebanese political system. Those who advocate the possibility of creating a Lebanese nationality separated from sectarianism usually are very critical of the current system. Mullbacher, for example, has described Lebanon’s consociational democracy as an “oxymoron.” She argues that the consociational system, which was supposed to bring democracy through power-sharing, ended up preserving the old confessional structure, especially after 1990. Moreover, it has also failed to create a common public sphere, and until very recently, a considerable portion of the population has boycotted the elections under Syrian tutelage (Muhlbacher 2009, 419).

Moreover, El-Husseini explains that despite fifteen years of civil war and a new constitutional pact, the Lebanese system has not experienced substantial change. The only change brought about was at the elite level; the old elite composed of notables, landlords and professionals was now replaced by warlords, entrepreneurs, Syria’s clients, and military personnel that are all identified and supported by their respective sects (El-Husseini 2004, 261).

It is the external factors that play a core role in some scholars’ arguments. Seaver argues that “…[c]onsociational failure is a product of inauspicious regional factors and turbulent regional systems. Although consociational failure stems from the cessation of elite consensus, regional factors represent important antecedent variables that contribute to elite dissonance and ultimately regime collapse” (Seaver 2000, 10). On the other end of the spectrum, Marie-Joelle Zahar argues that the external factors have been a stabilizing factor within the Lebanese system. Without this factor, the country bears witness to instability and political turmoil (Zahar 2005, 219). Michael Kerr examines the systems of governance both in Northern Ireland and Lebanon and concluded that the success or failure of the system is dependent on “…the maintenance of the positive exogenous variables.” He contends that if Lebanon stays in the focus of the Arab-Israeli conflict, these variables will continue to be susceptible to manipulation, and thus lead to instability (Kerr 2006, 261).

Although the aforementioned observations are historically valid to a large extent, they are merely descriptive of the reality and fail to provide any solution that can weaken the effects of regional tensions on Lebanon. Alienation in the country’s foreign policy has been tried before; it rarely succeeded and led to civil wars both in 1958 and 1975; it is being retried today in dealing with the Syrian crisis and the results do not look promising. In a volatile area such as the Middle East, exogenous variables change continuously; therefore, it is unrealistic to depend on them to bring favourable conditions to ensure stability or good governance. Henceforth, it becomes necessary to look inwards to find permanent fixes for the political system.

Politicized sectarianism is regarded here as an essential component of the problem. It leads to social fragmentation, reinforces the patron-client network, and finally, empowers external patronage of political elites and parties. In Mullbacher’s words, “…if pluralism and democracy remain discordant, consociationalism is likely to become another version of oligarchic elite cartels” (Muhlbacher 2009, 179). Hence, having a true pluralistic society, and not a fragmented one, can facilitate the functioning of any democracy, even if it is designed around consociationalism. Of the solutions presented to do so, depoliticizing sectarianism (i.e., abolishing sectarianism from state affairs) seems to be the most advocated by scholars. However, their opinions differ on implementation, and they range from slow gradual transition to full-scale secularization.

Michael Hudson, a proponent of the second view, suggests that Lebanon’s precarious political system can only be resolved by transitioning from the present consociational sectarian model to a full-fledged secular democracy (Hudson 1976). However, he does not tackle the difficulties that this proposal raises, and there are many. The most recent example was the organization of protests by civil society activists to contest socioeconomic disparity and calling for the abolishment of sectarianism from state affairs. Inspired by the Arab Spring, the protestors roamed the streets of Beirut on different occasions in 2011. The biggest rally gathered almost 6,000 people. They called for the introduction of civic law in the personal status laws and the legislation of civic marriage. The movement refused to be supported by any sectarian party and lost momentum after a short while. Observers argued that the reason for the movement’s decline is its broad demands, which Lebanese society cannot accept or adapt towards too quickly (Moaddel, Kors, and Gärde 2012).

Amongst the scholars defending a gradual transition is Tamirace Mullbacher, who argues that the remodelling of consociationalism can lead to secularism. In order to achieve that, various institutional mechanisms can be enacted to weaken the stiffness of confessional politics and instigate a cross-communal culture that will eventually lead to secularism (Muhlbacher 2009, 443). These types of solutions are at the core of the integrationist theory, another power-sharing theory that advocates integration as
opposed to Lijphart’s accommodation. The following section will highlight key elements of integrationist theory that will be used later as a comparative tool to assess the progress made in Lebanon, in the way of abolishing sectarianism from state affairs.

The Integrationist Theory

The integrationist theory is founded upon five integrative conflict-regulating practices in a society: 1) creating a mixed, or non-ethnic, federal structure; 2) establishing an inclusive, centralized unitary state; 3) adopting majoritarian but ethnically neutral, or non-ethnic, executive, legislative, and administrative decision-making bodies; 4) adopting a semi-majoritarian or semi-proportional electoral system that encourages the formation of pre-election coalitions (vote pooling) across ethnic divides; and 5) devising “ethnic-blind” public policies (Sisk 1996).

Integrationists, in general, promote centripetalism, a term coined by Donald Horowitz, which is a connotation of “convergence” and “bringing together”; centripetalism encourages vote pooling electoral systems that weaken the “tyrannical practices” of majority-rule institutions in favour of moderate ethnic politicians, who might be able to reach for other communities. Therefore they oppose proportional representation systems that encourage ethnic partisanship (Mcgarry and O’leary 2008, 53).

Both Lijphart and Horowitz agree that the Westminster competitive models of democracy cannot be applied to deeply divided societies, due to the exclusion it might bring. They also refuse the concept of assimilation. In contrast, the two influential scholars disagree fundamentally on solutions as to the best system of governance in these societies, since Horowitz promotes integration and Lijphart promotes accommodation (Choudhry 2008, 18). As was suggested before, the consociational model or group building-block (Lijphart) relies on accommodating the ethnic group leaders and a high group autonomy; on the other hand, integrative democracy aims at creating incentives for political leaders and the people at the same time, to push them towards more moderate positions on decisive ethnic themes, which empowers the minority influence in major decisions. Lijphart promotes a language of pluralism but with a consociational orientation and its desire to “share, diffuse, separate, divide, decentralize, and limit power” (Sisk 1996, X).

Horowitz sees Lijphart’s view on consociationalism and the promotion of a proportional representation system as strengthening ethnic identities, when what divided societies really need is more moderation. The other major difference between the two theories is in the way they perceive the citizen and his or her relation to the state. Lijphart’s view is of a pluralist democracy, where multiple identities should be accommodated in a constitution, and hence shape the form of this institution. On the other hand, Horowitz and his followers look at the whole concept of multiple identities in a suspicious way as undermining the democratic legitimacy of the constitution (Sisk 1996, 658-659).

The two views, integrationist and accomodationist, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Richard Pildes observes that when social identities are seen in a static and primordial way, they limit the options for innovation in constitutional design. He argues that in times of crisis, when people are mostly attached to their identities, any integrationist solution will seem unrealistic. However, accommodationist power-sharing obstructs the move towards a civic democracy. He continues by saying that even though “...integrationist approaches are most likely to fail at moments of state formation, accommodationist approaches often mitigate against longer-term integration” (Pildes 2008, 174). In the same vein, McGarry and O’Leary suggest that accommodation and integration are best employed in relatively different environments. Accommodation is suitable in places where minorities are in large groups and territorially concentrated, while integration is more suitable where there is cross-cutting cleavages between minorities that are small and territorially dispersed (Mcgarry and O’Leary 2008).

Civil war in Lebanon has created some homogenous neighborhoods and villages between Christians and Muslims. However, mixed neighbourhoods are still present, especially in big cities, such as Beirut. Moreover, the division in Lebanon has become political and cross-sectarian. The deepest cleavage today is between Sunnis and Shiites. The two sects enjoy considerable interactions with...
a relatively high level of intermarriages and cohabitation. Any future conflict that puts those two sects on opposite sides will have the same effects as the sectarian war in Iraq with one difference: Lebanon is only 10,452 square kilometers shared by 19 sects; if federalism or separation is to happen, it will have to be at the neighbourhood level.

Consequently, the most realistic solution for the Lebanese conundrum is a power-sharing system that establishes a strong civic identity instead of empowering minority leaders. Such a system can be found in the integrationist model, which weakens sectarianism through cross-sectarian cooperation and national integration. This has to happen gradually to avoid undercutting the rights of the minorities. Therefore, the confessional system, which guarantees those rights, has to be dismantled cautiously to ensure a smooth transition.

**Conclusion**

The confessional system in Lebanon was initially formed to manage the relationships of the nation's multisectarian society. However, perceiving the sectarian identity as primordial and “unique” compelled the founding fathers in Lebanon to choose a system that enforces sectarian identities over a strong national identity.

Lebanese nationalism has been tested at various junctures throughout the country’s postcolonial history. On a few occasions, the Lebanese have found security in embracing their national allegiance over sectarian ones. On many other occasions, however, this was not the case. In the absence of a unified view on the country’s national interest, the sects aligned themselves to external countries and projects, which perpetuated sectarian clashes.

The indicators of change do not look promising. The same confessional system persists, and sectarian tensions are extremely high. Nevertheless, preliminary discussions in parliament concerning the abolishment of sectarianism and the introduction of a proportional electoral system can be seen as steps towards a more integrationist political model.

The Lebanese experience does not bode well as a model example of political systems in deeply divided societies. However, with Syria’s civil war generating its own protracted social conflict dynamics, the Lebanese experience can prove valuable in a post-conflict Syria. Consociationalism can offer a temporary solution in a country embroiled in conflict such as Syria. It can guarantee representation of different groups in the state institutions.

However, a consociational system based on sectarianism is only a temporary solution. It can serve as a transitional phase where trust in between communities and between communities and the state is re-established, and the social fabric is carefully rebuilt. Otherwise, a consociational system in a sectarian environment, have the potential of entrapping the political and social life in a circle of clientalism, sectarian allegiances, and external patronage. Symptoms that are starting to become more apparent in Syria today. Subsequently, integrative policies such as proportional representation electoral system can be gradually introduced. Such policies have the potential to limit power monopoly by sectarian leaders, as well as political currents.

Whatever is the outcome of the war where there’s no state collapse, the post-war authority has to find mechanisms to accommodate vulnerable groups of the society. The shape and nature of these accommodations will depend largely on the ideological orientations of forces that will take over the power in Damascus. With the presence of so many different currents in the Syrian opposition, it is hard to determine the nature of the new Syrian state. Nevertheless, whichever group that takes over has to deal with the sectarian problem through institutional and constitutional design. If anything good comes out of this conflict will be an honest dialogue between the Syrians about their fears and aspirations.

**References**


Civil-Military Relations in North African Countries and Their Challenges
Mădălin-Bogdan Răpan

Abstract

In the context of social and political transformations that are taking place in North Africa, the analysis of civil-military relations becomes a priority, taking into account that these represent an important factor for defining the pattern of force used by the state.

The path of these countries towards democracy raises many questions, such as: which role will be played by the military in the political sphere, will the system of civil-military relations be built up on principle of shared responsibility, may there be developed an institutional mechanism of democratic control over the armed forces?

The paper focuses on conceptual and theoretical framework in the problematique of civil-military relations, emphasizing, by using a comparative analysis, the role of military in the internal politics in North African countries in the post-colonial period. It also analyses the way in which the military was involved in recent social movements and the challenges that transition to democracy will bring in developing future civil-military relations.

Involvement of the military in politics differs from a country to another, depending on the way in which political elite designs the role and the position of those within the society. In North African countries under authoritarian regimes, there could be observed a strong connection between political leadership and the military.

Introduction

Recent political transformations in the Middle East and North African (MENA) countries that occurred after the social movements known as Arab Spring also concern the problematique of civil-military relations in the context of democratisation advancement in this region.

As Hansen and Jensen (2008) show, “democratisation processes are often violent, and the groups losing power may choose violent strategies in order to regain their position or to minimize the effect of democratisation” (Hansen & Jensen, 2008, p. 34).

The military represents an important actor in the Arab states, the success of transition towards democratisation also depending on its role on the political arena.

By studying MENA countries’ history, one can see that the aims, functions and missions of the armed forces have been changing according to political aspirations and objectives.

42 Ph.D. student, Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest, Romania.
My purpose in the current paper is to approach North African countries – Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia – in order to focus on different stages of the civil-military relations. To be more specific, I will identify the role of the military in the internal politics throughout the time span starting from the 1950 up to the present day.

But, first and foremost, I will draft the conceptual-theoretical framework related to civil-military relations, taking into consideration both “classical” literature and recent one, in which the emphasis is put either on separation of civilian and military institutions, or on dialogue, objectives or values shared by the armed forces, political leaders and the society.

**Conceptual-Theoretical Framework**

By using simple methodological scheme, a matrix with two entries, Daniel N. Nelson (2002) defines the terms *military* and *civilian*. The first term is defined, restrictively, as being an officer of the armed forces, and, widely, a member of any national security structure. The term *civilian* is defined, restrictively, as government institutions and political decision-makers and, widely, the society as a whole (Nelson, 2002, cited in Zulean, 2008, pp. 16-17).

Jan Angstrom (2013), on the other hand, suggests that the two terms must not be understood as fixed categories, but rather as norms offering an explanation of the variations and changes in the civil-military relations (Angstrom, 2013, p. 226).

The general concept of *civil-military relations* presupposes a wide range of relations between the armed forces and different categories of the society in which they exist and act (Bilveer, 2000, p. 607). They do not refer exclusively to officers’ subordination towards civilian leaders, but to a complex system of responsibilities and mutual expectations.

The challenge of the civil-military relations is the way in which the two central principles, namely the need to have protection by the military and the need to have protection from the military, can be harmonised (Feaver, 1996, p. 154).

An answer to this challenge was institutionalisation, by means of modern constitutions, of the principle of *supremacy of political power over military power*. In the framework of power systems, political power, by its legitimacy and authority, has a coordinating role over the others, which are in its subordination. More often than not, the military as a social institution is dependent by the political power, but, in certain conditions and limits, the relation can be reversed. According to Taufik Abdullah (1981) “political bankruptcy and demoralization in a democratic system, accompanied by an economic crisis can push the military to take action” (Abdullah, 1981, cited in Bilveer, 2000, p. 609). Likewise, Finer (2009) argues that an intervention of the military in politics is produced more probably when political institutions are weak and lack public support, as such a situation offers the military a good reason to act politically (Finer, 2009, p. 21).

Morgenthau shows that there needs to be made a difference between political power and force understood as appeal to physical violence. When violence is used, this means abdication of political power in favour of military or pseudo-military power (Morgenthau, 2007, p. 69).

One of the most renowned scholars who approached civil-military relations, Samuel P. Huntington (1957) puts within his theoretical paradigm the concept of *military participation in politics* by asking the following question: how can military power be minimized? In his view, two broad answers exist: through the *objective civilian control* or through the *subjective civilian control*. By objective civilian control is understood “distribution of political power between military and civilian groups which is most conducive to the emergence of professional attitudes and behaviour among the members of the officer corps” (Huntington, 1957, p. 80), and by *subjective civilian control* “the maximizing of the power of some particular civilian group or groups in relation to the military” (83).

Morris Janowitz (1960) emphasized that the military gradually adopted new political roles as a consequence of social and technological changes. Higher degree of “national” consciousness of the military led to the non-direct participation of the military in
politics and the rise of the armed forces as a constabulary force within the State, ready to act at any moment by using minimum of force and rather seeking viable international alliances (Janowitz, 1960, cited in Sava, Tibil & Zulean, 1998, p. 71).

According to Croissant et al. (2010) “in most studies, civilian control is understood as one pole of a continuum which describes the distribution of political power between the civilian political elite on the national level and the military leadership (Croissant et al., 2010, cited in Kuehn and Lorenz, 2011, p. 235). Also, the notion of democratic control refers to the military being controlled by legitimate civilian authorities, this conceptualisation being used exclusively by US authors and overwhelmingly associated with the Cold War military stand-off between the ‘West’ and the ‘East (Bruneau & Matei, 2008, p. 911).

By putting together concepts used by several authors (Huntington, Ionescu, Lasswell, Rapoport & Janowitz), A.R. Luckham has drafted a model of the roles’ typology which the military establishment can play in politics in order to emphasize differences between various types of military interventions and existing similarities between certain civilian regimes and military regimes installed in similar social conditions (Luckham 1971, p. 267).

Table no. 1: Roles of the military in politics (Luckham, 1971)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil power</th>
<th>Military power</th>
<th>Boundaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Integral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1. Objective Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium low</td>
<td>Medium low</td>
<td>2. Constabulary control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>6. Garisson state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less high</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>7. a) Guardian state b) Guardian state postcolonial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>8. Praetorian state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium low</td>
<td>9. Political vacuum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Sava, Tibil & Zulean, 1998, p. 267)

Douglas L. Bland (1999) shaped the theory of shared responsibility in order to provide a general analysis framework to address civil-military relations issues, theory that can be transferred to any state or political model, is able to explain civil-military relations over time and to provide a high degree of predictability. Thus, he identified four problems of this particular biunivocal relation: the need to curb the political power of the military establishment, maintaining good order and discipline within the military, protecting the military from politicians’ partisan interests, ministers lack the necessary knowledge and experience to control the armed forces (Bland, 1999, pp. 09-13).

The theory of shared responsibility underlines that “civil-military relations are the manifestation of the interaction of various players working within a known regime in which the rules of the game and the sanctions for breaking them are understood and generally agreed upon. The rules and sanctions place constraints on the armed forces and political leaders, and work in both directions” (Bland, 1999, p. 17).

Another theoretical model to explain civilian-military relations in the non-Western countries belongs to Rebecca Schiff. Through the theory of concordance, Schiff (1995) rhetoric is not in line with the one emphasizing the separation of civilian and military institutions and the supremacy of the civilian over the military, underlining specific conditions determining the role of the military in domestic politics and society. “Concordance theory views the military, the political leadership, and the citizenry as partners and predicts that when they agree about the role of the armed forces by achieving a mutual accommodation, domestic military intervention is less likely to occur in a particular state” (Schiff, 1995, pp. 12-13).
Schiff identifies four indicators of concordance ("composition of the officer corps", "political decision-making process", "recruitment method" and "military style") reflecting agreement or disagreement between those three partners in historical and cultural specific conditions, that can take the shape of separation, integration or other alternative (Schiff, 1995).

In the same line, Foster (2005) brings into discussion the idea of social contract of civil-military relations. Starting from the premise that democracy is based on social contract, he states that there is an implicit agreement that connects together the three parties of the civilian-military relation. These parties are "the people, the civilian officials who represent the people and oversee the military, and the military itself" (Foster, 2005, p. 94). "Islamists, however, reject the idea of a social contract in the Western sense. According to Arab culture and many Islamic tenets, legitimacy is granted exclusively to the leader" (Bukay, 2009, p. 5).

The MENA states have developed specific models of interaction with the armed forces that are the result of the historic, economic or socio-cultural context. Unlike the European military establishments, that have appeared, mainly, on the background of industrialisation or fight for democracy, the military establishments in Northern Africa have emerged in the context of colonialism and a peasant social structure (Augustus Richard Norton and Ali Alfoneh, 2008, p. 11).

Regarding the role played by the army in politics, Nordlinger (1977) identifies three typologies: the Rulers, the Guardians and the Moderators. According to him, the first category involves "government by the military" (Nordlinger, 1977, cited in Norden, p. 11); "guardians are often no different from moderators in wanting to stave off political change and maintain political order, except that guardians are convinced that these goals can best be realized by controlling the government themselves" (24); "moderators-type praetorians act as highly politicized and powerful pressure groups in relation to the civilian incumbents, sometimes backing up their demands with explicit threats of coup" (11).

As for the role played by the military in politics, Mehran Kamrava (2000), arguing the typologies of civil-military relations from MENA region and military professionalization, creates a distinction between "military democracies", "autocratic officer-politicians", "dual militaries" and "monarchies".

Table no. 2: Varieties of civil-military relations in the Middle East

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribal dependent monarchies</th>
<th>Autocratic officer-politicians</th>
<th>Dual militaries</th>
<th>Military democracies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oil monarchies</td>
<td>Civic-myth monarchies</td>
<td>Mukhaberat states</td>
<td>Military states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>Libya</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td></td>
<td>PNA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kamrava, 2000, p. 71

Kamrava concludes that the introduction of the professionalisation of the military in the Middle East “has not translated into the military’s depoliticization and increased subordination to civilian control. To the contrary, it has increased the potential for the military’s continued intervention in the political process (Kamrava 2000, p. 68). However, Croissant et al. (2011) observed that civilian control also exists in autocracies, hence, regime type is not a good predictor of the type of civil–military relations (Croissant et al. 2011, cited in Bünte, 2011, p. 9).

Classical literature in the field of civilian-military relations in MENA region has focused on military coups, but with their decrease in frequency, there were also concerns for the aspect of the military role in internal politics or its role in nation building. The coup and the role or the influence of the military were approached as dependent variables, being closely connected with the issue of civilian control (Nielsen, 2002, p.69). On the other hand, the following are considered independent variables: “independence from
The role of the military in the politics of developing countries was quite important, especially during the Cold War, but it did not have a constant evolutionary path. The growth of the civilian political elite and of the middle class, the incapacity of the military leadership to resolve a series of political, economic and social crises, are some factors that led to the retirement of officers from the fore-front of the political arena. However, even if the role of the military was no longer a central one, it was ready to assume the leadership or to operate in the shadow in order to remove civilian leadership, as it happened in Algeria in 1991, or as it may happen in Egypt currently.

Civil-military relations in MENA region have gone through several phases over time, as it can be seen from Table no. 3.

Table no. 3: Roles of armed forces in the Arab Middle East 1950-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase/roles</th>
<th>Internal role</th>
<th>External role</th>
<th>Other roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Regime challenge</td>
<td>Regional warfare</td>
<td>Developing state identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-1970</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Regime protection (Bipolar</td>
<td>Limited regional defence</td>
<td>Absorption of surplus labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>App. 1970-1989</td>
<td>conditions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3.a</td>
<td>Regime protection (unipolar</td>
<td>Managing unipolar influence</td>
<td>Absorption of surplus labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-2001</td>
<td>conditions)</td>
<td>through adaptation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hansen & Jensen 2008, p. 41

Currently, there is taking place a debate on the change of the paradigm from authoritarianism to democratisation, caused, as researchers have shown, by the increase of globalisation, interdependence and expansion of market economy.

A new key challenge of the theories in the field of civil-military relation in the recent democracies is to explain how and in what context will civilians manage (or not) to institutionalise the civilian control over the army.

Eva Bellin (2005) launches, in turn, another challenging hypothesis: “The more institutionalized the security establishment, the more willing it will be to disengage from power and allow political reform to proceed. The less institutionalized it is, the less amenable it will be to reform” (Bellin, 2005, cited in Lutterbeck, 2013, p. 31). Lutterbeck (2013) argues that institutionalization, in this context, refers to the fact that the armed forces are governed by a clear set of rules, have established career paths and promotion is based on performance rather than on political or other loyalties (Lutterbeck, 2013, p. 31).

Having these arguments in mind, my further research focuses on the role of the military in politics in the following MENA countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, starting from the ’50 – 60 and also, I will analyse the military behaviour during popular uprisings in Northern Africa.
Algeria’s military forces are called The National Popular Army (NPA) and have an effective personnel of approximately 130,000, of which 75,000 are recruits. Conscripts serve for 18 months, of which six months involve basic training and the remaining time encompasses various civil projects (The Military Balance 2013, p. 370).

After many decades of French occupation, Algeria managed to gain its independence in 1962, after the guerrilla war started in 1954 by the National Liberation Front (NLF). The first Algerian President, Ahmed Ben Bella (1963-1965), was a symbol of the fight for independence, given his military past and the great number of supporters in the army. “Ben Bella’s rhetoric lauded the revolutionary potential of the peasantry and he spoke openly – to the alarm of the West – of «Castro-style socialism» in Algeria” (The Times, 2012).

Against the background of unsolved social and economic problems, he started to be called in question by the former leaders of NLF, dissatisfied with his dictatorial leadership, on the one hand, and with the fact that his socialist orientation was considered to be incompatible with Islam, on the other hand.

The decision to reduce dependence on the army, by setting up a popular militia, resulted in his overthrow through a coup led by the Minister of Defence Houari Boumedienne.

During the 13-year rule of Boumedienne, the army “developed a set of political and social institutions that were critical to the consolidation and maintenance their power. These included formal institutions, such as single catch-all parties to better patrol the perimeters of the political system or laws, regulations, and decrees that formally limited political participation” (Cook, 2007, p. 9).

According to Cook, the officers of Algeria’s NPA sacralised the role of fighters against the French colonial presence, which conferred upon them the legitimacy to play a central political role. “During the NLF Congress of January 1979 following Boumedienne’s death, it (A/N NPA) demonstrated its influence in the designation of Chadli Bendjedid as his successor’’ (Picard, 1990, p.198).

The partial liberalisation of the economy in the 1980s provided an opportunity for members of the military establishment to benefit from economic advantages that officers already enjoyed, given their proximity to the state. “For example, a Central Bank regulation allowing for intermediaries to manage foreign exchange transactions permitted members of Algeria’s military enclave to become pseudo-private actors, importing through their own companies, taking commissions on imports, or facilitating access by private companies to import contracts” (Cook, 2007, p. 20).

Starting with the mid-seventies, the military command has been chiefly dedicated to the custody of the state and of its legitimacy (Picard, 1990, p. 198). During the Colonel Chadli Bendjedid’s rule, the NLF was established de facto as the single party.

In 1991, the Islamic Salvation Front (ISF) won the first multi-party elections, but the military seized power through a coup, before the second round of elections, and re-established the former elite system, being supported by armed forces. The initial results indicated the fact that ISF was about to gain control of 2/3 of the seats in the National Assembly, resulting in amendments to the Algerian Constitution and putting an end to the rule of a single party, which had been in place for almost 30 years. These changes started a civil war which, according to certain estimates, resulted in more than 100,000 deaths.

After the 1992 coup, the army ruled the country by placing generals in key decision-making positions and by electing a president from among the military (for instance, retired General Lamine Zeroual, in 1994) or the former military-revolutionary apparatus (Sorenson, 2007, p. 104).
In the 1999 elections, the army supported Abdelaziz Bouteflika (one of the last veterans who fought in the independence war against France), winning the next elections in 2004 and 2009. President Bouteflika had to deal with the difficult perspective of reducing the military power, trying to implement reforms and put an end to conflicts. One of its proposals was to grant pardons to a few Islamic combatants, a position that divided the armed forces – some were against the measure, while others supported it (Sorenson, 2007, p. 105).

The waves of protest that swept over Algeria starting from 28 September 2010 made Bouteflika announce cuts of prices on basic foodstuffs, new job-creation measures and the possibility for State Television and Radio to be opened to all political parties. Gradually, protests started to fade, analyst Bruce Riedel emphasising that “Algeria is a haunted nation; fear of a return to the terror and violence of the 1990’s is so great it acted as a brake on the Arab Spring in Algeria” (Riedel, 2011).

“When faced with demonstrations amid the revolts that swept the Arab world, segments of the military leadership have appeared more concerned with protecting their own fiefdoms than addressing a deep socio-economic malaise” (Daragahi, cited in Blanche, 2013, p. 23).

The military salary increased in 2011, in response to the popular discontent elsewhere in the region, defence spending being expected to reach US$ 10bn (compared to US$ 5.6bn in 2010) in 2012, in part, because the Ministry of Defence will assume responsibility for and restructure the Municipal Guard, which was previously under the Interior (The Military Balance 2013, p. 358).

**Egypt**

Egypt’s Supreme Council for the Armed Forces (SCAF) has an effective of 438,500 personnel and the service obligation is between 12 to 36 months (The Military Balance 2013, p. 374).

Compared to other countries from this analysis, Egypt has gained its independence a couple of decades earlier, that is, in 1922. By the coup in 1952, the Free Officer Movement forced King Farouk I to abdicate, and one year later, the Egyptian Republic was declared, under the rule of General Muhammad Naguib.

Jamal Abd al-Nasir, the real architect of the movement, forced Naguib to resign in 1954, while, in 1956, he became president. He controlled the government and the political process, keeping the power for a long period of time, in which he made political, economic and social radical changes.

In his article, *The Egyptian military in politics: disengagement or accommodation?*, Imad Harb makes an analysis of the Egyptian military role in the political process. He shows that throughout the years of transformation, the military protected the regime and participated in the governing process because of their belief that it is only them that have the bureaucratic organizing skills to run state affairs and to assure control over traditionally independent bureaucracy (p. 278). As leaders of the Revolution, the soldiers formed a genuine *esprit de corps*: disciplined and obedient, benefiting from a privileged position within the state (p. 280).

Sadat’s ascension to the presidency in 1970 brought about significant ideological and practical changes in the Egyptian regime policies. He used the military as a foundation stone for legitimacy and power, trying to manipulate the entire officer corps and to turn them against each other (according to the principle *divide et impera*). Moreover, Sadat made use of the constitutional power to dismiss high-ranking officers when they disagreed with him. This policy turned the Egyptian Armed Forces into a structure totally subordinated to the civilianized leadership of the President, the result being a more professionalised Armed Force dedicated to external defence. This professionalization was reflected in recruitment, as well as in equipment procurement and training (p. 282).

The “Bread riots” from January 1977 also indicated the military’s professionalism and obedience, as they succeeded to repress the riots and restore the order.
Although in 1967, military presence within the cabinet ranged from 41% to 66%, in 1972 it dropped to 22.2%, which proves the reduced political role of Armed Forces in Sadat regime (pp. 283 – 284).

Hosni Mubarak set up the military establishment at the core of the state’s control and power. As a former officer, the president insured the institution’s dominant role and protected its interests, involving the Armed Forces in politics up to a certain extent (p. 287).

Harb noticed the socialization function of the armed forces, the high level of the force (440,000 officers), of conscription and length rate (80,000 recruits each year, a period of for two or three years); thus, the institution is provided with a wide social basis.

In 1990, during a period of economic stagnation, Mubarak allowed the military to develop its own corporate identity through business pursuits, in the hopes that the military would remain loyal (Parsons & Taylor 2011, p. 18).

In the context of 2011 protests, on February 10, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) assumed control of the country, Mubarak being obliged to resign.

In this regard, Barany (2011) raised the following question: why did the Egyptian army decline to save Mubarak’s regime? In his opinion, military elites despised Gamal Mubarak, the president’s son and putative successor. Secondly, the top brass were growing anxious about youth alienation and spreading Islamist radicalism, as well as economic malaise and stagnation. Thirdly, Egypt’s soldiers were not pleased to see the regime leaning on – and sluicing ever more privileges to – a large police and security apparatus. Finally, Egypt’s conscript army has so many ties to society at large that many officers and enlisted men would probably have refused to shoot demonstrators (Barany, 2011, p. 28).

Following the riots in February 2011, the Egyptian military appeared to be in a tacit partnership with the Muslim Brotherhood, but, with the lapse of time the Brotherhood-military partnership frayed.

Currently, as we could see, a new wave of protests broke up at the end of June 2013 against the President Morsi, the army warning him to find agreement with the opposition.

**Libya**

Libya gained its independence in 1951, the members of the Sanusi Army forming Royal Libyan Army, after they had fought in the Second World War beside the British troops.

King Idris I was not interested in developing powerful Armed Forces, focusing more on police forces, which included trustworthy conservative tribal elements. Despite Great Britain’s proposals to endow the army with modern weaponry and to prepare the army for using it, King Idris preferred to maintain a balance between the army and the police, because the acquired equipment might have been used against his regime.

The 1969 coup brought to power Muammar Gaddafi, a captain of Libyan Free Army, who, together with other young officers, wanted to introduce the “Arab and Islamic socialism” as a government system.

A week after that coup, Revolution Command Council (RCC) formed a Cabinet, in which the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Defence were the only military, showing the intention to govern indirectly through civil technocrats (Wright, p. 132). The regime neutralised its internal opponents by arresting the members of the royal family, notable politicians and officials, but also more than 300 high-ranking police officers and over 250 army officers who held the rank of major or higher ranks (p. 135).

The coup attempts which occurred in the ’70s made Gaddafi increase the number of the army personnel and of other State security services by members of his own tribe, in an effort to repress riots against him. Although the army participated in the governance of the country, tensions among civil and military authorities started to become visible in the early ’80s. “On numerous occasions,
Gaddafi declared that ultimately the traditional military establishment should «wither away», to be replaced by an armed citizenry. (…) Although Gaddafi seemed to treat the disappearance of the professional military more as a theoretical goal than an imminent reality, his remarks added to the deteriorating morale of the officer corps” (Metz 2004, p. 266).

According to Barany (2011), “the military and security establishment was divided into numerous organisations that had little contact with one another. The regular military was ostensibly charged with the external defence of the country, while the security forces were supposed to protect the regime, though, in practice, ensuring regime survival was the main mission of all these forces” (Barany 2011, p. 29). As a result, the Libyan military was “never allowed to develop a professional ethic that could have created a distinct cooperate identity or distinct interests” (Lutterbeck 2013, p. 40).

Pollack (2002) shows that Libya was the most affected by the effects of the politicisation of the army, since there was an overlapping of chains of command, by rotating key commanders. Thus, the incompetence of the loyal was favoured to the detriment of the competent (Pollack, 2002, cited in Sorenson, 2007, p. 110).

Gaddafi set up the Popular Guard, made up of a few professional military units, continuing to weaken his army. He inoculated to the Popular Guard a military doctrine based on older ideas related to “the war of people”, separating them from professional armed forces.

The defeat of the Libyan army by French-backed Chadian forces in 1987 increased unrests of the military, which reflects upon the coup attempts in the early ’90s. “Not surprisingly, Gaddafi deliberately neglected the military and gave priority treatment to parallel elite and paramilitary forces, most of them newly established and commanded by his relatives.” (Barany, 2011, p. 30).

The protests that started in 2011 degenerated into a civil war, in which important external factors, such as NATO, were involved.

The army’s response to these events was divided. On the one hand, senior officers of the Libyan army such as Abdul Fatah Younis and Mustafa Abdel-Jalil resigned from their posts and defected to the rebel side (Steffen Kailitz, 2013, p. 51) and, on the other hand, the elite elements of Libya’s armed forces, intimately tied to Gaddafi and his family, showed no restraint in crushing the rebellion (Lutterbeck, 2013, p. 42).

As a result of the civil war, the old Libyan army ceased to exist, some number of “brigades” are reportedly aligned with the National Transitional Council, which is acting as the interim government. (The Military Balance, 2013, p. 391)

**Morocco**

Morocco’s armed forces number 195,800 personnel and military service is not mandatory. The Royal Armed Forces was founded on 14 May 1956 (except the Royal Navy founded in 1960), after Morocco’s independence from France and Spain, initially being formed through the transfer of fourteen thousand Moroccan personnel from the French Army and ten thousand from the Spanish Armed Forces.

The coup attempts by General Mohamed Oufkir against King Hassan II made the latter attach a minimum importance to the army. “William Zartman usefully summed up Hassan’s strategy towards the military after 1972 as aiming to keep it busy, dependent and divided. He kept it busy by making Morocco a significant contributor to UN peacekeeping forces in places such as Zaire and by sending troops to Golan in Syria where they fought in the war of October 1973 against Israel” (Willis, 2012, pp. 92-93).

Therefore, the king tried to control the army by keeping it busy with security problems and placing it under his direct command. Willis (2012) emphasizes that the military campaign from 1975 against the Polisario Front and its backers did more than meet Hassan’s aim of keeping the FAR busy and away from Rabat. High-ranking officers were offered a series of privileges in order to create a direct connection with the system and to prevent the potential criticism against him.
Moreover, the measure consisting of rotating army commanders through posts was taken in order to avoid the establishment of powerful regional or administrative fiefdoms.

“Hassan also instituted conscription, because during the coup years, a large proportion of the senior officers were Berbers; conscription raised the percentage of Arabs in the FAR to around 40 percent” (Sorensen, 2007, p. 108).

The issue of the military’s role in Moroccan politics was revived with the death of Hassan II in July 1999 and the accession to the throne of his son, Sidi Mohammed, now Mohammed VIth, who extended his ruling circle by appointing members from civil society.

But Mohammed the VIth did not eliminate the control on the army established by his father, since the army did not have an official role in the economic development or the nation building.

“In mid-2006, Moroccan security forces authorities dismantled Ansar al-Mahdi, a Jihadist group, and discovered at least five soldiers in its ranks. [...] a month later, Morocco ended the military conscription begun under Hasan II, constituting, according to one analyst, “…a move undoubtedly aimed at mitigating the vulnerability of the lower ranks to the influence of radical Islamists” (p. 109).

Following the protests that started on 20 February 2011, a constitutional referendum was held on 1 July 2011 on a text drafted by a commission of sages, which reinforced the power of the parliament, but the king continued to hold the position of chief of justice and security forces (Alvaro de Vasconcelos 2012, p. 95).

**Tunisia**

Tunisia’s armed forces number 35,800 personnel and are reliant on conscripts (The Military Balance 2013, p. 405).

Unlike the other countries, Tunisia’s army did not play the role of the symbol of revolutionary change, nor did it play an important role in bringing Habib Bourguiba to power.

Bourguiba, a representative of the Neo-Destour party, took over the power in 1957, after France recognised the independence of Tunisia on 20 March 1956. He forbade the right of officer corps to political association, thus preventing their access to the political elite and appointed a civilian as Minister of Defence. The army was seen by the governing political and economic reformers as a potential bastion of political and social conservatism, which is why it benefited from few resources and a reduced number of people (Brooks, 2013, p. 209).

The reasons for this policy can be found in one of his speeches in 1965: “Members of the military are not free to have political opinions like other citizens, otherwise they would become involved in the struggle for power and would use their weapons to impose solutions of their own choosing” (Willis, 2012, p. 86). His fears were also related to the two attempts to overthrow him in 1957 and 1962, in which military officers were also involved.

Therefore, Bourgouiba drew a clear separation line between the army and political structures, which was proven by the fact that Zine el Abidine Ben Ali was the first career officer who held the office of Minister of the Interior in 1986. But he too, came from the intelligence services rather than from the regular army” (Lutterbeck, 2013, p. 34).

Nevertheless, the army maintained its own courts that could try military personnel and civilians charged with violations of national security.

After Ben Ali took over power in 1987, after a coup, civil-military relations remained in line with the former regime, namely the smallest possible influence of armed forces in the field of politics. The main focus was on the army’s professionalism and the
improvement of its technical expertise. “The term *la grande muette* (the big silent one), which is often used in Tunisia to describe the Armed Forces, highlights its discreetness and non-interference in public affairs” (Lutterbeck 2013, p.34).

In January 2011, the army was sent on the streets of the capital, to repress protests that had broken out, being called upon to use force against protesters. But it refused to open fire on protesters, which hastened the flight of Ben Ali from the country. Brooks (2013) shows that this non-use of violence by the army must be understood from the perspective of the features of civil-military relations in this country and from the point of view of the costs and benefits that the army would have had, if it had acted in support of Ben Ali. “Combined, these features of civil-military relations contributed to a third distinctive characteristic of the Tunisian military. The absence of a daily role in securing the leadership and de facto relegation to the periphery of the regime helped sustain a corporate ethos in which officers appeared to identify with the institution itself, such that they placed value on maintaining its organizational integrity, freedom from civilian interference and social prestige” (Brooks, 2013, p. 208).

Therefore, the high level of institutionalisation of the army and the strong connection with society, due to broad-based conscription, led to an attitude supporting the reform process (Lutterbeck, 2013, p. 35).

## Conclusion

By analysing the five MENA countries – namely Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Marocco and Tunisia – from the perspective of the role that the army had in politics over time and the way in which the military reacted in the context of the Arab Spring, there can be deduced a series of similitude and differences.

First of all, we can observe, on the one hand, the lower role in internal politics of the military in Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, and, on the other hand, their significant share in Algeria and Egypt.

Secondly, except for Morocco, political leaders in all analysed countries at the moment of the outbreak of the Arab Spring had military background.

Thirdly, in Tunisia and Egypt, the military did not intervene against protesters, thus insuring a transition relatively without conflicts. In Algeria and Morocco, the army was not used against protesters and there was no change of the regime.

The only country in which occurred a civil war was Libya, where there took place bloody confrontations between the rebels and the military that were loyal to Gaddafi.

Having in mind the whole regional picture, it can be stated that the behavior of the military during the Arab Spring depended on a series of factors: the degree of institutionalization/patrimonialism of the military apparatus, the political restraints on the military, the strength/weakness of its relationship to society at large and the interests level to intervene of the military.

Also, we can observe that the nature of the transition can vary from a civilian controlled transition (e.g. Tunisia), to intermediate configurations of military control and a strong counterweight of societal mobilizations (Egypt), up to transition after civil war (Libya).

Thus, a re-evaluation of the civil-military relation in the Arab world is needed, taking into account that civil-military relations represent an essential element of consolidation: it should be altered to protect and sustain democratic processes and democratic values.

The biggest stake will be, in my opinion, the way in which the civil-military relations are going to be defined in the MENA region by the new political leadership.

Concluding, understanding civil-military relations becomes important with the process of democratization, societal challenges and the rise of a multipolar world.
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Turkey’s Potential Role for the EU’s Approach towards the Arab Spring: Benefits and Limitations
Sercan Pekel43

Abstract

As a longstanding defender of democratic values, the European Union wishes to and should participate in and stimulate the transformation in Arab countries towards a better and pluralistic state administration. Turkey’s geopolitical positioning and recently active pursuance of foreign relations naturally bring forward the state as an influential actor in the Arab Spring. Across the axis of EU-Arab countries, Turkey’s potential role might be a significant determinant. Within this article, EU’s and Turkey’s approach towards the revolutions will be examined with a specific focus on the current status of EU-Turkey relations regarding foreign affairs. Turkey’s active participation will be dealt with on both sides highlighting the possible benefits and limitations. The form and level of cooperation that should be established between EU and Turkey will be elaborated in the conclusion.

The little sparkle that Mohamed Bouazizi lit to set himself on fire in Tunisia on December 17, 2010 was also the sparkle to set most of the Middle East and some parts of North Africa on fire making peoples defy the oppressive governments and rebel against them. That little sparkle spread around wave in wave through Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya and Syria. Concerned with the recovery from the 2008 Global Economic Crisis, the global actors including the European Union (EU), the United States of America were unprepared for such a big movement. As the situation in the Middle East got worse, the states turned their focus on the developments to occur and tried to take the situation under control while getting ready for the possible outcomes. The European Union was of course one of the actors anxious about the ongoing protests. As Hurmi (2011, 457) suggests “the geographical proximity of the region to Europe made the Union vulnerable against any social and political instability or insecurity like the rise of radical Islamism and terrorism in the Middle East which would adversely affect the EU’s internal social and political stability and security due to spill-over effect.” Accordingly, The Union—within its Common Foreign and Security Policy objectives and tools—tried to actively participate in the transformation processes of the states in the region. This article, hence, deals with the European Union’s current approach towards the revolutions in the region while presenting Turkey—a candidate of the EU—as a versatile partner to cooperate for policies towards the Middle East. Turkey’s current approach towards the revolutions and possible benefits and limitations of the Anatolian state are analyzed respectively. The conclusion of this article gives basic guidelines on how the EU should formulate its policies towards the region, how EU and Turkey may complement each other for the sake of rational policies in the Middle East and how both may contribute to the transformation process.

43 M.A. Student / Research Assistant, Adnan Menderes University, Turkey.
When the first protests hit Tunisia in December 2010, both European Union and Turkey had been dealing with its own problems stemming largely from the global economic crisis. The Arab Spring—the term to be used much later—swiftly dispersed through the Middle East and North Africa and it forced all actors closely tied with this region to raise their heads and grab the significance of the situation.

Prior to the Arab Spring, European Union had already established some form of policy towards its neighbouring countries via European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) “to promote prosperity, stability and security at its borders.” The Eastern Partnership, The Union for the Mediterranean and The Black Sea Synergy programs supported the ENP after the protests in Tunisia, EU was quick to react. “In its formal pronouncements and new initiatives the EU has indeed welcomed the ‘Arab Spring’, and has said that it wants to be on the side of the people in their call for freedom” (Hollis 2012). As Perthes (2011) stressed in its article, the EU soon formulated plans for democracy partnership and shared prosperity that included financial assistance and improved market access. Beginning with the harsh statement on Tunisian developments on January 14, 2011 EU has so far delivered a significant amount of international support with grants and loans thanks to the Task Force established by the union itself (Hurmi 2011). A second Task Force was implemented in Jordan in February 2012 to stimulate the transition process. The EU has become most active in the Libyan revolution. Whether it is because Libya has been a significant trade partner and an energy-rich country on which Europe is partially dependent or because there would be and has been an immigration problem especially in Italy and France in the event of an upheaval, European officials were quick to react to the incidents in Libya. EU implemented the UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973 which include financial and physical sanctions against Qaddafi regime. EU participated in Libyan talks and followed France which organized the Paris Summit and was first to intervene in Libya. Catherine Ashton opened an EU Office in Benghazi to provide direct and active liaison. In terms of Libya, EU officials have made several statements condemning the fatal incidents in the country and have actively participated in meetings and talks to achieve peaceful transition. EU has also contributed to the supply of humanitarian aid served to the victims of the civil war ongoing in that country.

When it comes to Turkey, as Kaya (2012) suggests “The Arab Spring caught Turkey off-guard, just as it did other countries.” The country was solidifying its economic success with rigid budget measures against European Debt Crisis; was going through a transformation process towards a downgraded military influence in politics; was dealing with the problematic accession talks with EU and at the same time coping with the terrorism in the Eastern Region. Following the protests, the first reactions of Turkish state were mild statements highlighting the support for pro-democratic movements and the supremacy of human rights. However, when the protests began in Libya in February 2011, Turkey was reluctant to react. It couldn’t criticize Qaddafi and his administration, besides Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan publicly objected the intervention of NATO in Libya since the oil-rich country is a major trading partner with strong economic interests and hosted at that time 25000 Turkish workers as both Kaya (2012) and Haseeb (2012) argue in their respective articles. As the situation worsened in Libya, Turkey re-set its policy and sided with NATO intervention rather than one-sided French military initiative. After Qaddafi was toppled, PM Erdoğan made visits to Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. In all three countries, he was greeted by huge enthusiastic civilian groups with slogans appraising him and Turkey. In his speech in Cairo, Erdoğan stressed the importance of smooth transition to democracy and highlighted “secularism” as an asset of Turkish state. The Syrian uprisings, on the other hand, signifies a much more important foreign policy subject as Syria is a bordering neighbour with which Turkey has complex relations with lots of ups and downs. When the protests began, Turkey immediately elaborated its position and harshly criticized Assad regime. Mentioning its concerns about democracy and human rights; Turkish government insisted that Assad must cede his rule as the protests turned violent. Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu even argued that “all options including military measures is on the table” in one of the several statements made by...
Turkish officials. Turkish government has taken a leading role in global arena to topple Assad at the expense of ruining its relations with Russia and Iran. Following Syrian Army’s bombings against the opposition near Turkish border targeted Turkish territory twice and a Turkish military aircraft was shot down by Syrian Army, Turkey changed its rules of engagement against Syria. Furthermore, “the Turkish decision to station a NATO anti-missile defense facility in Malatya in southeastern Turkey has added to these tensions” (Ayoob 2012). Lastly, Turkey accommodates more than a hundred thousand Syrian refugees in its bordering cities.

EU – Turkey Relations on Foreign Affairs

In order to talk about the common understandings and cooperation in foreign affairs within the context of Turkey-EU relations, the background of the longstanding relationship should be understood. If the history of the relations is briefly taken into consideration, Turkey and the European Union have a long way of relations and this relationship has not been a smooth one. First of all, “in 1963, the European Economic Community and Turkey signed the Ankara Agreement51 whereby Turkey would be treated as an associate member until Turkey’s circumstances permitted its accession as a full member” (Elver 2005, 25). This agreement gave Turkey the key to the union if it were to accomplish the necessary reforms. As years passed, a new document titled as “The Additional Protocol” was signed between Turkey and the Community (EC). As it is acknowledged on the website of the Turkish Ministry of EU Affairs, the protocol dated November 13, 1970 set out in a detailed fashion how the Customs Union would be established by implementing a timetable in which EC would abolish tariff and quantitative barriers to Turkish products with some exceptions while giving Turkey 12 – 22 years time to gradually decrease tariffs on European products (History of Turkey - EU Relations 2007). Turkish political instability led to falling behind the agenda and the political turmoil resulted in a military coup in 1980. European Community froze its relations with Turkey following this development. It took several years to normalize the relations after civilian rule in Turkish state was assured. After liberalization efforts in newly-modernizing country began to work out, Turkish government started vigorous initiatives for Customs Union negotiations. Finally, in 1996 Customs Union agreement was put into practice. At the European Council Summit held in Helsinki on December 11-12, 1999 Turkey was granted accession candidate status to the European Union (Park 2000, 31). Turkey’s first step towards full membership was the commencement of accession talks on October 3, 2005 (Soytürk 2012, 382). Out of the 35 chapters in accession negotiations only one of them (Science & Research) was provisionally closed. 8 chapters are suspended until Cyprus criterion is fulfilled52. Currently, the negotiations are in halt. This slow process coupled with the increase in xenophobia in Europe and the decrease in eagerness for EU membership among Turkish society.

When it comes to shared principles of foreign policy and potential cooperation areas between the EU and Turkey, Turkish foreign policy orientations signify a better starting point. Upon the establishment of the secular Turkish Republic by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923, the newly-founded state turned its face towards the Western civilization. Bozdağlıoğlu (2003, 51-52) explains this transformation as;

In terms of foreign policy, the construction of a new identity through the Kemalist reforms provided the new political elite with the framework within which Turkish foreign policy was henceforth to be formulated. The most important aim of the new Turkey was to join with all civilized nations in pursuit of peace and friendship. Civilization meant the West ‘the modern world, of which Turkey must become a part.’

He (p. 53) further argues that “the implication of Westernization and the Western-oriented foreign policy was a movement away from Islamic practice and tradition, and therefore, from Middle Eastern civilization, toward Europe”. As the mentioned transformation continued through the course of time, Turkish foreign policy never turned back to oriental roots. The disengagement from Middle Eastern culture naturally resulted in minimum interaction up until the Justice and Development Party’s(JDP)—a conservative political movement pursuing mild Islamism—term of office. This new understanding of political rule retained the modern, western orientations of foreign policy. As Oğuzlu (2010) indicates; “similar to the EU, Turkey supports a global system that operates on the basis of international law, international organizations, and international legitimacy.” The thing that they are

different is that JDP has pursued an active foreign policy in Middle East unlike its predecessors. Terzi (2010, 121) reinforces this idea by asserting that “Turkey has been trying to contribute to the stability in the Middle East by projecting European norms into the region and also by contributing to increasing diplomatic dialogue in the region”. As the case is mentioned, it can be seen that Turkish foreign policy and EU foreign policy have the same ideational roots and share substantial common ground on which cooperation should be established. Although these two understandings of foreign policy converge with one another, there is no tangible cooperation towards Middle East or any other region. The parties share common positions only under the roof of NATO which is even debatable as Greek-Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot conflicts sometimes prevail before a joint action, measure or simulated military exercises. In terms of Middle East, both powers back democratic transformation; however, they do these efforts only by themselves and naturally fall short of their goals in that particular region due to uncooperative actions.

**Turkey’s Potential Benefits**

The European Union may benefit from Turkey as a strong partner in Middle East affairs since Turkey has unique features making it ideal to cooperate within this region. In this section, these features will be elaborated. To begin with, Turkey has historical, cultural and religious bonds with the Arabs. With the expansion of Islam via Arabs to Turkish territories and the acceptance and spread of Islam among Turkic tribes, the interaction between Turks and Arabs started its course through history (Erdem 2012). Centuries later, it was the Ottoman Empire that managed to reign over the whole Middle East and naturally over the Arabs. Also, the title of Caliphate was given to the Ottoman Emperor. Until the fall of Ottoman Empire, Arabs lived under Turkish rule. Gradually, they had become independent with many newly-founded states in Middle East. Still today, there are millions of Arabs living in Turkey. The historical ties between two nations, coupled with the faith in the same religion, bring them together to share similar cultural and traditional values. All those involved, Arabs and Turkish people feel as closely related. Second of all, Turkish state constitutes a structurally good example of an established state with numerous assets. Turkey has made substantial progress on the path of modernity. The liberal ideas, human rights, democracy have blossomed to a reasonable extent. Its growing economy continued its glamorous success even through the economic crisis. All these features have made Turkey a shining star in the region and a role model for most of the states living nearby. The most significant element of Turkish state is the secularism principle laid within the foundation of the republic. It is one of the very few countries that mixed Islam and Secularism in the same pot successfully. This signifies a great achievement as Islam lays grand ideas affecting every part of human life. Apart from shaping a Muslim’s daily life, it proposes sharia—Islamic law—as a foundation to administer state affairs. Managing to govern the state according to modern law instead of sharia, and establishing bureaucratic mindsets in the same way through the years indicate a strong asset of Turkey. The relation between EU and Turkey is another reason for Turkey to be a model for Middle Eastern countries. It is the only “Muslim” country in the region to establish strong ties with the Union. It is an official candidate conducting accession talks with the community—sometimes called as a Christian camp. Turkey is the opening gate to Europe for Middle Eastern peoples. All these grouped together explain why Turkey constitutes a good example and a role-model for the region’s states. The third potential of Turkey is its leader. Drawing the conservative movement to his circle, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan established Justice and Development Party and won the elections in 2002. He serves his third term in Prime Ministry and with one-party rule in the past decade, he and his party made numerous reforms in every aspect of state affairs including radical ones such as overriding the established military influence of politics. With comprehensive economic reforms, Turkey has become more stable in many ways. As an influential leader in its own party, Turkish government’s policies are generally shaped by his own ideas. No doubt that these reforms, economic success and his leadership traits in domestic politics contribute to his reputation; however, the real thing that adds to his charisma is Erdoğan’s strong tone in foreign policy affairs. Prime Minister’s fierce criticism of Israel in nearly every speech regarding foreign affairs, his unusual reaction to walk off the discussion in Davos in protest of Israel, his caring and protective words for all Muslim people address right to the hearts to the region’s highly emotional people and flatters them. While sustaining its alliance and cooperation with the Western camp and even Israel in some areas, it is strange why Arabs admire Erdoğan so much. The visits of him to Egypt, Libya and Tunisia were an indicator of this affection. While Cook (2011) described him as a hero welcomed as the leader of Turkey seen as a positive force through the transformation of Middle East, Abuzeid (2011) highlighted that “Erdoğan was received like a rock star by thousands of adoring supporters in Cairo”. As long as PM continues to be regarded as an appreciated leader in the Middle East, he will be an asset of Turkey with potential benefits to utilize in foreign affairs. The last but not the least, the active pursuance of foreign policy by JDP in the previous decade improved the image of Turkey in the

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53 Turkey is a secular state. The “Muslim” description is used in order to highlight that more than 90% of its population is Muslim.
Turkey’s Potential Limitations

The potential benefits to cooperate with Turkey within Middle East is explained in detail above; nevertheless, there are some drawbacks which may limit Turkey’s significance when dealing with the developments in the region. If not controlled well or things get worse, these potential limitations could highly damage Turkey’s image throughout the Middle East as well as creating solid problems both domestic and foreign for the Turkish government. Firstly, Turkey is the 18th largest economy in the world with more than $750,000 nominal GDP and every year it continues to grow with optimistic growth rates (Report For Selected Countries And Subjects 2012). For the first time in history, a credit rating agency increased Turkey’s credit rating to “investable” status within the previous year. However, this growth is fragile due to chronic foreign trade deficit. The private sector makes its investments with loans. Although a successful growth model insofar as for Turkey, Turkey needs to boost its equity capital and to increase its savings. Inability of Turkish economy to grow—if that happens—will automatically block Turkey being so active in foreign policy. Currently, The burden of hosting more than one hundred thousands of refugees is above $400m and still increases day by day (Hurriyet Daily News 2012). Event this amount of money could have serious implications on the already-strict budget. This situation indicates that Turkey is not fully ready to pursue extremely active foreign policy. The foreign policy acts may bring economic burdens such as the case in Syria; Turkey must be careful in every step it takes in order not to cast into exotic adventures by jeopardizing its economic stability. Secondly, the new understanding of foreign policy—in Minister Davutoğlu’s famous words—also known as “Policy of Zero Problems with our Neighbours” stands before an active Middle East policy and sometimes creates dilemmas for Turkish foreign policy makers. This official slogan—in Ministry’s own words—summarizes “Turkey’s expectations with regards to her relations with neighboring countries. Turkey wants to eliminate all the problems from her relations with neighbors or at least to minimize them as much as possible” (Policy of Zero Problems with Our Neighbors n.d.). Putting apart the idealism of this policy and the current problems with Armenia, Greece and Bulgaria; the Syrian approach of the Turkish government created a dispute and a clash between Turkey and Iran. As a defender and an ally of Assad Regime, Iran consistently backs the government in Syria and warns the Western actors to stand off the Syrian issue. Turkey’s harsh criticism and active efforts to force Assad to quit drew reaction from Iran. The last decision of Turkey to urge NATO to station anti-missile defence facility in Turkish territory was the last straw. As Ayoob (2012) suggests, Iranian government perceived this act to be aimed against Iran. The alienation of Iran because of Syrian issue bulks on the strict sanctions—which Turkey has to and does apply—imposed on Iran. Rivalry turning into an hostility between Turkey and Iran may pose a fatal threat to the balance in the region. Thirdly, Turkey may face problems with the credibility and sustainability of its policies regarding foreign affairs. Although a significant state with most of its population being Muslims, Turkey has a longstanding alliance and cooperation with the Western World—primarily the USA. NATO alliance and its commitments to the EU sometimes urge Turkey to act within the resolutions of these partnerships. Its national interests also comply with the U.S. in general terms. As a member of NATO, Turkey is even obliged to cooperate with Israel under the NATO structure. In the time ahead, Turkey may lose its plausibility in the Arab world by normalizing its relations with Israel and by cooperating in key affairs. Also, in the event of an establishment of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq, Turkey will react fiercely in parallel with its national interests while clashing with its ongoing appraisal of people’s free choice to choose who will govern them in the Middle East. Internal developments also constitute a threat to Turkey’s foreign policy. Growing opposition to conservative and sometimes oppressive practices of the government, the concern
for the decay of independent and fair judgments and decline in the respect for freedom of thought may force JDP to turn introvert and channel its energy for internal unrest.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, after so many years long-awaited revolutions are taking place in the Middle East urging for rule of democracy and respect for human rights. However, the transition process shows the deficiencies of Middle East nations to construct sustainable democracies. Helping those people to establish well-founded states is a duty of all modern nations. As an indispensable pioneer and advocate of open democracies, European Union should be involved in the process and give hand to the region for the sake of its own interests and a better and peaceful order throughout the world. Unfortunately, the involvement of EU has been limited through ENP. In order for productive results to be obtained, EU should align itself for more cooperation and aid with different tools to be formulated. The lack of such approach was criticized in Arman’s (2011, 61) article in these words: “while short term priorities of the Union such as prevention of organized crime and fight against terrorism and fraud are stressed, the long-term policies of improving civil society and governance are overlooked” within the neighbourhood policy.” This idea is reinforced by another scholar’s statement: “Europe has had its own experiences with democratic transformations and can supply much that is needed to support such processes in other countries, starting with assistance organizing free elections and election monitoring, and including help in reforming the police and judiciary” (Perthes 2011, 76). After structural ground is established; he (p. 77) continues that “the EU should present itself as an ‘open Europe’ and offer the transforming states a new form of partnership that is not only intergovernmental but also draws in the societies involved.” By accomplishing such comprehensive approach towards the Arab Spring, EU may be successful in what it aims in terms of democracy building. EU’s mentioned success is closely related with Turkey. Above, why Turkey could be an asset while EU conducts such programs towards the Middle East is elaborated both with its benefits and limitations. The first thing to do in such cooperation—if both parties desire to be effective in transforming the region’s states—is reawakening the accession process of Turkey. Opting out Turkey for the Union’s membership or offering privileged partnerships rather than full accession will have two negative effects. The first one is Turkey’s disappointment in the future of relations and the second one is the formation of a dangerous thought in Middle Eastern people’s minds that even the most modernized and pro-Western Muslim country with secularistic practices cannot get in the Western Camp. This will alienate the nations in that region. If a good spirit and environment where EU, Turkey and Middle Eastern countries may think that they can live in cooperation linked with peaceful ties and shared wealth, it will be easier to transform such states towards pluralistic democracies. EU-Turkey cooperation in the Middle East may bring a new dimension to the process by boosting the mentioned potential of Turkey in the region while eliminating its mentioned limitations to some extent. Namely, Turkey—as a full member or a candidate waiting for its imminent membership—could serve to the interests of the Union throughout the Middle East (Cameron, 2007). Then the Union may proudly present Turkey as a role-model for transforming states. In the meantime, reawakening of the accession process will urge Turkey to compensate what it lacks and force the candidate country to fulfill what is needed to become a full member. In this way, Turkey could finalize its modernization process and ensure highest standards of democracy, rule of law, freedom of thought by solidifying European norms. This process will eliminate potential unrest within the opposition in the country; hence, availing the government to channel its energy towards foreign policy—especially the Middle East. Economic limitation of Turkey would be tackled easily with the enormous wealth accumulated by the Union at other times but today The European Union is going through a harsh crisis. Conversely, the vivacious economy and young labour force of Turkey may help the Union economy to recover more quickly and smoothly. Full integration of the economies may prove helpful to stimulate the internal economy and may even ease the process of formulating economic tools to reach revolutionized countries. Lastly, EU may utilize an already-functioning benefit of Turkey by making Recep Tayyip Erdoğan the face that reaches the Middle East on behalf of the European Union. Knowing that a leader that they admire is involved in the collaborative programs towards their country will assure that emotional people to trust the efforts given by the Union and bring them closer as a society towards European ideals.

The transition in the Middle East will take place in one way or another. It is at key global actors’ stake that these transformations will prove a peaceful process leading to established democracies where the rule of law is considered or will turn out to be temporary upheavals that only results in change of power in which extremists or another interest group take control and continue to oppress the peoples of the region. EU and Turkey have solid grounds to cooperate and if rational steps are taken these two actors may act as ‘polaris’ drawing these transforming nations towards a better order.
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Analyzing the Domestic and International Conflict in Syria: Are There Any Useful Lessons from Political Science?
Jörg Michael Dostal

Introduction

This article contributes to the discussion about opportunities for and barriers against political reform in the Syrian Arab Republic. The point of departure is the assumption that Syrian society and the Syrian state require domestically driven political reform in order to reach a more advanced stage of social and economic development. This is not to deny that domestic reform and the international context are very difficult to disentangle: nevertheless, the basic assumption is that any serious debate about democratization from within Syria requires drawing up a balance sheet of the history of the modern Syrian state in order to learn new lessons to overcome undeniable shortcomings. At the same time, this mobilization of domestic reform forces is the only way forward as the alternative would be to accept the imposition of foreign agendas upon Syria.

The subsequent argument is put forward in five sections. In the first section, relevant political science approaches analyzing the Syrian case from a domestic and global perspective are briefly discussed. The second section sketches the early political history of Syria between 1920 and 1970, and the third section explains how the regime led by Hafiz al-Assad was able to use the period after 1970 to consolidate Syrian statehood, establish a national security state, and emerge as a strong regional geopolitical actor. Next, section four analyzes the period of the Presidency of Bashar al-Assad before the current crisis (from 2000 until March 2011). Finally, section five discusses the most recent escalation of the Syrian domestic crisis toward the largest armed conflict in the country’s history. This section also scrutinizes the domestic political reform program as advanced by the Syrian government since April 2011 (essentially the new 2012 Syrian constitution and the new multi-party system). Finally, a conclusion sums up the theoretical and empirical argument.

Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Syria

In the study of Syrian affairs, domestic and international levels of analysis must be jointly considered. Nevertheless, the most promising analytical approaches deriving from political science broadly perceived can be divided into those that highlight specific Syrian issues, on the one hand, and those that focus on Syria in the context of the international system on the other hand. The following five theoretical approaches appear to offer the highest analytical utility, moving in order of their analytical scope from a particular consideration of Syria toward those that are of more general applicability: (1) the theory of populist authoritarianism; (2) the focus on sectarian loyalties and weak nationhood/statehood; (3) analysis of the postcolonial ‘rentier state’ based on oil

55 Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Public Administration, Seoul National University, Republic of Korea; e-mail: jmdostal@snu.ac.kr.
exploitation and other resource rents and of the ‘state class’ that emerges in the context of the political economy of a rentier economy to advance autonomous social interests that differ from the interests of the ruling groups in the economically dominant countries; (4) the neo-Gramscian theoretical approach in international relations theory; finally, (5) classical geopolitical analysis. The remainder of this section briefly deals with each of these approaches in turn.

First, the theory of populist authoritarianism explains the rise of the modern Syrian state as resulting from the mobilization of popular social classes challenging and defeating the ancient regime. After the withdrawal of the French colonial power from Syria, the Syrian postcolonial state between 1946 and 1963 initially ‘acted as a mere executive committee of the landed commercial ruling class’ (Khatib 2011: 60). This changed with the emergence of populist authoritarianism based on the political mobilization of new middle classes and the peasantry. The Baath Party acted as the political agent of mobilization after defeating competing political forces such as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) and the Syrian Communist Party (CP) for dominance in the officer corps of the Syrian army (Seale 1988: ch. 5-6). The Syrian army was captured by the Baath via its stronghold in the officer corps and provided in turn the power resources to take over and transform the old state. Thus, the theory of populist authoritarianism suggests that the Baath Party engaged in the controlled mobilization of popular social forces ‘from above’ to enforce social change such as the removal of the traditional bourgeoisie from political power and the advancement of social reforms favoring the popular social classes (Hinnebusch 2001). The most significant achievements of authoritarian populism are land reform (the distribution of land to popular sectors in the countryside) and the transformation of the state by way of expansion of a new public sector that owes its access to resources and upward social mobility exclusively to the new political regime. In the beginning, Syrian populist authoritarianism lacked stability and showed some sign of ‘adventurism’. This concerned the historical period of the so-called ‘neo-Baath’ between 1966 and 1970 when Salah Jadid chaired the regime. His focus on radical social change worked to limit the appeal of the Baath Party. From 1970 onwards, Hafiz al-Assad managed to re-stabilize authoritarian populism based on the creation of a more comprehensive political alliance. Under his leadership, some sectors of the traditional bourgeoisie were invited to re-join the regime, corporatist political bodies such as peasant organizations, unions and other mass membership bodies were built up, and the radicalism of social transformation was downscaled. Moreover, the rise of Syria as a rentier state based on the exploitation of national oil resources allowed further expansion of the public sector and limited industrialization while political and strategic rents (especially the alliance with the Soviet Union) allowed the regime to engage in the construction of a national security state. Yet since the 1990s, the populist authoritarian regime entered a structural crisis due to the stagnation and decline of oil rents that had been crucial for the economic expansion of the 1970s and 1980s. This triggered a crisis of direction of populist authoritarianism involving the choice between neoliberal economic reform policies based on a shift toward the new domestic bourgeoisie and international capital, and alternative efforts to sustain the alliance between the state and popular sectors. As for the latter option, the rentier state in crisis faced permanent resource shortages that made it difficult to maintain existing patronage or to offer any further concessions to the popular sectors.

A second theoretical perspective on Syria focuses on sectarianism (Dam 2011a). This line of analysis suggests that the structures of the Syrian state are ultimately controlled by some members of the Alawi sect minority ruling the country in an informal coalition with other minorities such as Christians and Druzes. This coalition of minorities does selectively co-opt representatives of the Sunni majority into the ruling bloc but the repressive forces of the state (i.e. special units of the army and the security services) are mostly controlled by sectarian loyalties rather than other potential sources of authority such as ideology or social class coalitions. The proponents of this interpretation of Syria suggest that past conflict over power in the Baath Party and the army took an apparently ideological form but was actually decided along sectarian lines. The rise to power of Hafiz al-Assad and the setting-up of cohesive state structures since 1970 is therefore held to be due to the tight linkages in the ruling elite deriving from the extraordinary cohesion of at least some sectors of the Alawi community backing up his rule. Extension of this interpretation is the statement that Syria is not a nation state and that the current crisis will ultimately result in the splitting-up of the country. The proponents of this view suggest that ‘state nationalism’ in Syria has failed and that the division of Syria along sectarian and ethnic lines into smaller Sunni, Alawi and potentially Kurdish and Druze entities should be expected. What speaks against this excessively ethnic and sectarian interpretation of Syria is that all postcolonial states in the region are ‘state nations’ rather than ‘nation states’ (Breuilly 1993). Moreover, the break-up of any Arab state in the region would certainly trigger intervention from outside and would have repercussions far beyond the borders of Syria. In summary, the populist authoritarian and the sectarian perspective both help to explain certain features of the Syrian state. However, it is not useful to place any single perspective above the other since ‘it becomes almost impossible to disentangle the sectarian argument from the political economy one’ (Khatib 2011: 59).

56 Conversely, it is necessary to ‘take into consideration that there is no clear sectarian dichotomy in Syrian society, dividing the country into Alawis and non-Alawis. Syria has never been ruled by “the Alawi community” as such’ (Dam 2011b).
Third, more general theories of economic development might also be useful to acquire a better understanding of the Syrian state. In this context, the most promising expansion on the theory of populist authoritarianism in Syria toward a general theoretical framework is provided by the theory of the rentier state and state class (Elsenhans 1981). In developing countries, capital accumulation in the domestic market is either missing or very limited in scope and the state lacks the capacity to enforce an effective tax system. Yet as soon as developing countries are in a position to exploit natural resources on a large scale, state income must no longer primarily be generated domestically. Instead, it starts to derive from rents that are achieved in selling oil and other resources to the outside world. Thus, in oil-producing countries the relationship between the state and the economy is reversed because state income determines gross domestic product and not the other way round (Luciani 1987: 65). Therefore, the direct appropriation of rent income by the state means that the bureaucracy does not need to ‘legitimate their resource control in their interaction with other social classes which results in the creation of a specific class—the state class’ (Eckelt 2011a: 19). According to Elsenhans, the state class consists of all those employed in ‘leading roles in the state apparatus, state enterprise, and state-led political and societal organizations’ (1981: 122). This group therefore consists of the higher levels of the state bureaucracy, state enterprise, army and similar state-led bodies that enjoy higher than average incomes, prestige, and opportunities for political participation. Crucially, the state class is an elite class that differs from rank-and-file public sector employees. The latter are clients rather than members of the state class. Moreover, the state class includes competing segments that are in turn characterized by cleavages such as ethnic origin, family, tribe, religion, ideology, and educational background. The ruling segments of the state class tend to co-opt the most significant other social classes in society and use the rent to build alliances based on patron-client relations. Significantly, the rentier state uses corporatist institutions to avoid the open escalation of political conflict: ‘The relationship of the state to different social classes is not revealed in tax policy but in social policy…. [T]he state class legitimates itself in competition with other segments by improving the conditions of living of the population at large’ (ibid.: 270). Going a step further analytically, the historical task of the state class is to organize the transition from the simple divvying up of the rent between different groups (the initial stage) toward the productive and intelligent usage of rent. In case of success, states might use local agricultural surplus together with rent income to finance industrialization efforts and subsequently engage in export-oriented industrial policies to advance the position of the country in the international division of labor (Elsenhans 2005: 163-164). However, in the Syrian case the transition from the splitting up of rents toward the productive usage of rents remains deeply contested. In particular, the Syrian rents from oil and gas exploitation were rather limited in comparison to the main OPEC producers and as measured in terms of resource endowment per head of the population (Basedau and Lay 2009). What was available in rent income was used to subsidize all kinds of domestic economic activity including agriculture while a large share was also spent unproductively on the national security state. Advocates of the state class theory stress, therefore, that rentier states must be conceptualized broadly. In particular, the rent from oil and gas is only one of the potential sources of revenue of the state class while strategic and political rents must also be considered to explain the room for maneuver to sustain patron-client relationships domestically. In conclusion, the theory of the rentier state might highlight some of the underpinnings of the behavior of the Syrian state class that are shared with many other countries. It also helps to explain why the latitude of the remainder of the Syrian resource endowment (and the right of accessing it) is a crucial political variable.

The fourth theoretical school worth considering in the context of Syrian affairs is the neo-Gramscian perspective in international relations theory (Cox 1983). This theoretical approach goes beyond the traditional focus on the state as the major actor in international relations and focuses instead on the interaction between states, economic regimes, and civil society. The main focus of the theory is on social class forces and their political agency in contesting for leadership and hegemony at the national and international level. The resulting dominant policy frameworks express a combination of state and class power. For example, the so-called ‘embedded liberalism’ of the Cold War era and the more recent rise of neoliberal capitalism since the mid-1970s are according to neo-Gramscian analysis due to elite consensus that emerged only after a period of severe class conflict (the rise of leaders such as Reagan and Thatcher focusing on the exclusion of organized labor from policy formulation at the national level). In this approach, hegemony might occasionally be based on cross-class alliances such as the political co-option of social democratic parties and trade union movements during the period of Cold War liberalism. At other times, hegemony might be based on more narrow elite coalitions such as during the most recent period of the apparent dominance of financial interests over other class forces (the so-called ‘shareholder capitalism’). In this context, the results of contestation between advocates of social reformists

57 All translations from German-language sources are by the author.
58 According to Elsenhans, ‘public sector employees differ from other client groups of the state class in growing as of necessity in parallel with the rise in importance of the state class. They differ from the other client groups of the state class that can change in accordance with different economic strategies… [E]mployees in the public sector are the “organic clients” of the state class...’ (1981: 122, see also 23-24, 121).
59 There is a danger to overextend the theory of the rentier state to include many states that enjoy primarily political and strategic rents. From such a comprehensive point of view, states such as Israel might also be considered rentier states on account of the country’s privileged economic relationship with the U.S.A. However, such expansive use of the theory ignores its direct analytical link with resource-based extraction of rent income.
and neoliberal policies inside of international organizations (IOs) determine to a large extent the rise and fall of hegemonies in the international system (Hudson 2005). As for Syria, the state elite maintained a strategy of maximizing its own autonomy vis-à-vis international organizations until the 1990s. In marked difference to many other developing countries, Syria enjoyed relative autonomy due to its self-sufficiency in agriculture and the absence of a debt record with western countries or western-dominated IOs such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank. It therefore did not engage in IMF-inspired structural adjustment programs although some of the domestic austerity measures that were taken in the 1990s due to the disappearance of Soviet assistance and the decline of income from oil and gas rents triggered very similar social consequences for the poorest sections of the population. Under Bashar al-Assad, the country’s leadership started to experiment with a more accommodating policy framework in the context of neoliberal capitalism. The former (2003-2011) Syrian deputy prime minister for economic affairs Abdullah al-Dardari was the most prominent representative of supply-side neoliberal reform policies in Syria. In line with World Bank advice, he focused on cuts in subsidies for agricultural producers, removal of tariff protection, and the raising of domestic prices of subsidized commodities such as gas and fuel. These measures might be interpreted as Syria’s increasing acceptance of the international neoliberal economic mainstream. They certainly worked to weaken the Syrian corporatist institutions that expressed interest mediation and social compromise at the domestic level (Hinnebusch 2012). Nevertheless, proper interpretation of neo-Gramscian theory suggests that Syria remains characterized by the direct political control of economic policies that is the central feature of rentier states. The regime therefore still navigates between the forces of economic liberalization representing private capital at the domestic and international level, on the one hand, and the ‘corrective wing’ representing the Syrian public sector and popular forces on the other hand.

Finally, a fifth theoretical perspective on Syria is provided by classical geopolitical thought which is defined as the influence of geographical factors on politics and international relations. In the context of the modern Middle East, the effort of the United States (U.S.) to assume the role of the only veto power in the conduct of Arab regional politics frames the behavior of all competing powers. The U.S. policy of enforcing and defending a veto role derives from the takeover of formerly European (i.e. French and British) influence in the region after WWII. In this context, the most significant step was the agreement, in 1944, between U.S. President Roosevelt and the Saudi King Ibn Saud establishing the strategic link between the U.S. and the Saudi oil monarchy. Afterwards, the U.S. largely replaced British and French influence in the region leaving the latter powers only some token representation (i.e. the link between Maronite Christians in Lebanon and France and the link between the King of Jordan and Britain). U.S. strategists described the alliance with the Saudi King, which allowed U.S. exploitation of Saudi oil fields, as ‘a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history’ (Merriam 1945, quoted in Gendzier 2011, footnote 3). The U.S. regional policy of exclusive strategic leadership was formalized in the Eisenhower Doctrine, which considered any intervention of competing powers in the Middle East as unacceptable: the U.S. subsequently took over from France the role as patron of Israel in the late 1950s. In parallel, the intervention of U.S. troops in Lebanon in 1958 demonstrated U.S. willingness to assert direct military control and underlined the geopolitical decline of France in the region.60 However, the U.S. subsequently faced significant geopolitical backlash due to the successful policies of Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser who managed to first defeat the joint Franco-British and Israeli invasion during the Suez Canal crisis in 1956 by tactical alignment with the U.S. before shifting Egypt toward an alliance with the Soviet Union (Haykal 1973; Yaqub 2004: 5-8, 20). This U.S. defeat in Egypt was reversed after Nasser’s death; yet the U.S. once again lost control of a significant regional ally when the Shah was removed from power during the Iranian revolution of 1979. From the Syrian point of view, the local geopolitics offered Syria the position of a ‘swing state’ in regional geopolitical affairs, which allowed the country to choose alliances with each of the other three main regional Arab powers, namely Egypt, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia (Yaqub 2004: 36). Syria first aligned with Egypt under Nasser but this link was in effect broken by the U.S. in the early 1970s after Nasser’s death. In reaction to its isolation in the Arab world, Syria subsequently formed a defensive alliance with the Islamic Republic of Iran (a non-Arab power) after the 1979 Iranian revolution and subsequently with the Shiite Hizballah party in Lebanon in the 1980s. This alliance (the so-called ‘axis of resistance’) has gained additional significance due to the economic and political rise of Russia and especially China. In particular, China’s recent interest in Middle Eastern oil resources—necessary for energy-poor China to maintain its industrialization drive and high growth rates—is one of the main considerations to explain U.S. conduct in the region (Almond 2003; Brzezinski 1997: 55). As for Syria, the country’s leadership tried at least twice in the 1990s to improve the relationship with the U.S., and Hafiz al-Assad engaged in sustained negotiations with George H. W. Bush during the time of the second Gulf war in 1991 and with Bill Clinton in the context of the Madrid ‘peace process’ in the mid-1990s. In both cases, the Syrian leadership learned that elite diplomacy did not result in the willingness of U.S. policymakers to support legitimate Syrian demands, especially the return of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights to Syria. In summary, the behavior of the government of Bashar al-Assad since 2000 and the strong focus on the regional

60 The Carter Doctrine of 23 January 1980 (inspired by Zbigniew Brzezinski) once again explicitly stated that the U.S. would consider any threat to its geopolitical position in the Middle East as a legitimate reason to use military force.
and international alliances between the Syrian government and supportive external powers (Iran, Russia, and China) might be explained by long-standing experiences with U.S. behavior in the region.

Finally, only by combining different theoretical perspectives—focusing on the structure of material interests, social forces, and ethnic cleavages, on the one hand, and the awareness of the interaction between Syrian domestic forces and the regional and international system on the other—is it possible to capture the complexities of Syrian politics. In fact, the resilience of the Syrian state under pressure since March 2011 has underlined that the regime continues to be deeply rooted in Syrian society.

**Syria’s Political History from 1920 until 1970**

The history of modern Syria derives from the division of the Levant (the Bilad al-Sham, Arabic for ‘the country of Syria’) after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 into smaller states that were either nominally independent or given as ‘mandates’ of the League of Nations system to Britain and France. This was the direct result of the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 between Britain and France that divided the Levant into a British and French zone of interest (see BBC 2001 for a map; WWI Archive (no stated date) for the full text). During the French rule in Syria and Lebanon (1920-1946 in the former and 1920-1944 in the latter case), French authorities focused heavily on ‘divide-and-rule’ policies along ethnic and religious lines. First, the French severed Lebanon from Syrian territory and created ‘Greater Lebanon’ due to the French decision to add territory east of Mount Lebanon to the new Lebanese state. This decision created a demographic balance between Maronite Christians and Sunni and Shiite Muslims in Lebanon, thereby bringing into being a political state in which ‘most Lebanese owed their primary allegiance not to the nation but to their religious sects’ (Yaqub 2004: 37).

Similar considerations governed French rule in what remained of the Syrian mandate. Here, the French aligned themselves with the Alawi and Druze minorities that were given priority to be drafted into the French colonial armed forces. French strategists were keen to experiment with a ‘canton’-like system of subdivisions of the Syrian territory. They therefore delegated authority to various local leaders to create a power balance based on sectarian and regional divisions that would limit the appeal of the emerging Arab nationalist movement demanding Syria’s independence from France. In 1938, the Turkish military entered the Syrian province of Alexandretta (the coastal area in the north-western top corner of Syria) and expelled sections of the local Arab and Armenian population. The territory was afterwards incorporated into Turkey as the 63rd Turkish Hatay province. This cessation of Syrian territory was accepted by the French colonial power to improve relations with Kemalist Turkey but is still contested by Syria.

From the point of view of the predominantly Sunni Muslim leadership of the emerging Arab nationalist movement in the 1920s and 1930s, the French policy of ‘divide-and-rule’ was based on efforts to artificially separate Lebanon from Syria. While the colonial authorities wished for small political entities to exercise effective control, the emerging pan-Arab nationalist movement stressed on the contrary the unity of the Arab nation. Arab nationalism became defined as based on the shared use of the Arab language rather than the territorial unity of the Arab peninsula. It was due to this shift toward cultural nationalism that Egypt and countries of the Maghreb started to be associated with pan-Arab nationalist aspirations (Devlin 1991). When Syria became independent in 1946, the postcolonial state was exceptionally weak, however. In marked contrast to Lebanon in which a ‘National Pact’ between the Sunni Muslim politician Riad el-Solh and the Maronite Christian politician Bishara al-Khouri of 1943 allowed to construct a political regime based on the principle of power sharing between different sects (Seale 2011), no such formal agreement had been reached between the different sects in Syria. As a result, postcolonial politics remained in the hands of traditional notables and the landed gentry. In addition, regionalism (the conflict between Damascus and Aleppo-based political leaders) and the exclusion of popular sectors from effective participation in politics made for rather shallow statehood.

Between 1946 and 1963, Syria found itself mostly at the receiving end of regional and global power politics and was considered a case study of covered US and neighboring Arab countries interference in the domestic politics of Syria (Copeland 1970; Seale 1986; Rathmell 1995: 138-144, 163-166). In political science literature of the time, Syria was presented as ‘the coup country par excellence’ (Luttwak 1979 [first edition 1968]: 85), having experienced more than a dozen military coups since independence. Because of weak statehood, the Syrian army quickly emerged as the most effective tool to exercise political power. Since the army
had been historically considered as an unacceptable career choice for members of the Syrian upper classes, this newly found power of the army placed young officers from lower and lower middle-class sectors and the ethnic minorities in positions that would allow them to subsequently contest for power (Seale 1988: 38-39).

Apart from the structural power of the army, Syrian politics was characterized by the rise of new political parties that aligned themselves with ideologies of popular sectors. The three most significant forces were the Baath Party, the SSNP and the Communists. Their ideological differences concerned questions of pan-Arab unity and the issue of socialism: the Baath Party was ideologically committed to pan-Arab unity while the SSNP, led by the Greek-Orthodox Antun Saadeh, insisted that a greater Syrian nationalism uniting the ‘fertile crescent’ reaching from Cyprus to Iraq into a single state based on a particular shared cultural heritage that differed from other Arabs, would allow founding a greater Syria. As for socialism, the Baath was committed to ‘unity, freedom, and socialism’ but was never Marxist in orientation. The SSNP was originally non-leftist in its discourse but later became more social-populist while the Communists essentially followed the course of the Soviet Union and suffered internal divisions that mostly concerned the party’s relationship with the Baath Party.

As for the history of the Baath Party, the organization was founded by the Orthodox Christian Michel Aflaq (born 1910) and the Sunni Muslim Salah Al-Din Bitar (born 1912). The party demanded to unite all Arabs, defined in terms of shared language and culture, into a single Arab state. In the beginning, the party aspired to develop party organizations in all Arab countries and the party’s leadership was therefore divided into a so-called ‘national command’ (a pan-Arab leadership structure that was notionally in charge of the entire party) and a ‘regional command’ (the leadership structure dealing with Syrian affairs). However, following the rise of Nasser in Egypt and the development of a pan-Arab Nasserist movement, the historical Baath Party leadership around Aflaq accepted Nasser’s leadership role and the party dissolved to prepare for the unification of Egypt and Syria during the United Arab Republic (proclaimed in 1958 and dissolved by the exit of Syria in 1961). After the failure of this short-term political experiment with Arab unity, the Baath Party became increasingly controlled by a military committee of Syrian army officers that included Hafiz al-Assad.

Following a coup on March 8, 1963, the Baath Party again took power in Syria under the notional leadership of Aflaq and Bitar. However, the two historical leaders were subsequently sidelined in another coup of the so-called ‘neo-Baath’ on February 23, 1966. This coup, in turn, resulted in the rise to power of a collective body of Baathist army officers led by Salah Jadid that was mostly Alawi in origin and in which Hafiz Al-Assad served as defense minister. Under Jadid’s leadership, the Baath Party adopted a leftist profile and engaged in land reform confiscating land from large landowners. This move was backed up by the foundation of the Peasants’ Union in 1964 that became a pillar of Baathist influence in the countryside (Eckelt 2011a: 30-31). As for regional Arab affairs, the Jadid leadership suggested to engage in ‘people’s war’ to liberate Palestine and was willing to offer Palestinian militants military support in their conflict with the Jordanian state authorities. However, this posture did not help to avoid the military defeat of Egypt and Syria in the 1967 war with Israel in which Syria suffered the loss of the strategically and economically significant Golan Heights that have since been occupied by Israel.


On November 16, 1970, Hafiz al-Assad led another coup–termed the ‘Corrective Movement’–that removed the more radical sections of the Baath Party under the leadership of Jadid from power. This move turned out to constitute a decisive turning point in the history of modern Syria. In marked contrast to earlier Baathist leaders, Hafiz al-Assad was able to construct a stable political system that allowed the Syrian state for the first time to become an influential regional actor. In order to explain this transformation of state and society, economic and political factors must be jointly considered. On the economic plane, Syria started to take off as a rentier state in the early 1970s due to the expansion of oil rents and strategic and political rents. These derived in turn from

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61 Notionally, the Syrian Baath Party still maintains a National and a Regional [i.e. Syrian] Command. However, the Regional Command is in fact the actual party leadership body. (This paper does not discuss the case of the Iraqi Baath Party.)

rising oil prices and improved relations with richer Arab Gulf countries, thereby allowing for the rapid expansion of the Syrian public sector. Consequently, public sector workers enjoyed privileged access to social policies such as guaranteed jobs, free health care, old-age pensions, public transport, social services, and some public housing facilities (Eckelt 2011a: 60). In addition, the state controlled prices of basic goods such as fuel, petrol, bread, and certain staple foods. In the countryside, the state also used some of the oil rent to provide price guarantees for agricultural producers which allowed rural workers to participate in the rise in the standard of living. Overall, the 1970s were characterized by rapid urbanization and a transition in the labor market. At the beginning of the decade, one in two Syrians was working in agriculture while only one in four did so at the beginning of the 1980s (Eckelt 2011a: Appendix IV).

In terms of Hafiz al-Assad’s reorganization of the political system in Syria, a marked shift took place toward a ‘palace-type’ of political authority that replaced the earlier system of collective leadership. The new system was characterized by the dominance of the president who alone took the position of controller of all other institutions. It is probably the case that Assad was inspired in his reorganization by the example of Nasser in Egypt who had been very successful in stabilizing his rule by engaging in role distribution to other major officials while reserving to himself the exclusive right of political coordination (Baroutt 2011: 12). Under the new presidential system, the Syrian state became defined by the following major institutions: (1) in the center is the figure of the president; (2) the president is in charge of the ‘Presidency of the Syrian Arab Republic’, which has purposefully blurred boundaries; (3) the army; (4) the security services operating independently from each other and without any inter-agency coordination; (5) the formal state institutions consisting of a government and ministries headed by a prime minister and assisted by a parliament (the People’s Assembly); (6) the regime’s corporatist institutions such as the Baath Party, the other legal political parties organized in the ‘National Progressive Front’ (NPF), founded in 1972, the Peasants’ Union, trade unions, and similar bodies.

The most significant feature of the Syrian political system is the concentration of power in the Presidency. The Syrian president is the commander in chief of the armed forces, controls the security services, and has also been the secretary general of the Baath Party. While the political domination of the president was codified in the 1973 Syrian constitution, it is significant to appreciate that the office is characterized by formal and informal powers: ‘The president can govern by way of ordinances and decrees and has the right to initiate laws in Parliament. The government and the 14 provincial governors are appointed by the president and directly responsible to him. The government consists of a prime minister and a variable number of ministers…. [O]pportunities of the president to intervene directly into day-to-day policymaking are not based on well-defined presidential institutions. Instead, decisions are taken on the basis of consultations with advisors and ad-hoc working groups’ (Eckelt 2011a: 55). Thus, the Syrian president is free to shape the office according to his own interests, and direct leadership can be exercised whenever suitable while authority can also be delegated at will to other people who own their position directly to the president. Indeed, Hafiz al-Assad decided to focus his attention on foreign policymaking and defense while delegating the management of Syria’s economy and other domestic issues to close assistants. He explained his choices by stating that ‘I am the head of the country, not of the government’ (Assad, quoted in Seale 1988: 343).

In terms of the actual exercise of power, observers of Syrian affairs have pointed out that the informal security apparatus, based on sectarian loyalties and directly answerable to the president, backs up the formal state institutions. Thus, many state offices act as little more than a facade for the actual power holders. To put it differently: Syria’s official government is part of the Syrian regime but does not necessarily belong to the core of the power elite. In addition, the different formal and informal institutions mutually overlap and reinforce each other. For example, the army enjoys privileged representation in the leadership of the Baath Party which is in turn based on a hierarchy that is shaped in consultation with the president in his role as party leader. Since the Baath Party was until the 2012 amendment of the Syrian constitution (discussed below) the ‘leading party in the society and the state’ (article 8 of the 1973 Syrian constitution), it was in turn charged with the running of public sector institutions in the economic and educational field as well as in the army. In summary, the exceptionally strong role of the Syrian president makes it practically impossible for the other formal institutions to exercise checks and balances or to issue vetoes as it pertains to presidential actions.

Briefly summing up the main events during the long rule of Hafiz al-Assad, one needs to focus on economic and political issues. In terms of economic affairs, the Syrian state enjoyed increasing access to oil rents and political and strategic rents. These rents

63 In addition, Syrian labor migration to richer Arab countries such as Lebanon and Saudi Arabia allowed access to remittance payments. These payments improved the economic situation of many Syrian families.

64 Parliamentary powers to supervise the national budget are limited in scope and parliament is ‘not to engage in comprehensive control of the executive, especially not of the president who can dissolve parliament at any point…. The [parliamentary] veto power as regards presidential degrees was de facto not used’ (Eckelt 2011a: 53).
could be used according to political objectives and spending focused strongly on the army, other state institutions, and the public sector. The main problem from the point of view of managing the rental income was that the oil rent suffered from the decline of oil prices since the beginning of the 1980s while the political and strategic rents were highly unstable and depended on Syria's geopolitical environment. Thus, Syria enjoyed periods in which the rich Arab Gulf states were willing to provide assistance to the Syrian state—such as after the 1973 war with Israel—and suffered during periods in which political and strategic rents declined. In addition, the Syrian leadership also received substantial economic and military assistance from the Soviet Union before and, more substantially, after the 1973 war in order to support the Syrian doctrine of ‘strategic parity’ with Israel in the military field. (Although the Syrian army subsequently developed into one of the strongest regional armies, the Syrian economic foundations were never strong enough to allow reaching the goal of strategic parity.)

In terms of managing the Syrian domestic economy, Assad started his Presidency in 1971 by trying to establish better relations with the representatives of the traditional urban Sunni bourgeoisie. During the entire period of his rule until 2000, economic policymaking shifted between the poles of increased economic liberalization as advocated by representatives of the traditional and new (regime-dependent) bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the public sector Baathists demanding ‘corrective measures’ to support the public sector on the other hand. This polarization triggered cyclical competition: whenever the rent income of the state declined, the economic liberalization wing advanced while the public sector Baathists reasserted their position when rent income was on the increase. It is appropriate to suggest that this helped to ‘contain both the right and left mechanisms of the political regime. Thus it achieved a sharing of power and managed the various stances emanating from within the regime’ (Baroutt 2011: 13). One needs to appreciate that the process resulted in the increasing power of the liberalizers over time and various political ‘turning points’ in favor of the liberalizing wing can be pointed out. For example, the first ‘infithah’ [Arab term for ‘openness’] after the coming to power of Hafiz al-Assad in the early 1970s and the second ‘infithah’ based on the Investment Law no. 10 of 1991 were certainly significant stepping stone to move ‘from the theory of the central leadership role of the public sector to “economic pluralism” in all public, private and joint sectors’ (ibid.). Nevertheless, the regime never fully turned against its public sector constituencies because the very nature of the rentier state demands that the state class exercises leadership based on public sector policies and the maintenance of corporatist institutions. Thus, experiments with liberalization of the economy remain ultimately under the political command of the state class to ensure its own political survival.

As for political integration measures, Hafiz al-Assad expanded the network of corporatist political organizations under the guidance of the governing Baath Party. This amounted to a process of ‘integration from above’ and covered Nasserite and Communist organizations. These parties were invited to join the National Progressive Front and were also granted representation in the People’s Assembly (the Parliament), although the only NPF parties with a significant degree of popular support were the two factions of the Communist Party. In addition, the Kurdish minority received a degree of parliamentary representation and, in the 1990s, the new bourgeoisie was allowed to use the Chamber of Commerce as a lobbying body in its interaction with the government.

However, such ‘integration from above’ was also contested by opposition from below. The main forces of the Syrian anti-government opposition in the 1970s were secular leftist parties and the Muslim Brotherhood. In the former case, the leftist groups suffered intense regime repression at the beginning of the 1980s from which they did not subsequently recover. In the latter case, the Muslim Brotherhood was originally characterized by a more moderate and a more radical wing and was also divided along regional and generational lines. Due to various external events, such as the intervention of Syria in the Lebanese civil war after 1976—originally on the side of Maronite Christians—the radical Brotherhood wing gained the ascendancy and started to shift from agitation against the secular Baath regime toward an armed sectarian campaign against the Alawite minority between 1976 and 1982 (Khatib 2011: 71-73; Lobmeyer 1995: 199). In this conflict, the Brotherhood was originally able to gain a certain degree of support from social constituencies that included craftsmen, traders and elements of the traditional Sunni-urban bourgeoisie. In addition, some professional organizations of doctors, engineers, and lawyers were also at various points under the influence of the Brotherhood. However, the radicalized and armed Brotherhood failed in the contest for power with the regime. This was due to the fact that the degree of support for the Brotherhood in Syrian society remained always quite limited in scope and was at the highest point in the late 1970s estimated to be around or below 30,000 sympathizers (Daraj and Barut 2006, quoted in Khatib 2011: 81; Dekmejian, quoted in Lobmeyer 1995: 384).

On the other hand, urban workers employed in the public sector, the peasantry, and people in the countryside in general did not extend any significant degree of support for the Brotherhood (Lobmeyer 1995: 389-390, 394). Moreover, the Brotherhood did not sustain efforts to construct a broader political coalition with other opposition forces. For example, the short-term political alliance with the leftist secular opposition at the beginning of the 1980s lacked credibility and ‘reflected in reality a deep cleavage between Islamists and secularists whose commonality remained limited to shared hostility to the ruling regime’ (ibid.: 301). More impor-
tantly, the Brotherhood accepted foreign financial and military assistance, principally from Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and conservative Gulf states, to start a campaign of urban terrorism against the Assad regime (Seale 1988: 335-338). The campaign of violence soon escalated and rising numbers of regime representatives including pro-regime Sunni religious scholars were assassinated. There were some attempts to stop the escalation of violence, including regime efforts to come to an agreement with the Brotherhood in 1979, but these efforts all failed. In 1982, the Syrian army’s crushing of the uprising of the Brotherhood in the city of Hama ended the insurgency and resulted in the full-scale defeat of the organization.

The political and military defeat of the Brotherhood underlined that the Assad regime was able to rely on a sufficiently-large coalition of domestic supporters and that the Brotherhood’s policy of self-isolation and armed attack on the state had failed. This was in spite of the significant degree of external support that had been offered to the Brotherhood from a large coalition of outside powers who were keen to remove Assad and the Syrian state class from power. In the years after 1982 and until the end of his life, Assad worked to improve the relationship with the Sunni community in general and Sunni religious leaders in particular. This policy of accommodation was based on efforts to promote a moderate religious leadership and to offer state resources for a large Mosque building program. One of the results of this policy (matched by similar efforts to sustain good relations with all other religious communities in Syria) was a significant improvement of the relations between the state leadership and religious leaders—while earlier strongly secularist views of the Baath Party were increasingly sidelined (Khatib 2011, 2012).

In summary, the leadership of Assad sustained the Syrian state class in power between 1970 and 2000. The first decade of his leadership was the most dynamic period in economic terms with high growth rates that are typical for countries in transition from an agricultural toward an industrial and service economy. The Syrian state engaged in this period in limited land reform and limited industrialization efforts. These economic policies were neither a complete success nor a complete failure. In terms of agricultural reform, the scope of land distribution might have been too limited while efforts to increase agricultural productivity produced some moderate success. As for industrialization efforts, the build-up of state-owned industries was not comprehensive enough to create strong linkages between sectors and many public industries were from the beginning loss-making entities. Nevertheless, these policies strengthened the country’s economic autonomy and domestic social compromises based on expansion of the public sector. Ultimately, the state still relied on rent income from the sale of oil and from political and strategic rents. Throughout his rule, Assad managed to sustain the large degree of autonomy of the state class. The Syrian state remained practically independent from the international financial institutions, and Syria's membership in IMF and World Bank did not result in any substantial economic involvement with these bodies. In summary, Syria's leaders always enjoyed significant degrees of autonomy in their dealings with allies and adversaries.

Nevertheless, there was already a slow but steady decline of the ability of the state class to advance comprehensive social policies that would have allowed the Syrian society in general and the rank-and-file of the state class (those employees of the public sector that were not part of the elite) in particular to be confident about their upward social mobility. (One of the indicators for the decline of internal social reformism was the relative loss of the value of average state employee’s salaries as judged against the cost of living.) This has been well-described in the discussion of internal cleavages within the state class: Already in the 1980s, observers noticed the rise of what was then referred to as a ‘new class’ or ‘military-mercantile complex’ of regime representatives mingling with representatives of the Sunni Damascene merchant class, which amounted to a ‘coalescence of those from different societal origins around newly encouraged economic activity’ (Terc 2011: 44). It was the new class faction that subsequently advanced its economic demands in the context of global neoliberalism, demanding increased freedom for entrepreneurship and private capital interests, thereby questioning the internal unity of the state class.

The Presidency of Bashar al-Assad since 2000

The accession to the Syrian Presidency of Bashar al-Assad following the death in office of his father Hafiz al-Assad on June 10, 2000 underlined the fact that the Syrian ruling elite did not wish any open contestation for power amongst the representatives of the older leadership generation. Thus, Hafiz al-Assad's style of leadership that had denied any of his close associates the role of a natural successor worked in favor of allowing his son access to the highest position. The new president (aged 34 at the time of as-
suming office) symbolized generational change and the opening up of the country to new technologies and new cultural influences such as the internet and the expansion of English-language instruction in the education system (Hinnebusch 2009: 12-13). Directly after the Syrian succession, western commentators were mostly focusing on the question of whether or not Bashar merely served to fulfill demands of existing power holders. However, it subsequently became apparent that there was real generational and power change in the regime and two thirds of the 60 most important positions in the regime were newly appointed until 2003 (Abboud 2009: 17).

Once firmly settled in office, Bashar’s leadership style and office shaping strategy nevertheless remained based on a gradual and mixed approach. In terms of domestic policymaking, he refused to engage in any fundamental political reform efforts although a certain degree of media liberalization and the rise of civil society organizations pointed towards a tacit opening of Syrian society. In the economic field, he continued the gradual liberalization approach that had already prevailed under his father. Yet the degree of economic liberalization measures was significantly increased after 2005 underlining a drift in the higher echelons of the state class toward alliances with the new bourgeoisie. In foreign policymaking, Syria continued to belong to the axis of resistance with Iran and Hizballah in Lebanon. In addition, Bashar sustained pan-Arab nationalist demands such as the support of Palestinian rights and the need of Israel to return the Syrian Golan Heights. On the other hand, he also explored opportunities to improve the relationship with the U.S. and the European Union (EU). These efforts suffered from the fact that U.S. policy in the region was dominated by a group of policymakers who intended to impose a pro-Israeli Pax Americana in the region and rejected any consideration of legitimate Arab and Syrian grievances (Hinnebusch 2009: 19).

In order to analyze Bashar’s Presidency, the first part of this section follows a timeline approach. The latter part of this section sums up the outcomes of his policies in the economic field and with regard to the reform of the Syrian political system. In terms of a timeline approach, the Presidency might be divided into the following periods: (1) the transition period from the time of assuming office until the U.S.-led occupation of neighboring Iraq (2000-2003); (2) the first period of sustained external pressure when the U.S. threatened regime change from outside (2003-2005); (3) a second period of sustained pressure in which Syria was forced to withdraw its military presence in neighboring Lebanon in 2005; (4) a short-term period of direct challenge of the axis of resistance during the border war between Israel and Hizballah in Lebanon in 2006; (5) the increased shift of the Syrian regime toward economic liberalization during the 10th Syrian Five Year Plan (2005-2010); (6) the period between the beginning of the ‘Arab Spring’ and the rise of public protests in Syria (2010-2011); (7) the rapid deterioration of the Syrian domestic political situation since March 2011 and the tacit efforts of the regime to react with political reforms.

Directly after entering office, the new president was greeted by a civil society movement with a leftist and liberal profile that was referred to as the ‘Damascus Spring’. This movement was primarily driven by intellectuals and demanded the abolition of the state of emergency, the release of political prisoners, and the introduction of a multi-party system in Syria. However, the intellectuals were unable to reach larger sections of the population or of the state class with their demands (Eckelt 2011a: 90). The movement was subsequently shut down by the security services at the end of 2001 and some people were arrested and tried in public courts for offences against national security laws. At the same time, the state did release some political prisoners and some degree of political activity of the liberal opposition was still tolerated. The issue of domestic democratization became sidelined, however, when the U.S. intervention and subsequent occupation of neighboring Iraq in 2003 resulted in the closure of ranks amongst the Syrian leadership and the Syrian population at large.

Between 2003 and 2005, the Syrian leadership appeared to be next on a list of U.S. military-sponsored regime change in the region and seemed to be in real danger to fall victim to a second U.S. military campaign. Yet U.S. intervention in Iraq quickly triggered the full-scale breakdown of the Iraqi state along sectarian lines, and the high monetary and political cost of subsequent U.S. counter insurgency efforts made it clear to the U.S. leadership that additional military campaigns were not advisable. From the point of view of the Syrian leadership, the collapse of the Iraqi state next door served as a warning that Syria might ‘turn into a second Iraq’. This fear was shared by the Syrian population at large and underlined by the presence of up to 1.5 million Iraqi refugees in the streets of Syria since the Syrian government had allowed Iraqi citizens to flee the sectarian war at home by opening the country’s borders for Iraqis. In this situation, the Syrian regime organized large-scale public rallies in the streets of Syria in which the campaign message was mostly limited to pro-Syrian, pro-government, and pro-stability messages. These rallies were a real political success for the Syrian government and were based on the fear that war could come to Syria at this point in time (Hinnebusch 2009: 23).

In 2005, the contestation between Syria and the U.S.-led coalition quickly switched from the border between Syria and Iraq toward neighboring Lebanon. Here, the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri, who was strongly linked with
Saudi and French interests, on February 14, 2005 triggered the forming of a Franco-American coalition blaming Syria for the assassination and demanding (in UN Resolution 1559) the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. While the crime was never solved in a conclusive manner, Syria accepted that the pressure on its presence in Lebanon had become so severe that withdrawal of the Syrian troops was quickly concluded until May 2005. This withdrawal depreciated the regional geopolitical role of Syria whose intervention in the Lebanese Civil War since 1976 had been tacitly accepted by the U.S., Israel and other powers to avoid a security vacuum and to maintain a balance between the different political forces and sects in Lebanon. In 2006, Israel promptly engaged in a border war with the Hizballah militia in the south of Lebanon in order to weaken this Shiite-political movement with the view of disarming them. However, rather than producing a quick military defeat of Hizballah, the 34-day war was interpreted in the Arab world as a military draw and as a strategic success for the resistance axis to which Syria belonged. Thus, the period directly after the 2006 confrontation between Hizballah and Israel in Lebanon was probably the most successful point in the Presidency of Bashar with regard to foreign policy. His alliance with Hizballah appeared to point to a strong regional position of Syria regardless of the country’s earlier withdrawal from Lebanon (Hinnebusch 2009: 20; Valbjørn and Bank 2012: 4-7).

What lessons did Bashar draw from the experiences with sustained U.S. pressure and the push against Syria’s position in Lebanon? On the one hand, one might observe efforts to ‘construct multiple alliances, at both the regional and the international level, through which the pressure on Syria might be diluted and external resources accessed’ (Hinnebusch 2009: 15). However, there was also another and somehow contrary lesson: it appeared possible for Syria to push above its weight in terms of resisting U.S.-led pressures due to the popularity of a resistance position in the Arab world. It also appeared possible for the axis of resistance to fully balance the conservative Gulf Arab countries. With the advantage of hindsight, this interpretation of the geopolitical potential of Syria was clearly too far-reaching since it underestimated the superior resource endowment of the conservative Arab Gulf States and their willingness to put these resources to use against Syria (and by extension Iran) (Chivers and Schmitt 2013; Khalaf and Fielding-Smith 2013). Moreover, U.S. policymakers recovered to some extent from their lowest point after the Iraqi invasion (removing Saddam Hussein’s Sunni-based regime had actually served to strengthen the power of Shiite Iran since the post-Saddam Iraqi central government was principally Shiite). In fact, there are many indications that U.S. policymakers quietly remained committed to the project of regime change in Syria in the medium term (Hersh 2007).

Geopolitical issues aside, Syria also faced the need to reconsider domestic economic strategy. In the period after 2005, the international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, and some Syrian actors committed to liberal economics, claimed that Syria’s prospects as a rentier state were rapidly deteriorating (IMF 2006). It was claimed that, in order to deal with declining rents from the oil sector, the government would have to cut state subsidies and the size of the public sector while allowing the private sector an economic leadership role in terms of attracting investment and creating jobs. This policy suggestion was put forward as a foregone conclusion and was also pushed by efforts to commit Syria to a free trade regime as advanced by the EU in the economic Association Agreements of the European Neighborhood Policy. The Agreement would have allowed EU countries after a short transition period full access to the Syrian market, including domestic services and Syrian government procurement, while outlawing any Syrian government subsidies for domestic public sector enterprises (Dostal 2008).

However, this offensive of liberal economics in Syria was in practice subject to permanent challenge. In fact, one could detect another round of the competition between economic liberalizers and advocates of ‘corrective measures’ already apparent during the rule of Hafiz: this time, the first coalition has been described as ‘internationalist’ (consisting of traders, investors, and bankers) while the latter has been described as ‘nationalist Statist’ (consisting of the military, public sector, and populist constituencies) (Ehteshami et al. 2013: 225). These most recent developments once again underline the fact that rentier state policymaking follows a similar logic over time. From the point of view of Bashar, the conflict had to be managed rather than decided upon in favor of one of the two constituencies. In what is known about Bashar’s own views about economic management, he favored a gradual approach based on the continuing existence of a public sector while opening the Syrian market increasingly for private sector investment. This compromise was formally presented in Syrian government discourse either as a shift to a ‘social market economy’ or as the ‘Chinese model’ in which the private sector was allowed to expand while the public sector was retained and reformed in parallel.

In any case, the Syrian shift toward a market economy suffered from various shortcomings that all worked to downscale the prospects of liberal reformers to firmly establish their hegemony. First, most domestic Syrian capitalists were not able to flourish in a genuine market or to compete with international capital but depended for their business success on connections with the government. This group has therefore been described as ‘crony capitalist’ and their most well-known representative in the regime

65 The account of Hersh is an important source demonstrating how the second George W. Bush administration’s ‘redirection’ (Hersh) of policy, lining up US objectives with Sunni states and constituencies against Shiite power in the region, helps to explain subsequent choices of the Obama administration.
is Rami Makhlouf, a cousin of Bashar, who is in charge of many domestic business ventures such as Syria’s mobile phone network Syriatel. Second, the efforts of ‘crony capitalists’ to create business linkages with capital in other countries suffered from U.S.-led efforts to boycott them, and to exclude them from business opportunities outside of Syria. Third, in order to attract international and especially Gulf Arab investment into Syria, the geopolitical conflict with Saudi Arabia and other countries worked as a barrier. Although Syria succeeded in attracting some investment and therefore extracted a small share from the proceedings of the latest oil boom, this investment was mostly focused on a narrow luxury sector such as high end hotels and luxury goods. Fourth, in terms of actual structural opening of the economy, Syria did allow increasing access of Turkish business interests into Syria which immediately threatened the competitiveness of Syrian domestic producers such as the textiles sector. In summary, the Syrian shift toward private-sector driven growth did not solve the structural problems of a rentier economy in crisis because the private sector’s ability to create new jobs and to replace the economic activities of the public sector remained too limited.

Thus, the ‘nationalist-statist’ interests and the public sector still had to be accommodated. The most crucial political economy question was to what extent the state would be able to procure enough resources to satisfy the social interests of all factions of the state class. On the one hand, new rent income could be mobilized or, alternatively, real cuts could be enforced in the government budget to improve government finances by means of austerity. However, any sophisticated quantitative analysis of these issues would have to rely on up-to-date trustworthy data sources that are largely absent in the Syrian case. One can therefore only argue in a highly stylized manner. As for the state’s rent income and its distribution, it has been suggested that Syrian society ‘appears to form a pyramid made up of different layers of rentiers, in which broader layers of the population further down profit less and less from the national rent income’ (Eckelt 2011b). In this sense, one must analyze how public sector salaries compare to the cost of living over time and what kind of state subsidies are made available for those Syrians who do not have access to employment in the public sector. This analysis must take into account that public sector employment is only offered to approx. 20 percent of the adult population. In addition, public sector employment is biased in terms of limiting access to the more highly educated sectors of the population with intermediate and university-level degrees, therefore reinforcing existing social cleavages (Buckner and Saba 2010: 88-89). Outside of the public sector, state subsidization of staple foods, petrol, and heating gas form the only generally available social policy. Such untargeted social policies are part of the social contract to protect the population from extreme poverty and their replacement by targeted anti-poverty programs is difficult or impossible due to the limited administrative capacity of the Syrian state. Indeed, any attack on these general subsidies has historically been associated with large-scale discontent in most Arab countries.

It is therefore not surprising that Syrian state policy continued to be based on compromise with public sector interests. Briefly, the early period of Bashar’s Presidency before 2003 enjoyed a windfall gain from oil rents due to Iraqi oil transfers—a policy adopted to undermine U.S. sanctions against Iraqi oil sales. However, the share of oil income in Syrian government revenue subsequently declined from 58 percent in 2001 to 27 percent at the end of the decade according to government sources (Al-Thawra, quoted in Memrieconomicblog 2010). The initial increase in rent income resulted in increased job creation in the public sector but the rapid subsequent decline questioned all government spending programs and most government decisions since then concerned cuts or full-scale removal of subsidies. For example, the agricultural price guarantees that distributed some of Syria’s oil rent to agricultural producers while also controlling the prices for urban consumers were cut from 3.7 percent to 2 percent of GDP between 2000 and 2005 and the price subsidies for staple foods, petrol, and diesel all declined incrementally. On the other hand, full-scale privatization of public sector enterprise was avoided and the public sector was frequently compensated for rising prices by parallel increase in public sector wages.

To sum up the economic situation, one needs to stress that the decision of the state to protect its own core constituency against the effects of inflation was not sufficient to maintain social peace. In particular, rural constituencies were hit hard by economic reform and cuts in subsidies in addition to a long period of drought. While liberal government reformers under the managerial leadership of former deputy prime minister for economic affairs Abdullah al-Dardari tried to spread the message that flat-rate

66 In terms of establishing private capital as an influential player in Syrian domestic affairs, these investments were nevertheless of some significance because they allowed the construction of direct links between Syrian and external capital interests with a potential to bypass the mediating role of the state class (Eckelt 2011a: 116).

67 The actual size of Syrian government employment depends on how one conceptualizes the different categories such as central government, non-central government, education, health, public enterprise, and the armed forces. In fact, only some of these groups enjoy privileges that have historically been associated with the Syrian concept of public sector employment.

68 Similar figures are given in a second source stating that ‘in 2003, some 51% of government revenue came from oil receipts, an amount equal to 20% of GDP and 58% of exports…. [I]n 2008 oil-related revenues accounted for 26.6% of total revenue, or just half of the level from five years previous. The IMF estimates that the 2010 figure is likely to be around 25%’ (Oxford Business Group 2011: 94).
general subsidies were too expensive to be maintained, arguing that targeted welfare and a social safety net should replace the existing system, the actual development on the ground was to enforce cuts without previous introduction of adequate side payments. However one interprets these developments, one must appreciate that policy still remained within the framework of the rentier state: in particular, the liberal reformers were politically controlled and quietly left the scene when the domestic political order started to break down in 2011—without challenging the regime in any way. The regime immediately appointed prominent representatives of the ‘corrective wing’ such as Qadri Jamil, a former Communist and current leader of a minor leftist opposition party in the Syrian parliament, to take over the position formerly held by al-Dardari. In short, the political initiative was recaptured by the ‘nationalist-statist’ wing of the regime in its fight for survival (this is further discussed below).

Turning to analysis of the political leadership of Bashar before the 2011 crisis, the general impression was that the regime and government were united. Serious challenges to Bashar’s leadership did not occur in public.69 Some minor adjustments of the formal political system occurred. For example, the SSNP that had not been a legal political party in Syria was legalized and subsequently joined the NPF. It became clear that the former competitors for power after the independence of Syria (i.e. the Baath Party, SSNP, and CP) were drawn closer together. What was problematic, on the other hand, was the actual conduct of regime policy outside of the formal political system. Here, the apparent acceptance of Bashar’s leadership was paid for by the delegation of authority and autonomy to other prominent regime stakeholders. Crucially, effective steering of the regime was difficult according to Bashar’s own opinion: ‘We have a lot of ideas, but we do not know how to implement them. We issue laws, but we do not implement them. I issue a decree and the government should implement it, but now I have to follow up on everything all the time’ (Assad, quoted in Lesch 2005: 200). There is of course nothing specific Syrian about the problem of government coordination but the general impression of the Syrian state under Bashar’s leadership was that he tasked different people with different (and often contradictory) projects while overall coordinative capabilities were rather weak. Once again, this is typical of a rentier state in which different factions of the state class advance mutually contradictory social and political objectives.

**The Crisis in Syria since 2011**

Finally, turning toward the period of the so-called Arab Spring in 2010 and 2011, Syria appeared initially to be unaffected by the events leading to regime change in some other Arab countries such as Egypt and Tunisia. In the period before March 2011, the Syrian government stressed that the internal opposition was completely unable to mobilize in the streets due to the close linkages between the regime and the people. Once the unarmed and armed opposition groups succeeded in a certain degree of mobilization, the regime responded with a combination of repressive measures and counter mobilization based on a series of defiant speeches of Bashar (four speeches each in 2011 and 2012 in symbolically important venues such as the Syrian parliament, the University of Damascus, and on the occasion of army day). Most of Bashar’s speeches were subsequently followed by state-sponsored pro-regime mobilization waves that went underreported or were ignored in the Western media.70 These rallies took place in all major cities of the country and amounted in all likelihood to the largest political rallies in the history of the Syrian state. The motivation for these rallies was at least partially due to many Syrian people’s intention to avoid a further escalation of violence by backing the government. It should be stressed that the wave of government-sponsored rallies in 2011 and 2012 was similar to the earlier mobilizations that had taken place during the period when the U.S. administration had threatened with imposed regime change from outside after 2003. Once again, many Syrians rallied around the government since the alternatives were considered to be worse rather than better. In terms of the political profile of the mobilization, there was a strong element of direct backing of President Bashar al-Assad and of Syrian state nationalism. The regime speakers and Bashar himself stressed the foreign policy stance of Syria in terms of backing of Palestinian rights and the demand to have the Syrian Golan returned from the Israeli occupation. In this context, Bashar asserted that the armed opposition was sponsored by external powers in order to punish Syria for the long-term policy of resisting U.S. and Israeli objectives. One might argue that the pro-regime rallies were attended by all

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69 Some observers interpreted the retirement of the Syrian Vice President and last prominent representative of the old guard Abdul Halim Khaddam during the last Baath Party conference in 2005 as a sign of internal discontent. Khaddam had held his position since 1984 and, following his retirement, left for France where he started to link up with the Muslim Brotherhood in exile to form a ‘National Salvation Front’. By then, he had lost his influence in Syria but it was speculated at the time that the political significance of his retirement might have to do with the defeat of a ‘pro-Saudi’ wing in the Syrian leadership that was closely related to the Syrian presence in Lebanon (Salloukh 2009).

70 For example, large pro-regime rallies took place across Syria on 28 November 2011, 11 January 2012, and 15 March 2012.
elements of the state class and their sympathizers (perhaps one in four adult Syrians attended these rallies). While they certainly did not restore the authority of the regime to speak on behalf of all Syrians, they nevertheless showed that the regime continued to enjoy some degree of legitimacy.

In the next step, Bashar started to talk about domestic reform and two projects were discussed and rapidly implemented, namely the introduction of a new constitution to replace the 1973 Syrian constitution and a new party law to be followed by the election of a new Parliament. These projects were put forward at a relatively early stage of the crisis (for example, the idea of a new party law was first mentioned by Bashar in a speech on April 16, 2011). Due to the rapid escalation of the crisis and the steady increase in violence in the streets, the two reform projects failed, however, to trigger a genuine political dialogue beyond government circles. They were therefore based on formula compromise within the state class and amounted to reforms from above.

The most significant single element of the reforms was the new draft constitution. This document clearly tried to satisfy demands of different constituencies in the sense of offering gradual changes in combination with reassurances for existing interests. The most noteworthy change was certainly the removal of the old article 8 of the 1973 constitution that had defined the Baath Party as the ‘leading force in the society and the state’ (ICL project, undated: article 8). Instead, Syria’s political system is now going to ‘be based on the principle of political pluralism, and exercising power democratically through the ballot box’ (SANA 2012: article 8). This transfer to a multiparty system is not matched by an expansion of the legislative powers of the Syrian parliament. The new 2012 constitution still defines parliament as a reactive body tasked to deliberate over proposals of the president and prime minister. However, there is a subtle upgrading of the role of Parliament as regards the nomination process for the presidency. Here, the new constitution demands that nominations for the presidency must have the support of at least 35 members of Parliament. No member of Parliament is allowed to support more than one presidential candidate at the same time. In addition, the new constitution appears to demand that there should be at least two candidates for the office of president in any future election (SANA 2012: article 85(5)).

As far as the all-important institution of the presidency is concerned, the exceptionally strong authorities of the old constitution have been maintained. The president still appoints the government and continues to forward his own draft laws to parliament for approval. Although the new constitution limits the exercise of the presidency to two single terms of seven years, this new time limit starts only with the next presidential election in 2014. The constitution allows this election to be delayed in the case of national emergency. It follows that Bashar could seek re-election in 2014 and 2021 and could remain in office (if elected) until 2028. The role of the prime minister and of the government remains practically unchanged in the new constitution since they are still directly appointed by the president. As for the judiciary, the new constitution slightly expands the right of the Syrian Supreme Constitutional Court since the new article 146(5) allows for the first time trials of the president in case of high treason. It follows that Bashar could seek re-election in 2014 and 2021 and could remain in office (if elected) until 2028. The role of the prime minister and of the government remains practically unchanged in the new constitution since they are still directly appointed by the president. As for the judiciary, the new constitution slightly expands the right of the Syrian Supreme Constitutional Court since the new article 146(5) allows for the first time trials of the president in case of high treason. Yet this is unlikely to happen given that the president appoints all members of the Supreme Constitutional Court (article 141). One might understand the new provisions as a symbolic endorsement of the idea of a division of judicial and executive powers although these are certainly very weak. The new constitution retains article 3 of the 1973 constitution that states that the president of Syria must be a Muslim. Yet the new constitutional oath of office in article 7 drops the reference in the 1973 constitution to ‘unity, freedom, and socialism’ which symbolized the rule of the Baath Party. Indeed, the 2012 constitution does no longer make any reference to socialism which could be interpreted as a symbolic endorsement of the demands of economic liberalizers. Last but not least, the new constitution endorses a multi-party system but continues to outlaw political parties formed on ‘religious, sectarian, tribal, [class-based], regional, or professional basis’ (SANA 2012: article 8(4)). This underlines that the Muslim Brotherhood continues to be a banned organization under the new constitution. Moreover, there would also be scope to ban various other political parties such as Kurdish nationalists or class-based and/or professional parties. On the other hand, the new constitution maintains the rule that at least 50 percent of members of Parliament must be from the ‘worker and peasant social classes’. This rule underlines some continuing commitment toward ‘class-based’ parliamentary legitimacy. In the end, the new constitution was officially endorsed by a majority of Syrians in a referendum on February 26, 2012. According to the results issued by the state, the constitution was supported by 89.4 percent of the voters on a turnout of 57.4 percent of the electorate (quoted according to Direct Democracy 2012).
It might appear, therefore, that the only group in the Syrian state class that lost out in the negotiations resulting in the new constitution was the Baath Party since the organization has lost the constitutional status of a ‘leading force’. Yet even the Baath Party enjoyed some gains in the sense that the new constitution demanded a new election of Parliament under the new multi-party system within 90 days. This time frame was too short for new parties to organize and campaign in a serious manner. While there was a steep increase in the number of registered parties, the electoral system based on 15 multi-seat regional constituencies favored large coalitions and the number of Baath Party members in the new Parliament, elected on May 7, 2012, and based on the participation of 51.3 percent of the electorate according to state-issued figures, was higher than before. Officially, the Baath Party gained 134 seats out of 250, and the organization’s alliance with the NPF parties added further to the Baath-led parliamentary bloc. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of opposition forces did not participate in the election which left only the leftist opposition alliance of the ‘Popular Front for Change and Liberation’ to contest the election as a second bloc gaining five seats. A third of the seats went to independent candidates while only one of the other eleven new parties received a single seat (Ahmad Kousa of the Syrian Democratic Party). As a result, the Baath Party enjoyed a higher share of representation in the new Parliament than before and the multi-party system did not really take off in any substantial way.

Any serious evaluation of the reform program in its current form (i.e. the 2012 reform policies based on the new constitution and the new parliament) must conclude that it is too limited in scope to offer those sections of the opposition willing to negotiate with the government a real stake in policymaking. In particular, under the 2012 constitution, the presidential elections of 2014 would essentially limit the field of presidential candidates too much due to the rule that at least 35 members of Parliament must support a candidate in writing. No political party other than the Baath Party under the leadership of Bashar currently fulfills the criteria of assembling 35 members of Parliament. Under the current rules, one might imagine that there would be two more potentially feasible candidates (one based on an alliance of Socialist Unionists (18 seats in Parliament) and other leftists and one based on a candidate backed by economic liberalizers). However, there would be serious question marks behind each of these candidacies and all other opposition groups willing to negotiate with the government would essentially remain excluded. In this context, the seemingly innocent article 153 of the new constitution stating that no amendments of the new constitution are possible before the passing of 18 months means in essence that the state could run the 2014 presidential elections without reconsidering the way in which presidential candidates would be selected beforehand. That this constitutes a problem, and limits the scope of dialogue with the opposition severely, appears by now to be accepted by Bashar himself. In the last section of his most recent speech on January 6, 2013, he suggested a new national dialogue that should result in concluding a national pact. This process would in effect entail another new constitution, new party law, and new parliamentary elections (SANA 2013). How these suggestions relate to the issue of the presidential elections, scheduled for 2014, remains unclear and would in any case depend on the results of a forthcoming Syrian national dialogue.

In addition, one needs to evaluate the full picture of the Syrian state after two years of sustained crisis. First and foremost, Syria has always been a relatively weak rentier state due to the limited amount of rent that the state could extract from the oil (and possibly gas) sector. Thus, it could be argued that Syria has actually stopped to be a rentier state since the beginning of 2012, at least as far as the oil rent is concerned. This was due to the decision of the EU to boycott Syria economically by stopping the import of oil which immediately weakened the resources base of the Syrian state to a large extent. In fact, Syrian exports to the EU in 2011—the last year of normal economic relations—consisted to more than 84 percent of ‘mineral fuels’ [oil and oil-related products] while app. 94 percent of all Syrian oil exports went to EU member states, principally Germany, France, and Italy (DG Trade 2012: 7; EIA 2011: 3). This high degree of dependency of Syria on the oil rent from just three EU member states meant that the Syrian state was under pressure to immediately procure alternative sources of revenue or to face a very severe economic crisis.

Nevertheless, politics cannot be reduced to economics and the unity of the Syrian state class has essentially been maintained while the Syrian state has continued to function. This degree of internal stability of the state class is symbolized by Bashar’s public speeches in front of constituencies supporting the regime and his regular participation in Muslim religious holidays during which he is accompanied by the moderate Sunni religious leaders of Syria. Whether or not Bashar and the Syrian state class will continue to sustain the state depends on economic and political factors that are still not settled. As for the prospects of political reform, the current balance of forces suggests that there is a conflict at the national (Syrian), regional (Arab), and global level. Each of these levels interacts with the others and even if a balance should be reached at every single level, the conflict could nevertheless continue for a long time.

Last but not least, the question of dialogue between the Syrian regime and the domestic opposition is certainly crucial. Nevertheless, these deliberations will not be able to end the crisis if the Arab and global actors do not allow domestic dialogue to proceed. International observers must by now appreciate that the Syrian opposition is internally divided and that the various opposition
leadership bodies compete with each other as much as they contest the Syrian government. One can distinguish between opposition groups that have moved close to the Syrian government consisting of elements of the SSNP, CP, and other leftists. These groups entered the political reform process in 2011 and 2012 and subsequently became part of the current Syrian government. A second moderate opposition group, also made up of leftist, centrist, and secular democratic parties, has formed the ‘National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change’. This group is in principle willing to negotiate with the Syrian government and has stressed that they are against any outside intervention of NATO countries in Syria. They have warned that ‘militarization means the political and financial dependency on the military opposition, the marginalization of democratic forces, and the reinforcement of sectarian extremist and black Islamism groups: Black like oil, black like darkness and black like exclusion’ (Manna 2012). Beyond these minor moderate forces, the opposition involved in the insurgency consists of hundreds of armed groups and at least half a dozen opposition leadership bodies. These two sets of organizations are only loosely coupled and they all compete with each other for support, funding and patronage at the local, regional and global level.

In this context, political activity of any kind is at present nearly impossible in Syria: it is no longer possible to find out what ordinary Syrians might think about the crisis; nor, indeed, does it seem to matter much as the country suffers from a general breakdown of civil society triggered by a mechanical upgrading of the forces of violence in the context of a geopolitical power contest. This conflict by proxy is not the fault of ordinary Syrians: they are paying the price for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. In the context of hope for democracy in the Arab world, the Syrian events underline how dangerous it is to expect proxy conflicts to open the door to democracy. On the contrary, the Arab Gulf countries as the most authoritarian regimes in the region appear to export their own version of authoritarianism toward more secular and tolerant societies such as Syria.

Conclusion

The point of departure of this paper has been the question to what extent political science theory broadly perceived can add to the analysis of the domestic and international factors behind the Syrian crisis. In this concluding section, each of the five theoretical perspectives, i.e. (1) populist authoritarianism; (2) sectarianism; (3) rentier state theory; (4) neo-Gramscian approach in international relations; and (5) classical geopolitical thought is briefly reviewed in the light of the previous empirical discussion. Most importantly, each of the theoretical schools is useful in explaining the Syrian case and no single analytical perspective should be privileged at the cost of ignoring the others. It is only by combining different theories and qualitative and quantitative approaches that one can start to appreciate the many complex power relationships that have triggered the crisis of the Syrian state. Moreover, qualitative research must be privileged since a solid data base for quantitative research is usually absent in the Syrian case.

To begin with populist authoritarianism, this analytical perspective helps to focus on the sources of power of the Syrian state class. The core issue is whether the state class can continue to act as a unified actor and whether it remains possible to sustain domestic social coalitions that unite the different social and regional segments of Syrian society. Thus, the theory of populist authoritarianism highlights the fact that the state class remains bound to be populist in its orientation. It cannot abandon efforts to sustain social coalitions with popular sectors without facing a crisis of its leadership. In addition, the theory also suggests that the stability and scope of domestic social coalitions directly determine the country’s geopolitical strength. Conversely, the efforts of sections of the state class to engage in liberalization of the economy and the subsequent socio-economic abandonment of former core constituencies might trigger domestic disturbances that could question the stability of the regime. Moreover, one could also use the theory to explain why Syria is linked in its geopolitical alliances with certain other countries that are also driven by different versions of populist authoritarianism, such as Iran, Russia, and Venezuela. In fact, these states have little in common; yet they all share the reliance on rent income and subsequent efforts to integrate popular sectors based on some version of state-led social reform.

Second, the analytical focus on sectarianism and weak statehood might also add to an understanding of the Syrian case. The current crisis certainly increases sectarianism and threatens to break society along sectarian lines as happened in neighboring

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75 For example, some quantitative research approaches suggest that the political stability of rentier states depends on reaching a certain minimum threshold of rent income (Basedau and Lay 2009), and that Syria does therefore not qualify for stable statehood. However, there is no quantitative rule without exception as the authors hold that rich Bahrain is bound to enjoy political stability although the country’s stability was in fact most recently reinforced by Saudi tanks.
Iraq after the U.S. invasion in 2003. Thus, the Syrian ethnic and religious minorities certainly have no incentive to support those sectors of the opposition that are sponsored by outside powers. Nevertheless, the analytical focus on sectarianism does not explain why the crisis of the Syrian state occurs now. In fact, there exists no serious domestic demand in Syria to solve the crisis by splitting the country into ethnically homogenous smaller states. In the first place, this would not be possible in most areas of Syria, and the resulting small states would fall under the influence of neighboring countries and lack any long-term viability. Moreover, the division of Syria into smaller states would encourage similar projects elsewhere. On the other hand, one must also stress that many actors within Syria have consciously maintained a Syrian national unity position. For example, the alliance between the state and the state-supporting Sunni religious leaders has been maintained, and Syrian religious leaders from all denominations have stressed their determination to defend Syrian statehood. One therefore needs to stress that religious and ethnic diversity could still act as a force of unity that actually adds to a Syrian nationalism that is integrating and accommodating rather than divisive and sectarian.

Third, this paper has strongly focused on theories of the rentier state and the state class as advanced by Elsenhans and other authors. The advantage of this particular theoretical perspective is to demonstrate that Syria is not a unique case in the international system. Rather, many of the shortcomings of Syrian statehood are shared with rentier states in other parts of the world. In addition, the two theories of the rentier state and of populist authoritarianism mutually support each other. Both theories highlight the need of the Syrian state class to sustain a sufficient degree of rent income in order to maintain domestic stability. In the Syrian case, the fact is that oil rents are at the lower end of what is usually understood as minimum threshold of a rentier economy. In the academic literature, it is often suggested that at least 40 percent of state income must derive from oil rents (mineral rents) to define a rentier state; this figure has no longer been reached by Syria in recent years and has dropped to nearly zero in 2013 under the conditions of the current armed conflict. Nevertheless, the rentier state theory also holds that a country can replace oil rents with political and strategic rents. Here, the Syrian state class must certainly explore new revenue opportunities in order to restore the economic foundations of the Syrian rentier state. In addition, Syria might be able to gain new rent income from the development of the as of yet untouched gas resources located along the country’s Mediterranean coast and/or from revenue-producing pipeline projects linking Iranian oil fields with Iraq, Syria, and the Mediterranean Sea. At least in principle, an improvement of relations with EU states could also have acted as a source of political rent income. Yet the EU’s actual willingness to provide substantial assistance has remained too limited to be of geopolitical significance and the Syrian state class therefore had to look for more promising alternatives. This resulted in efforts to ‘go east’ toward China or to link up with regional neighboring states such as Turkey (in the latter case certainly a full-scale failure). Last but not least, another major problem of the Syrian state class is that most of the country’s close allies tend to have similar economic profiles; thus Syria has little bargaining power in terms of dealing with other rentier countries and only serves as an export market for Chinese products (although China as a non-rentier state could in principle offer a market for Syrian oil and gas). At present, the Syrian state class relies mostly on Iran due to the two country’s close geopolitical alliance. Nevertheless, this might not be sufficiently strong an economic alliance to keep the Syrian economy afloat. Finally, the state class requires a long-term social and development project that would offer credible prospects for the social advancement of large groups of the Syrian population. In the past, this was occasionally successful but the current Syrian state is far away from offering such prospects.

Fourth, the neo-Gramscian approach highlights how the crisis of the Syrian state class relates to global hegemony and the distribution of class power in the international system. This concerns the conflict within the Syrian state class between economic liberalizers, on the one hand, and public sector constituencies on the other hand. The question is whether the state class acquires most of its economic and political power from its control of the state and from domestic resources or, alternatively, from its mediation of the demands of international capital. In other words, is the state class able to act autonomously or is it rather bound by alliances with outside capital interests in which it must submitted to more powerful forces? The example of the ‘crony capitalists’ of the Syrian regime is a case in point. These most aggressive liberalizing forces deriving from within the regime stressed that they wanted to be treated like ‘ordinary businesses’ in the international arena. However, they faced boycott by the U.S. and EU which underlines that even the cronies were unable to overcome the power limits of the Syrian state class, i.e. to be strong in the exercise of political and economic power at home while being extremely weak and without any credible bargaining power outside of the Syrian national territory. In addition, neo-Gramscian approaches can also help to highlight a broader structural crisis of the state in developing societies. Here, the international system with its asymmetric power relations between the center and the periphery severely curtails the agency of any kind of political leadership in developing societies. The rise of political Islam is itself

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Footnote 76: For example, Kurdish minority rights and autonomy in Syria would not be advanced by forming a small new state. Such new entity would certainly suffer from threats of neighboring states, especially Turkey. Most Syrian Kurdish political leaders therefore demand a higher degree of autonomy within Syria and have avoided any association with the armed opposition. They have so far largely succeeded in protecting Kurdish regions in Syria from the hostilities elsewhere. This also applies in a similar manner to the areas settled by the Druze minority.
one outcome of this long-term structural crisis that was first encountered by secular nationalist elites who proved unable to fulfill expectations. The case of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt, already challenged by Egypt's chronic economic crisis, underlines that these forces remain bound by the limits of weak statehood and their structural dependency on international capital. Indeed, any future Syrian leadership will face economic challenges that do not differ much from what the current government has to deal with in terms of the choice of national development model.

Fifth, the Syrian crisis can certainly be explained in the context of classical geopolitical thought. Here, one must appreciate that Bashar’s leadership between 2000 and 2011 appeared from the point of view of U.S. strategists as a permanent provocation. A case in point was the 2010 meeting between Bashar and the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in which the former criticized the ‘new situation of colonialism’ while the latter suggested that ‘[i]he whole U.S. government has no impact whatsoever on regional relations’ and ‘should pack their things and leave’ (CNN 2010; Schneider 2010). From the point of view of U.S. regional strategists, the main concern has been to put pressure on Iran which is considered the main opponent of U.S. objectives in the region. In this context, Syria is little more than another pressure point, and Syrian affairs are considered to be undistinguishable from the broader agenda of pushing back the axis of resistance. This has always been stated openly in the U.S. foreign policy discourse (Byman, Doran et al. 2012). The behavior of the anti-Syrian coalition in the Arab world can therefore be explained with various political and economic interests and the global context relates to the issue of U.S. unilateral control, on the one hand, and the alternative scenario of a more multipolar world order with an upgraded role for Russia, China, and other countries in the region and at the global level. Looking at the current state of the Syrian crisis, one might suggest that the U.S. have already achieved the goal of turning Syria into a weak state. On the other hand, one can also interpret the current situation as characterized by a new balance of power at the domestic Syrian level (the government essentially continues to function due to assistance from Iran and Russia while the insurgency is also maintained by outside powers), the regional Arab level (the Sunni states and the Shia states all suffer from domestic disturbances to various degrees that make further escalation of the Syrian crisis even more dangerous), and the global level (Russia and China move slowly toward a more assertive posture in terms of their relationship with U.S. policymakers). These are all issues beyond the scope of the current paper. One might simply conclude that the current situation has underlined how contested the Greater Middle East remains and how little EU member states have been able to assert any objectives on their own.

Finally, how could the Syrian crisis be solved at the domestic and international level? There is no doubt that the shortcomings of the Syrian state do relate to the fact that the principle of ‘winner-takes-all’ structures the entire political system. The all-powerful institution of the Syrian Presidency and the lack of power of the other formal institutions mean that Syrian society cannot currently be stabilized by way of power sharing. It is certainly the case that reforms of the formal institutions, allowing for a rebalancing of political authority and increasing degrees of power sharing, could open the way to create a more democratic and more accountable system. In this context, the tools of consociational democracy (Lijphart 2012) could help to slowly transform the Syrian state and could bridge the deep cleavages in Syrian society over a longer period of time based on the principle of power sharing and the protection of minorities. Yet democracy is not going to come to Syria in a single step. Any credible prospect for democracy would require to end the geopolitical contest over Syria, and to allow the domestic actors to mutually engage with each other in order to allow national reconciliation and the building of trust. There is little hope at present due to the sustained escalation of violence that has horrified most Syrians and that makes some militants believe that one more effort is going to break the opponent. However, this logic is the greatest obstacle to democracy in Syria and the region. Thus, the need to agree on a negotiated settlement in Syria is beyond doubt and cannot be achieved by violent means.

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Migration Flows and the Mediterranean Sea. The Tunisian and Libyan “Bridges” to Europe
Ornela Urso

Abstract

At the dawn of the recent uprisings migration continues to be perceived as a “threatening factor” in terms of domestic stability, public order, as well as a matter of cultural identity and human rights protection (especially in the case of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees’ vulnerable status). The stratified and mixed reality that, the Arab Spring has further fragmented, makes migration a complex issue to face, for both the EU and North African states. In the Mediterranean sea, these factors have been translated in the increasing militarization of border controls and the externalization policy “to fight against irregular migration”, as a self-reinforcing mechanism, that European member states, such as Italy and Malta needed to implement to face the “migration crisis” coming from the Arab Spring. In this regard, transit migration has become paradigmatic in current explorations of migration to Europe. The main research question of this paper is focused on the role played by the North African states of Libya and Tunisia as “transit countries” for international migration, considering the migration patterns involved from both the northern and southern Mediterranean countries and identifying the nature and the recent developments that involve irregular African migrants to North Africa and Europe. A comparative study of data on migration trends in these two countries (Tunisia and Libya) allows us to understand which are the influent effects for migrants and transit countries deriving from the recent uprisings and which are the consequences in terms of EU migration and asylum policy. Looking at the Mediterranean flows, what does the shift from “a politics of migration in Europe to a European politics of migration” (Geddes and Boswell, 2011) mean? This still remains a burning issue. Rethinking migration, the Euro-Mediterranean relations should overcome the existing gap between EU practice and rhetoric towards the development of new dynamics of migration policy.

Introduction

In many European countries, such as Italy, Spain, Malta and France, the political debate - echoed by media - has addressed a phenomenon of “biblical exodus” of migrants from North African states, reaching the southern shores of EU Member states. Migration continues to be perceived as a security-threat, conceived as “threatening factor” (Eylermer and Semsit, 2007) in terms of domestic stability, public order, as well as a matter of cultural identity and human rights protection (especially in the case of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees’ vulnerable status).

In the Middle East and North Africa, political events have a profound impact on human migration and refugees’ flows. Focusing on the North African shores, migration has developed as a complex and stratified issue, which is not easy to manage at a political and legal level. Migrants often are from sub-Saharan countries, where economic, political and social conditions force people to move towards the North. In other words, migration routes from sub-Saharan to North Africa have been extended towards Europe, crossing - even irregularly - the Mediterranean Sea by boat (with considerable consequences on human trafficking).
Migration has become paradigmatic in current explorations of migration to Europe. This does not mean that migrants - who apparently seem to fit within these categories - are numerically dominant; rather, in fact the opposite is true: they are certainly a minority of all migrants to Europe (De Haas, 2007). The evocative image of the ‘transit migrant in a boat’ or ‘scaling a tall fence’ is so powerful that it has captured the public imagination and it has been widely illustrated in media portrayals. It also dominates policy discussions due to the alarming perception of ‘loss of control’ (Collyer and De Haas, forthcoming).

In this context that sees the involvement of both the European Union and the North African countries, it appears particularly relevant focusing on the role played by “transit countries”, such as Tunisia and Libya, and seeking to analyse which are the main variables, from which movements of sub-Saharan population to Europe derive, in order to understand how the European Union should face this multi-faced migration issue.

**A Theoretical Premise**

Migration, as an issue of the global political agenda, involves international, regional and local actors. In a domestic sense - migration is marked by the responsibility held by interior ministries and associated agencies for the regulation of immigration (Geddes, 2005). Since 1990s, the migration-security nexus derives from the pluralities of forms, actors and policies that migration involves.

According to Christopher Rudolph (Rudolph, 2003), migration is seen in western states as a “security threat” in terms of cultural proximity - that includes aspects such as race, language, religion, ethnicity and perceptions of assimilation; visibility, intended as a “concentration” of immigrant flows “more visible when they occur in a single place all at the same time”; entry channel (which instead concerns the distinction between legal and illegal migration) and the “latent effects” of prior policies, that could coincide with the establishment of system of chain migration able to create a “migrant networks” control system. More generally, what we see are two sides of the same coin, in which the core-goal is represented by the guarantee of nation-state’s interests. This means that, on the one hand, there is a trend of closure, where migration is perceived as a security threat for the internal stability of both migrant-sending and -receiving states; these forces stress the “myth of stasis” of national identity; on the other, a trend of openness is more oriented towards dis-closure and fluidity, in defining the relationships between countries in a more cooperative sense.

Since the 1990s, the migration issue appears interlinked to the multi-dimensional security. On the notion of security, Waever (1996) writes: the concept of security is linked to that of nation. National security is the established name for security of the state [...]. Security is a practice, a specific way of framing an issue. It is “self referential” because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue. Security is a generic term with a distinct meaning. Barry Buzan has devised security into five different factors, that are military, political, economic, societal and environmental (Buzan, 1991).

In this regard, “the Euro-Mediterranean design develops a political line of action [...] that originates from the state of international (in)security in the Mediterranean in the late 1990s” (Attinà, 2003). The security-migration nexus implies a further distinction among he ideas of challenges, that traditional security faces, the “security from threat” derives from the “hostile intention of an actor to realize it” (Williams, 2008, in Attinà, 2012), while risks within communities concern the (in)computable magnitude of the consequence - its nature is indeterminate (Attinà, 2012). Starting from this premise, in the Mediterranean region, governments, from both North and South shores, in a condition that some authors have defined as “jeopardized” stability; have to manage security matters together, despite double traits of security dimension. In other words, on the one hand, the European Union (EU), with its southern countries, tends to combine an idea of comprehensive security (multi-dimensional) with new security threats, such as terrorism, migration and energy security, while, on the other, the Arab implication appears to be more attached to the traditional conception of security, whose culture emerges with more emphasis since the Spring 2011; for Arab countries, in fact, security cannot go beyond the boundaries of the nation (with the exception of the radical movement, whose action tries to subvert, through not always peaceful means, traditional cultural beliefs, typical of the Arab world).

Among the leading experts of the Copenhagen School, the obsolete military dimension of security concept should make room for the multi-dimensional concept of security, moving towards the “societal aspects” of the term: security threats are linked not just to military reactions (as the main consequences of traditional security challenges; first of all armed conflicts and violent war), but, domestic strategies of the states and, their foreign actions, appear to be influenced by social, political, environmental and
economic variables and dimensions. This must also be considered under the evidence that states are not “any longer the only actors of international and domestic policies” (Strange, 1997). One of the main dilemmas that involve the migration-security nexus, strengthened in the Euro-Mediterranean relations, is the frequent hindering of a balanced and comprehensive assessment leading to the neglecting of the humanitarian aspect of the issue, especially concerning flows, whose origins are rooted in the heart of the African continent.

**Conceptualising Migration**

As it can be understood from the study of international relations, the concept of “migration” covers all forms of migration and mobility from and across central and eastern Europe, which will include intra-migration flows of workers from developing countries, migration by workers from western Europe, return migration, ethnic migration, asylum-seeking, or migration defined as illegal by state policies (Geddes, 2005).

Migration is a multi-faced issue. As an old issue it relates, strictu sensu, the classic vision of migration to the “state of crisis”. This condition is determined, in most cases, by an unbalanced relationship between the demographic condition of the immigrant-sending country and its economic crisis (due to low rate of employment, high level of unemployment and a persistent social and economic discrimination of specific categories, such as women and youth). This is further exasperated by hostile and/or inhospitable (re) actions of immigrant-receiving societies.

Starting from the contraposition between “openness” and “closeness” towards migration flows, the attitude of “openness” of the states (as immigrant-sending, immigrant-receiving or transit countries) is in contrast with the idea of “closure”, which instead tends to justify the need to guarantee the (internal) identity stability. At the same time, some categorizations of migration suggest two relevant ways to interpret and look at migration; in fact, the distinction between legal and illegal migration78 has not few implications on the normative discourse- forms of migration defined as illegal are epiphenomena of types categorized as legal (Samers, 2004).

More specifically, legal or regular migration are in most cases associated to the kind of labour migration, and they may be brief term or long term, where we assist to people, male or female, who move to find a job, in general low qualified (but also high skilled), in also very different economic sectors; in the same category, we also find students who find a job or an occupation in the hosting state or, more simply, irregular migrants that by the time have the possibility to become regular citizens of the immigrant-receiving state. On the opposite side, there are the “illegal migrants” – also defined as the “dark underside of globalisation” - who are considered clandestine because they are seen as “security risk” and they are embodied into the “human smuggling and trafficking” political matter (Geddes, 2008). Looking, more specifically, at the context of the Mediterranean sea, this has been recognised as one of the main gateways that make possible the transit of thousands of people who, at any cost (even that of their own life) and even in the worst conditions, try to reach the shores of the EU and, more precisely, those of southern member states.

A condition of plurality that affects our insecure global society inevitably implies the direct and indirect intervention of both state-actors and non-state actors, who consolidate the impact of “security paradigm concerning the development of migration policy” (Collyer, 2006). In a concentric vision of the theoretical framework of international migration, it is possible to identify the global dimension of the phenomenon that appears interlinked to the multi-dimensional aspects of security.

As Huysmans and Squire suggest “the migration/security nexus has been approached both from a traditional strategic perspective through a focus on the security of the state, as well as from a human security perspective through a focus on the security of individual migrants” (Huysmans and Squire, 2009). The externalization of the EU’s migration control instruments (such as border controls and readmission agreements) confirms the role of security consumer and the respectively “win-lose situations” that the EU puts into practice. From this aspect one of the main accusations turned to EU’s approach towards Euro-Mediterranean

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78 Irregular migration “includes both people legally entering with a passport, a visa or a student permit but then overspending the legal period of stay, and people entering in an unauthorized way through illegal points of entry” (Geddes, 2005).
relations and its neighbouring countries is the focus on security concern of massive migration flows without considering the third countries’ interests or the fragilities of the migrant di per se (Huysmans, 2000).

Focusing the attention on the Mediterranean area, the security-migration nexus emerges, especially concerning the impact of migration flows in the trans-Saharan and trans-Mediterranean routes. Humanitarian crises affecting the MENA79 countries put in evidence the impact of the processes of political transition that involve this area and how the economic difficulties and the unsafe and endemic poverty of sub-Saharan states tend to confirm the character of the North African bridge.

**The Externalization of the EU Migration policy**

Beyond the EU legal framework defined by treaties80, important common decision-making procedures are determined by three action plans that show the shift towards the externalization of the EU migration policies, in including also new measures and countries. The Tampere, The Hague and Stockholm programmes comprise the period that ranges from 1999 to 2014, involving all the EU member states and the main EU institutions.

Since the European Council held in Tampere in 1999, “the European Union needs a comprehensive approach to migration addressing political, human rights and development issues in countries and regions of origin and transit”81 (Tampere European Council, Presidency Conclusions, Point 11).

In addition, as an intermediate stage of the Tampere agenda, the conclusions of the Seville European Council (June, 2002) and, subsequently, those of Thessaloniki (2003), have stressed the relevance of the EU external migration policies with third countries (sending- and transit-immigrants) “in achieving the Community’s objectives in the field of return and readmission”82 (Lavenex, 2006).

These latter aspects were followed by the Hague Programme that, instead, covered the period that ranged from 2005 to 2009, also managing policies included in the Treaty of Amsterdam and Nice, “sets the agenda for stepping up the fight against all these forms of illegal immigration in a number of policy areas; border security, illegal employment, return and cooperation with third countries”83 (Carrera and Guild, 2008).

After Tampere the five-year action plan of the so-called Stockholm Programme - “an open and secure Europe serving and protecting citizens” - proclaims that the “EU needs to promote a dynamic and fair immigration policy” (including the new measures provided in the Lisbon Treaty). Moreover, according to Geddes and Boswell (2011), within the European Union, the policy area of migration and mobility is characterised by networks of transgovernmental and supranational actions promoted across states. This means that states remain key actors but they are no longer the only protagonists because of the presence of non-state actors. Recently, with the new strategic framework based on the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, events “served to further emphasize the need for a coherent balanced EU migration policy which is both dynamic, to respond to short-term needs, and strategic, providing

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79 MENA countries include Middle East and North African states (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine and Qatar).
80 The Lisbon Treaty (2009) drives the EU towards the implementation of a common immigration policy “aimed at ensuring, at all stages, the efficient management of migration flows, fair treatment of third country nationals residing legally in Member States, and the prevention of, and enhanced measures to combat illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings” (art. 79 Lisbon treaty).
81 In Pastore (2007).
82 Within the EU security agenda and, in particular, with aftermaths of 9/11, migration has been mentioned in the most relevant EU security document i.e. the 2003 ESS: A secure Europe in a better world and the Report adopted by the Council in 2008, titled The Implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World.
83 More specifically, as stated in the Hague Programme “the European Council requests the Council to examine how to maximize the effectiveness and interoperability of EU information systems in tackling illegal immigration and improving border controls as well as the management of these systems on the basis of a communication by the Commission on the interoperability between the Schengen Information System (SIS II), the Visa Information System (VIS) and EURODAC to be released in 2005, taking into account the need to strike the right balance between law enforcement purposes and safeguarding the fundamental rights of individuals” (Carrera and Guild, 2008).
a longer-term vision” (European Commission, 2012). The EU external action and its partnership with third countries (such as with the southern Mediterranean partners) demonstrates how migration represents an important (economic, political and social) challenge for the EU. Starting from this perspective, the general and, in a certain sense, reductive image of the European Union as “Fortress Europe” appears to be a mere caricature, far from the concrete weakness that shows the shortcomings of a coherent EU migration policy.

In this sense, the “Global Approach to Migration and Mobility” determines a “coherent, balanced, dynamic framework to respond to short-term needs providing a longer-term EU migration policy” (European Commission, 2012). It reveals a certain rational logic (principle) of nationalism and intergovernmentalism, obscuring a possible “common, integrated and coherent” (EU) immigration policy (Carrera and Guild, 2008).

**Beyond the EU borders: Migration in the Mediterranean**

Beyond labour migration, looking at the context of the southern European member states (like Italy, Spain, Greece and Malta), one of the main challenges that national administrations have to face is linked to the management of irregular flows coming from the (transit) countries of the southern shores of the Mediterranean, that is to say states of North Africa, such as Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Libya. The risk is that a “myth of invasion” creates the mistaken belief that irregular migration is some overwhelming external pressure on the EU when de facto there are internal drivers (de Haas, 2007); in this sense, “irregular migration is a byproduct of national policies to restrict the legal entry of certain types of immigrants” (Geddes and Boswell, 2011).

Geddes and Boswell (2011) suggest the presence of a limit, which affects irregular migration in absolute terms of policy success or policy failure while, on the contrary its internal political process permits to distinguish between costs and benefits at the stages of “talk”, “decision” and “action” (Guiraudon, 2003).

Concerning the EU’s comprehensive and structural approach towards illegal migration, the Communication from the Commission, titled “On Policy Priorities in the Fight Against Illegal Immigration of third-countries nationals” (European Commission, 2006), emphasises “cooperation and dialogue on a broad range of migration issues with Sub-Saharan African states and neighbouring countries across the entire Mediterranean region is part of the longer term agenda”, this is further assured through financial assistance (the so-called MEDA program) and mid-term measures, implemented under the framework of the political dialogue with the EU Mediterranean partners. The “global approach” includes a combination between the EU migration strategy and the security objectives and deal-sweeteners - “carrot” - aimed at securing compliance with third countries, as demonstrated by the existing relationships between Italy and Libya (in the management of sea borders) and the involvement of “transit migration” states, like Morocco (for the case of Spain). In this regard, a huge debate has been developed about conceiving the term of “transit” as a specific category that seems to embody analytic aspects of migration.

More specifically, with the recent Arab uprisings, new questions about the role played by some North African countries, such as Tunisia and Libya, arise about the possibility that there could be a kind of “Mediterranean bridge” between the region of sub-Sahara and the southern European states, especially with reference to the situations of humanitarian crises, that since the end of the year 2010 have plagued these areas. This increases the gap between “talk” and “decision” and contributes to make the process of decision-making increasingly complex: the issue is extracted from “politics” and dealt with in more secreted administrative or judicial venues, again decoupled from talk (Guiraudon, 2003).
The North African “bridge”: a General Overview

Following the recent events that have involved North African countries, started with the political overthrow of the Tunisian political regime in 2010, the MENA region tends to be described as a political unstable area; for this reason, the weakening of political institutions in countries such as Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, and the resulting climate of uncertainty that followed the so-called Arab Spring, have had a considerable impact on the routes linking the North African coasts to the regions of southern Europe and, especially, those of Italy. The region of North Africa, in fact, besides being a sending-immigrants area - Egypt and Tunisia represents the birthplace of two of the major communities in Italy - has been for many years one of the main transit migration area, that is to say a Mediterranean bridge between sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. The four migration systems that involved North Africa before the recent uprisings which, according to De Haas, are synthesized in (i) family and labour migration flows from the Maghreb to the European states; (ii) migration with the Gulf and, more specifically, from Egypt; (iii) intra-regional sub-system to Libya and, last but not least, (iv) trans-Saharan migration roots; this latter migration system has shown that, with the large-scale return migration from Libya, a huge number of sub-Saharan migrants, in facing the escalating humanitarian crises, remained in Libya or returned to their countries of origins; this is also due to the “cases of forced immobility and factors that have “trapped” individuals within a within a country.

With the Arab uprisings, started at the end of 2010, the number of migrants from Tunisia crossing - illegally - the Mediterranean sea, hoping to reach the southern European borders, represents the 20% of immigrant inflows entering the European continent, but it is also relevant the issue related to the movement of sub-Saharan migrants from the fragile political system of Libya. As it is possible to see from the Annual Risk Analysis, published by FRONTEX for the year 2012, an increasing in the number of detections reported in the sphere of the central Mediterranean, has been registered, comparing the 64,000 detections to the 5,000 of 2010. Beyond detections, that in western Mediterranean represent only 6% of the entire EU average, irregular migration represents the central issue that the EU has to face within both central (Tunisia, Libya and Egypt) and western Mediterranean countries; more specifically, reported detections of illegal border-crossing arriving from central and western Mediterranean range around “46% and 40% of the EU total” (FRONTEX, 2012).

Inevitably, as Zupi (2012) states, the Arab Spring puts in evidence the fragilities of some North African states that played the role of “transit countries”, in filtering and controlling the flow of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, attempting to reach the European Union via North Africa. The composition of the flow depends on the route and on the countries of departure, but includes a large number of western and northern Africans.

However, the situation remains under control with sporadic arrivals from Tunisia now adding to arrivals from Egypt; flows from Libya are worth particular interest and confirm the fact that, despite the diversity and the unclear composition of the migratory flows (that depend from different routes and countries of origin and transit), there is a significant increase in the number of migrants departing from sub-Saharan countries, namely countries such as Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria and Congo.

To conclude, the existing EU acquis and initiatives, defined in the last few years, allow to provide to the EU the necessary tools to react - “effectively” and “consistently” - against the last challenges. This does not confirm the stereotype or the myth of “Fortress Europe” but it underlines how migration issue and, as a consequence, the EU migration policy in its external relationships (especially with third countries (as in the case of the North Africa states) should be inspired (considering specific fields, such as solidarity in the field of Asylum; the persuasion of third countries towards cooperation; the provision of adequate financial rescuers, etc.). These aspects confirm the centrality of migration management in the EU’s strategies towards Mediterranean countries.

Tunisian flow has reached an incisive increase in the early months of 2011; however, in absolute terms, it is not possible to speak about a “mass exodus” from North African coasts to Italy. The migration flow from Libya to Italy has been limited, compared to the Tunisian one (as in the Maltese case, with 1,574 arrivals); the number of Libyan migrants that arrived in Italy are about 25,935 (who reached the shores of Lampedusa, the port of Linosa and the major Sicilian ones), with more than 9,000 arrivals in May 2011.

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84 Zupi (2012).

85 Report written by Ayla Bonfiglio for the workshop organized by the International Migration Institute and Refugees Studies Centre on 6 May 2011, titled “North Africa in Transition: Mobility, Forced Migration and Humanitarian Crises”.
Interesting data derive from the fact that the main nationalities registered among the landings of migrants who reached Italy from North Africa, have further underlined the nature of “transit countries” of North African states, such as Tunisia and Libya. Since the Libyan crisis, migrants crossing the Mediterranean are from sub-Sahara countries: Côte d’Ivoire, Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Somalia and Sudan.

Table 1. Migrants’ stocks from Tunisia and Libya in Italy (2002-2010)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Libya</th>
<th>Tunisia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1299</td>
<td>59528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1466</td>
<td>6863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1532</td>
<td>7823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1523</td>
<td>83564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1551</td>
<td>88932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1517</td>
<td>93601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1471</td>
<td>100112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1468</td>
<td>103678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1516</td>
<td>106291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: OECD StatExtracts (2012) * Unit of measure used: thousands
In general terms, the humanitarian crisis which from Libya has involved the entire North African area, has caused a refugee crisis that spread beyond the intra-regional level and has signed an increasing number of Libyans fleeing to Tunisia. At the same time, boat migration from Tunisia to Europe (which has been present since the 1990s) has not seen a major increase (in absolute terms). In other words, migration in Tunisia and Libya presents different trends.

According to Lutterbeck (2006) it is particularly significant underlining the system of cooperation that, in this sense, is established between the countries of the North together with that of the South of the Mediterranean sea concerning internal security and considering the different categories of migrants involved.

Mentioning De Haas and Sigona (2012), referring to the recent humanitarian crisis and the subsequent migration flows, that invested (in part) the Mediterranean waters, the idea that emigration will stop is as unlikely as the idea of mass exodus towards Europe, that the empirical evidence has discredited.

**The Libyan “Bridge”**

“The Libyan crisis is considered the second most severe migration crisis in the region since the First Gulf War in the 1990s” (Abdelfattah, 2011); “in the spring and summer 2011, about 1,128,985 people fled war-torn Libya to Tunisia, Egypt, Niger, Algeria, Chad and Sudan, but also the southern European shores” (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012). What appears to be worthy of interest in the Libyan case is the increase and, respectively, datas related to population displacement within the region and its major neighbourhood countries.

Figure 3. Cross border movements from Libya (2011)
Libya, before the Arab Spring, constituted and represented one of the main “transit countries” of the North African area (IOM data estimates that 65,000 - 120,00 sub-Saharan migrants enter the Maghreb region each year); however, as De Haas suggests, it is important to consider tens of thousands of people rather than hundreds of thousands of migrant, crossing the Mediterranean Sea; in fact, considering IOM researches, (only) 300,000 of migrants from sub-Saharan try to reach Europe. Undoubtedly, Italy is, among the EU member states, the most interested country in the migration crisis in the Mediterranean area and this is also due to its geographical proximity to Libya and Tunisia; in the early months of the Arab Spring, the perception of a “future impossible to imagine” for Italian migration policy and border control worried both the Italian interior minister Maroni and the Foreign Affairs Minister Franco Frattini, who talked about “200,000-300,000” arrivals. Migration flows from sub-Saharan countries (and Middle East) tend to overlap those from Libya; for this reason Libya is considered and continues to be seen as a “transit country” from sub-Saharan migrants to Europe: in comparison with migratory flows from other North African countries, the flows of Libyan migrants and refugees has not significantly invested the Italian coasts and limited are also the arrivals registered in Malta; this latter aspect seems to confirm the status of Libya as a “bridge” country between Africa and Europe. The peculiar case of Libyan crisis has been put at the centre of the EU’s comprehensive and direct response, through a series of long-term actions aimed at offering the EU’s external support (together with the entire international community) to Libya’s process of political transition and economic reconstruction. The memorandum – the so-called Memorandum of Understanding – that the EU signed with Libya’s NTC (National Transitional Council) on June 17th 2011 confirmed the co-operation efforts of both partners in the field of migration management. “The political dialogue and engagement of the EU with Libya is very recent and remains fragile”: while FRONTEX has achieved “very positive results” on “day-to-day” cooperation with numerous third countries, cooperation with Libya is still lacking (European Commission, 2011).
The Tunisian “Exodus”

Tunisia is considered another relevant country worthy of interest concerning migration flows from Africa to Europe and, more specifically, the impact of the Arab Spring on migratory routes. The EU has adopted different measures to face the flow of immigrants from the southern shores of the Mediterranean, whose roots go back to the bilateral forms of cooperation signed in 1969. Interim Tunisian government and institutions have always maintained good relations with the European Union, further demonstrated by the subsequent EMP/UfM and ENP initiatives. Migration management and readmissions agreements have been considered the core issues in the EU-Tunisia external relations formalized by relevant instruments, such as the recent VIS; the “Dialogues for Mobility Partnerships” and the “Regional Protection Programme” (RPP). However, in a condition of humanitarian crisis national interests seem to prevail over commitments.

In Tunisia, the internal political change that affected Ben Ali’s (non democratic) political regime started with the street protests at the end of 2010 and, until they culminated in the early months of 2011, these had relevant consequences and effects on migration. In the specific case of Tunisia, it is possible to recognize a sort of “Tunisian Exodus”: about 45% of the total numbers of migrants from Africa to Europe are Tunisians, but looking at the trend over the last years, no particular break was observed in 2011 (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012). There is a significant peak, with 14,390 Tunisian arrivals mainly in the Italian islands of Sicily and Lampedusa, but also in this case the flow is less relevant than the intra-regional trend, registered in North Africa, since the outbreak of the Libyan crisis.

Conclusions

The North African bridge and the need of consistence at the EU level

According to Mikail (2012) “the Arab Spring has created a deeply insecure regional situation due to the insufficient or even lack of controls at the borders of countries undergoing transitions” (like in the case of Libya and Tunisia). This explains the shift towards security matter that the EU migration policy underwent, together with the consequences that this trend has generated. It is clear that migration issues, as well as the role of “North African bridges” that Tunisia and Libya continue to play, involve the development of a new security community in the area of the Mediterranean (Seeberg, 2012).

As the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, suggests the EU has to focus its actions on three key challenges: a valid and concrete response to the Arab Spring, the implementation of a common European migration policy and the need for a common European asylum policy; referring to the EU position towards its southern Mediterranean partners, the EU Commissioner asserts that “it is as if we’d said to them: it is wonderful that you make a revolution and want to embrace democracy but, by all means, stay where you are because we have an economic crisis to deal with here [...] The revolution may have started but the process of the Arab Spring is still in its early stages” (Cecilia Malmström, 2012).

Moreover, in the field of migration, European member states’ (unique) response is not clear and solidarity among EU member states has been replaced by the Italian and French menace of their internal security (France has, in fact, strengthened internal and French-Italian borders control). Despite the numerous arrivals of migrants who, crossing the Mediterranean sea, arrived in Lampedusa, Sicily and Malta, only Malta struggled to deal with migrants flow from North Africa and only 300 refugee were relocated to other member states (without considering the need of international protection that a huge number of people required and expected).

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88 This initiative is focused on different realms (such as the creation of job opportunities for Tunisians; the recognition of skills/diplomas; reforming the Tunisian education system in order to meet the requirements of the EU labour market; integration into the receiving society; visa facilitation inclusion of merchants, civil servants, and family members of migrants in Europe, together with the promotion of migrants’ fundamental rights).

89 The authors take into account a five-years trend, based on national statistical offices of the European countries of destination (such the Italian ISTAT and the German Population Register).
More generally, policies implemented by the EU member states appear to be much more security oriented, instead of democracy promotion. The need of “consistency with the existing legal and political framework” should be considered at the basis of the European Union’s geographical and thematic policies, developed with third countries (Cremona, 2008) including the ENP, the Mobility Partnership and the UfM. The states of the northern tier of Africa are considered as “transit countries”; moreover, this fact refutes the one-size-all strategy of the EU (Ceccorulli and Fanta, 2010).

The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (but also the ENP) should be re-oriented, prioritising political and social stability of the MENA states. What emerges is a lack of an efficient EU response (mentioning De Haas words “is a stark reminder of the gap between EU rhetoric and actual practice”) in facing contemporary challenges.

The stratified and mixed reality that has been further fragmented by the Arab Spring, makes migration a complex issue to face, for both the EU and the North African states. Moreover, as Malmström has recently declared, “respect of human rights and promoting democratic values are basic principles which the EU was founded up”: the EU cannot forget it and responsibility should be, in this sense, the key word.

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Arab Spring: Responding to the Changing Arab Order
Charting a new modernity in the new Arab world: the Islamic resurgence and the need for a Dialogue within Civilization
Ghoncheh Tazmini\textsuperscript{90}

Introduction

The upheavals spanning much of the Arab world over the last two years have introduced dramatic change in the region, overthrowing leaders in some countries and seriously destabilising regimes in others. Some have suggested that Iran would be the main beneficiary of regional instability, owing to the ‘the downfall of pro-US Arab regimes in the region, an emboldened Arab public angry at Israel and hostile to US foreign policy, and growing assertiveness of Shi’ites (Bajoria 2011). The rise of political Islam in the Arab world, they argue, has shifted the balance of power in Tehran’s favour. Various analyses of the post-revolutionary Arab world are replete with talk of ‘Islamic crescents’ with the Islamic Republic of Iran haphazardly blazing the trail. There is also much hype and speculation that Iran is using all of its resources to manipulate and hamper democratic transitions in the Arab world.

In this analysis, I go beyond assessing Iran’s role in the Arab spring as strictly a strategic rival or a regional power. There are lessons to be drawn from Iran – and not necessarily the 1979 Iranian-Islamic revolution or the so-called Green Movement in 2009. I will draw on Mohammad Khatami’s presidency (1997-2005) during which the reformer-president had to respond to calls for progressive social and political reforms within a theocratic-Islamic template.

I will advance the idea of a broad-based ‘dialogue within civilization’ as a framework in which all segments of post-authoritarian Arab society – Islamist, conservative, liberal, secular, the youth and minority groups – discuss how to integrate both indigenous and ‘nativistic’ practices and traditions with more ‘modern’, ‘democratic’ institutions. Moreover, I will argue that the European Union can act as a consensus-builder by encouraging post-authoritarian Arab societies to pave their own path to modernity by pursuing a strategy of ‘autonomous adaptation’ to new political and social realities (Tazmini 2012). Such an enterprise, I contend, is a long-term process that cannot be judged on a seasonal basis such a ‘spring’.

Iran and the Arab revolts

There is debate over the question of whether the events of the Arab spring have their precursors in Iran. The views are split over which Iran serves as the inspiration for events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and elsewhere. Is it as some Iranian officials’ claim, the 1979 revolution, which dethroned Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, or the Twittering, YouTubing mass protests that spilled into the streets of Tehran and other cities in the aftermath of the contested 2009 presidential elections? Most observers are quick to refer to the

technological parallels of the 2009 Iranian uprising and the Arab spring – in particular they refer to the cutting-edge technology and social networking tools employed in mobilising masses and organising protests. In fact, the role of communication technology was also critical in Iran’s 1979 revolution. Ayatollah Khomeini, in exile, managed to mobilize millions of people in a largely rural developing country with the use of the cassette tape. The Ayatollah’s sermons and messages, recorded in exile in Iraq and later France, were smuggled into Iran. Once in Iran, Khomeini’s collaborators within the religious establishment made sure the tapes were copied and distributed widely. The cassette tape became the technological symbol of the 1977-9 revolution.

Another notable point of parallel between the Arab uprisings and the Iranian revolution was the fact that both can be characterized as popular movements that successfully uprooted long-standing pro-western dictatorships. After all, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak were quite comparable to the shah; kings of kings who were dependent on the US and sceptical of democratic accountability.

Moreover, like the Arab uprisings, the Iranian revolution was originally heterogeneous in composition. The ‘Islamic’ revolution brought together disparate groups with different political agendas, including self-professed secular socialists, communists, liberal democrats, democratic nationalists, feminists, and moderate Shi’ite clerics, from all social classes. The one goal that united them was the desire to overthrow the autocratic shah. Supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini, better organized and financed, were able to sideline secular groups, unionists and more liberal Islamist factions with the objective of creating a more just and indigenous Islamic society. Similarly, in the Arab revolutions, although it was the liberals and secularists who led the popular movements, it is the Islamist parties that have come to power.

**Iran’s reading of the Arab Revolutions: an Islamic Awakening?**

The Iranian leadership has been unequivocal about the Arab uprisings. The narrative expounded by Tehran is that the Arab spring is not necessarily a socio-political movement that aims to democratize Arab societies but rather an ‘Islamic awakening’. For Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, the Parliament, the Judiciary and the Friday Prayer leaders, the Arab uprisings were a ‘widespread awakening of nations, which is directed towards Islamic goals’ (Rafati 2012, p. 50). According to this view, the wave that swept through the Middle East and North Africa was based on a revival of Islamic goals and values. On September 17, 2011, Tehran hosted the third first International Conference on the Islamic Awakening, which dealt with topics including: the need to restore the national and Islamic dignity of Muslim countries; the creation a new Islamic civilization on the basis of religion and rationality; and the presentation of Islamic democracy as a substitute for western democracy. The permanent secretariat of the conference was also established in Tehran.

Using the rhetoric of the ‘Great Islamic Awakening’ (*bidari-e-islami*), proponents of this viewpoint seek to develop parallels between the raison d’être of the Iranian regime and the protests, not only as a correlation to be drawn upon and exploited but as causation as well. Increasingly the Iranian leadership believes that the ‘Great Islamic Awakening’ was influenced and inspired by the radical and revolutionary Islamic notions developed by the Iranian revolution of 1979. The Arabs, according to the Iranian leadership and media, were against Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak, Tunisia’s Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and the rest of the Arab leaders, not so much because they were ruthless dictators, but because they were pro-western. According to this view, Mubarak’s good relations with Washington caused more resentment among the Egyptian people than the fact that he locked up his opponents in jail or failed to hold free elections. Arabs, the Iranian leadership stresses, are not seeking democratic changes but rather independence from the US and the Jewish state.

By and large the emerging post-American order is viewed with immense optimism in Iran. Optimism, because Iranian strategists assume that governments that are more responsive to the preferences of their societies will yield foreign policies that are more friendly to the Palestinian cause and Iran, and by implication less compliant to the US and Israel (Adib-Moghaddam 2011). Other analysts argue that the Arab uprisings have been detrimental for Iran, claiming that Tehran has suffered a loss of soft power and popularity by antagonising the Arab street: in particular by associating itself with Syria, and by extension, the crackdown on protestors. This, they argue, will have vast implications in the event that Bashar al-Assad’s regime collapses. These observers
argue that it will be harder for new democracies that acknowledge public opinion to form ties with Iran. We have yet to see if Assad’s regime falls, or if a single democracy is actually established in the Arab world.

**Islamic resurgence**

The interpretation of the Arab spring as an ‘Islamic awakening’ provides more substance than many analysts would like to admit. The instinctive rejection of the events being called an ‘Islamic awakening’, merely because it was an Iranian Ayatollah who chose this expression, is not helpful for a proper understanding of the Arab world. While the idea that the Arab revolts are modelled after the Islamic revolution of 1979 is far-fetched, the claim that the current Arab revolutions owe a great part of their success to the Iranian revolution should be critically scrutinized instead of condescendingly dismissed. Political Islam, an undeniable phenomenon today, was initially made presentable by the 1979 revolution, which took place amid an Arab world that was at that time saturated by Arabism and nationalistic and socialist ideals.

In effect, the Arab awakening has become a launching pad for Islamist political ascendance. Looking across the region, from country to country, Islam has proved influential. How can we explain the fact that Islamists performed so strongly in the elections? Ascher Susser makes an interesting observation: ‘Virtual reality and influence in cyber-space have been confused with real political power, as the leaderless mass movements that have produced neither coherent political platforms nor well-articulated policies have encountered great difficulty in transforming virtual influence into tangible political strength’ (2011). Thus, the more traditional, better organized and more ideologically coherent forces in Middle Eastern politics, like the Islamists or the military were more successful in seizing the reins of power.

**Moving from tradition to modernity**

While Islam remains important, the Arab revolts were not driven by religion but by political and socio-economic factors: dictatorship, oppression, nepotism, social inequality, structural poverty and demographic changes. The paradox of the Arab awakening is that there was little or no reference to religion, and without any reference to pan-Islamism, pan-Arabism or the Palestinian cause. This is interesting to note, given that, empirically speaking, the Arab revolts took place after three decades of what has been called the re-Islamicization of Arab societies, that is, the revival of religious attitudes, practices and symbols (Chatham House 2013). Even more ironic is the fact that the Islamist parties came to power through the democratic process of free and fair elections. This demonstrates the complex and paradoxical nature of the Arab revolts.

The case I am making here is that there is a broad range of political and economic demands, intertwined with disparate ideological orientations and sociological trends. Considering Islam’s political ascendance, Arab society will have to reconcile tradition and dogma with the reality of the emancipatory movements. The challenge ahead is to adapt indigenous and ‘nativistic’ practices with more ‘liberal’, ‘democratic’ or ‘modern’ norms and institutions.

This brings us to the role of Islam in politics alongside specific aspects of the democratic process and of institution-building (the multiparty system, participation of women in the political process, coalition-building, equality of minorities and freedom of religion). Will Islamists let other elements compete freely and fairly in elections once they have consolidated power? How will Islamists cater for the wider society that includes secularists, liberals, religious minorities, and women? Will *shari’a* (Islamic law) form a basis for new constitutions and will it accept secondary status to the legislation of a democratically-elected legislature? Does civil society mean the thing it does in secular, liberal societies or will it take a different expression in Arab societies? What institutional form will pluralism take with Islamists at the helm?
Islamic renewal

There are no easy answers to these questions, and much debate and deliberation will have to take place between all segments of society in the form of a dialogue within civilization. Seeing as many of these questions involve Islam and its democracy, a rigorous hermeneutic project needs to be undertaken as part of this dialogue. There are many Islams, as there are many forms of Christianity – Opus Dei, Liberation Theology, the Papacy and Protestantism and its offshoots. So the crux of the issue is which Islam are we talking about? As such, interpretation lies at the centre of this proposed dialogue. For this reason I propose an extensive hermeneutic reckoning of inherited structures of understanding. This brings to mind the prominent Algerian thinker Mohammad Arkoun who sought to expand the very definition and conception of Islam, and to extend those aspects of tradition that lend themselves to the liberal-democratic project. Arkoun vehemently denied the validity of any single conception of a ‘true Islam’. He also denied any essential difference between western and Islamic cultural values, thereby presenting Islam as a many-sided and dynamic cultural force in full evolution and without fixed possibilities.

Another contemporary theorist is Islamic intellectual Fatima Mernissi who argues that Islam presents both democratic and undemocratic models, which may either be nurtured or curtailed depending on the needs of modern society. Discourses of this nature are extremely useful for Muslim-majority societies undergoing transition. An important component of the proposed ‘dialogue within civilization’ is a comprehensive hermeneutic approach in order to locate solutions to the challenge of modernity in Islamic texts and structures by virtue of the democratic and undemocratic elements of Islam that can either be nurtured or curtailed, according to the needs of the day (Mirsapassi 2010, p. 22).

In this Arab ‘spring’ there is an opportunity for Islam to undergo a seasonal change and to renew itself in light of new political realities. Islamic groups have found themselves in a unique historical ‘moment’ where they are forced to test their commitment to democracy. What is happening in the Arab world is a truly historical evolution that finally links Islam to universal principles of freedom, democracy and social equality.

The indicators have been positive so far. Moderate Islamist parties have participated in parliamentary elections in Morocco (the Party for Justice and Development), Jordan (the Islamic Action Front) in Yemen (al-Islah), Kuwait (Islamic Constitution Movement) or as independents in Egypt. Ennahda in Tunisia, whose leader Rachid Ghannouchi, has argued for years about the compatibility of Islam and democracy, stating that they do not want to impose shari'a law or the wearing for the hijab or an alcohol ban. (However, there have been mixed signals on these issues from certain Islamists who see these as necessary for an alternative long term agenda). The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its Freedom and Justice Party, has embraced pluralism and non-extremism and they have had to engage openly with other political forces and work within state institution and with greater transparency.

Then there are the Salafis in Egypt who participated in mainstream politics, in other words, they embraced the electoral process after decades of having denounced democracy as un-Islamic or kufr. They ultimately adopted the approach of the Muslim Brotherhood, which they had hitherto rejected. Whether this transformation was more a rushed affair stemming from expediency rather than a natural ideological evolution is open to debate. The fact is that there was an overwhelming need to adapt to, and accommodate, a new reality. Many Salafis, especially the political parties are willing to work with the Muslim Brotherhood toward the common goals of furthering the democratic transition and containing radical and militant tendencies. Such adaptation lies at the heart of an enduring and sustainable transformation in post-authoritarian Arab societies.

Post-authoritarian Arab states are in the throes of an historical ‘moment’ where they are being pushed them to explore a more integrative and adaptive developmental strategy. Arshin Adib Moghaddam contends that Islam is realising its latent social and cultural force, transforming itself into a ‘postmodern Islam’, that is, a radical departure from the deterministic, totalitarian ‘Islamism’ of previous generations. He makes the compelling case that we are at a historical juncture that promises to sweep away the gross misconception that there is an inert Arab or Muslim personality prone to authoritarianism. Indeed until Tunisia erupted, the dominant narrative was that Muslim societies are beset by radicalism and that al-Qaeda is a viable political force. Over the past decade, the fight against ‘Muslim radicalism’ has seen huge resources allocated to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; to the regime-change strategy in Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Gaza; and to huge military budgets and many national-security papers.

Now, a deep transformation is exposing the shortcomings of this approach. Islam’s own transformation is a key agent of this process of renewal.
All the same, what we have in the Arab world are fragile democracies. As such Europe needs to redefine its relationship to political Islam and to Islamist groups. Europe needs to act as a consensus-builder and not as a divisive force that either supports secularist forces against Islamist parties or marginalizes liberals in the name of political pragmatism. Maha Azzam recommends that the old rhetoric and practice of suspicion and exclusion of Islamists is counterproductive. She argues that it is perhaps time to shed the term ‘Islamism’ altogether and to speak of political parties in terms of their political and economic agenda (2011).

The EU needs to encourage post-revolutionary Arab societies to engage in an intra-civilizational dialogue, or a ‘dialogue within civilization’. Furthermore, the EU should recognize that it will take time and resources for Arab societies to address these questions and to accommodate demands for ‘modern’, ‘liberal’ or ‘western-inspired’ norms and institutions within a traditional template. It should come as no surprise that these states will be perpetually evolving and adapting according to political demands, economic challenges, demographic changes, as well as the need to function and to integrate on a global level. In other words, the Arab world is re-writing its own history – a task that needs to be carried out organically, and locally, and without western interference.

The ‘Arab revolts’ may in fact turn out to be a ‘spring’ but the nature of that spring needs to be determined by Arab societies and on their own watch. As Simon Murden explains, the development of a political model is an incremental process and cannot be achieved overnight. He makes this argument with reference to the evolution of liberalism in the West:

> Liberalism was never applied in an ideal form. Liberal ideas established influential tendencies in the politics and economic systems of Europe and North America, but they always ran alongside other forms of belief and practice. Liberalism was varyingly meshed with Christianity, kingship, class, status, nation, and the state … People could aspire to liberal ideals while retaining elements of their pre-existing beliefs. Meshing liberalism with ideologies sometimes caused tensions within and between societies, but westerners lived with those contradictions over long periods (Murden 2002, p. 1-2).

Fred Halliday advances a similar argument:

> Fukuyama, like many in the West, overestimated how many states had attained democracy … First, the economic history of few, if any societies in the world had even approximated to the free market model of liberal theory – the development of Japan, Singapore, Korea, and before that of Germany and Britain relied centrally on state intervention … Secondly, democracy was not a sudden, all or nothing event … but a gradual process, over decades and centuries: it took Britain and the USA three hundred years and three internal wars between them to move from tyranny to the kind of qualified democracy they have now. Thirdly, liberal politics is not a single act, bestowing finality on a political system. No one can be certain that a democracy is even reasonably stable unless it has been installed for at least a generation – many have appeared only to disappear (Halliday 2005, p. 159)

Institution-building is a long-term process, thus we must not judge the Arab ‘spring’ on a seasonal base. Adib-Moghaddam reinforces this assertion by explaining that the Middle East, subjugated and colonized for years, is witnessing independence and transformation into a non-colonial order. The Middle East, he maintains, is a ‘Euro-Americo-centric designation’, defined and imagined from the perspective of Europe and the US. Furthermore, it is region that buttresses the West’s claim to hegemony, ‘re-inscribing dependency into the very consciousness of the peoples and governments acting in that area’. The Arab ‘intifada’, as he calls it, signals the end of the Middle East, ‘which translates into the end of dependency on the west’. ‘They don’t need us to dictate words to them and to pester them with our patronizing wisdom. This is what the Iraq war and the uprisings should have taught us’ (2011).
Moving away from ethnocentrism

We have made the case that political transitions take years to evolve depending on each state’s peculiarities. Political theorist Charles Taylor notes that these days we speak of ‘multiple modernities’, the plural reflecting the fact that other non-western cultures have modernized in their own way, and cannot properly be understood if we try to grasp them in a general theory which was originally designed with the western case in mind (2012). The fact is that the predominant narratives of modernity are grounded in European historical experience. Modernity is situated in a western frame of reference, with a western governing centre. Thus much of the western world sees the ‘rest’ or the ‘others’ through a Eurocentric lens. This lends itself to an overwhelming tendency to homogenize the world, which some argue is a smokescreen for subtle neo-colonial forms of domination (Dallmayr 1996).

At the onset of the Arab spring, the EU was quick to refer to the revolts as a ‘democratic wave’. This ‘democratic wave’ allegedly came in four phases: it caused the fall of the dictatorships in Europe in Portugal, Greece and Spain in the 1970s, then in Latin America and Asia in the 1980s and 1990s, followed by Eastern Europe and other countries in the 1990s; and finally it swept through the Mediterranean and Arab world (Vasconcelos 2011). What has become clear is that democratic revolutions do not automatically beget democratic institutions. There is no global uniformity when it comes to the task of modernising political structures. History has taught us that modernity cannot be borrowed, imposed or ‘copied and pasted’. As Ali Mirsepassi reminds us, ‘Modernity is not an object or blueprint which is already completed and needs merely to be purchased or sold. It is an end that one moves toward only on the basis of dialogue and collective agreement ...’ (2010, p.189). What we need on a global level is to foster universal recognition of the heterogeneity of modernisation experiences.

Conservative British commentator David-Pryce Jones contends that the idea that Arabs want freedom and democracy, à la the storming of the Berlin Wall is a ‘Eurocentric fantasy resting on the inability to grasp how other societies actually operate’ (Pryce-Jones 2012). Although this is a rather strong statement, the fact is that post-revolutionary Arab societies need to craft their own developmental path based on their own historical, revolutionary, cultural-religious experience (free from outside interference or pressure or sabotage).

The problem is that modernity has been depicted as an exclusionary ideology grounded in European cultural experience. The fact is that the non-western world did not experience the Renaissance, the Reformation or the Enlightenment (and its democratic offshoots), thus development and modernity cannot possibly mean the same thing in non-western societies and cultures. Until the dominant north Atlantic and western European states accept the fact that modernity has multiple trajectories, development in the Arab world will remain polarized.

The West needs to move away from a unilateral logic toward a genuine cross-cultural encounter that takes a much broader view of ‘democratic transition’, by placing the process in the long-term context of cultural adaptation of civilizational complexes to the challenge of democratisation and modernisation. For example, talk about ‘aid conditionality’ as a way to increase leverage on donor countries, has particularly domineering and punitive connotations. Shadi Hamid from the Brookings Doha Centre advances the following proposition: ‘... if the goal is to pressure recalcitrant governments and encourage real, sustained democratisation ... any future economic assistance should depend on demonstrating progress on key political indicators, including transfer of power to civilian rule and respect for civil society’ (2012). Such an approach will only generate resentment – far more creative strategies of confidence-building are required and that begins with acknowledgement of the fact that democratisation cannot be controlled or speeded up through negative measures.

Lessons from Iran

We often hear about Iran and Turkey representing models of emulation for post-revolutionary Arab states. In fact, both countries and their political models are sources of emulation. This may be a controversial statement but the argument here is that each state

91 The issue is that the west operates under the assumption that there is some sort of historical inevitability to liberal society.
needs to craft its own indigenous, home-grown modernity. This is what Iran and Turkey have done. The Islamic Republic of Iran is a *sui generis*, a political system that is the product of its own, particularistic, historical, cultural, revolutionary civilizational experience. From state-sponsored westernisation in imperial Iran, followed by the creation of a non-western modernity in the form of an Islamic theocracy in post-revolutionary Iran, Iran’s experiments with socio-political transformation reveal a perplexing and often contradictory encounter with modernity and development. What we have seen in post-revolutionary Iran is the attempt to move away from the failed trajectories of the past, towards a homespun variety of modernity.

In 1997, Khatami secured over 70 percent of the popular mandate based on themes including democratic reform, civil society, pluralism and the rule of law. Khatami’s challenge was to reconcile characteristically ‘modern’ or western-orientated reforms with the traditional establishment’s deep-seated anxiety over the possibility of ‘West-toxication’. Khatami realized that his reforms would have to be introduced cautiously and at a measured pace. Furthermore, he understood the importance of pushing forwards with progressive reforms within the existing Islamic political and cultural template. Khatami’s developmental strategy was based on adaptation of the western form of modernity to local and traditional elements. While the politics spawned under Khatami’s watch lacked a consistent cumulative pattern, they were stamped by a profound commitment to democratic goals and method. Khatami’s politics demonstrably repudiated influential, mythical, anthropological theories that stress the passivity and innate authoritarianism of Islamic cultures and societies.

Khatami’s small yet significant successes were largely overshadowed by an institutional gridlock that impeded many of his efforts to implement change. Between 1997 and 2005, reform efforts were stifled amidst intra-elite wrangling between conservative hardliners, who dominated the traditional economic and cultural sources of power, and the reform-orientated elements of society. Khatami was unable to manoeuvre around the political structure or to reconcile the political rifts that impeded his programme for change (Tazmini 2009, p. 2).

Had Khatami fostered a more extensive, critical and interactive intra-societal dialogue *before* initiating his reform project, it is likely that conservative resistance would have been much less severe. The reformer-president overlooked the importance of defining and describing precisely what a modernized Islamic Republic would look like. How would an Islamic democracy differ from a secular western democracy? Did Iranian civil society mean the same thing it did in the West? What precisely was being reformed, and to what extent would the status quo change if the reform project fully materialized? Inattention to these salient questions fuelled the conservative resistance, which, in the end, stifled the movement. Khatami and his supporters needed to explain how their slogans and theories would translate in practical terms. This is not to detract from the fact that the fragility of the reform movement was largely attributed to the constitutional-institutional limitations of the president, his popular mandate and his allies, vis-à-vis the conservative religious establishment (Tazmini 2009, p. 142).

The important lesson for post-revolutionary Arab societies is that it is essential to achieve broad-based political consensus on a wide spectrum of issues, ideologies and orientations. I argue that Khatami could have done much more to allay the fears of the traditional or conservative segments of society who feared the possibility of ‘West-toxication’ and the infiltration of western influences. Khatami called for a dialogue among civilizations but that dialogue had to begin inside Iran. The same recommendation can be made to post-revolutionary Arab societies that will undoubtedly have to reckon with more traditional and conservative elements not to mention more radical groups like the Salafis.

**Conclusion**

Now we can try to pull together the various strands of this analysis in order to reach a substantive conclusion that will inform the European debate on democratic transitions in the increasingly Islamist, post-revolutionary Arab world. We have attempted to illustrate that in light of the Islamic resurgence in post-revolutionary Arab societies, there is an urgent need for an intra-societal debate. We have made this point by drawing on Khatami’s reform-orientated presidency, an era when Iran had to respond to calls for political openness and social liberties. This was a time when Iran faced the challenge of weaving ‘western-inspired’ practices

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92 ‘West-toxication’ is a term coined by Jalal Al-e Ahmad to describe the cultural disease that had plagued Iran in the 1960s. The conservatives continue to subscribe to this view.
into Iran’s national, religious and historical tapestry. However, while Khatami carried the banner of ‘Dialogue of Civilizations’ he overlooked the importance of a dialogue within civilization. The Arab world cannot make this mistake. With the encouragement of the EU and the outside world, a broad-based domestic dialogue needs to take place in order to determine how political Islam will feature in societies that have clearly demonstrated an eagerness for democratic practices and institutions.

The EU can help Arab transitions using a two-pronged approach: on a local and societal level, the EU can encourage an intra-civilizational, intra-societal dialogue concerning adaptation of Islam, modernity and democratic norms and institutions, coupled with a rigorous hermeneutic approach of reassessing and reinterpreting religious and classical texts more extensively and creatively. On a global level, the EU needs to foster universal recognition of the heterogeneity of the experiences of modernity. This means the EU and the US need to overcome their ethnocentric tendencies and to subdue their impulse to control or dominate development by encouraging Arab states to pursue a strategy of ‘autonomous adaptation’ to the new political and social reality on their horizon.

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Abstract

The revolts began in the Middle East and North Africa in December 2010 generated unprecedented transformations. Among them, the security dimension, highlighted above all by the large flow of irregular migration, covers a prominent relevance where the related security culture could play a strategic role. The security culture, as a pattern of thought that establishes pervasive and durable security preferences by formulating concepts of the role, legitimacy and efficacy of particular approaches to protecting values, shapes the core beliefs, values and preferences of the decision-makers about how to deal with security issues. By the way, the Arab Spring, identifying itself as a regional phenomenon, could expect that the northern, familiar with the concepts of cooperative and comprehensive security, and the southern Mediterranean countries, attached to the traditional view of strategic secrecy and national military power short of alliance coordination, could go through a time of uncertainty on how to adjust their own security cultures to the present situation. In this sense, as the countries of the MENA region now are moving from the moment of revolution to the process of transition, this could be a timely opportunity to actively redefine their security culture as a primary benchmark of the success of the democratic transitions as well as a bulwark against the relapse into authoritarianism.

This paper would be the attempt to show how a joint security dialogue among the EU, Arab Spring and all Mediterranean's involved actors could be a platform for a new political understanding, anchored to the principles of representativeness and accountability, as a new era of the Euro-Mediterranean relations. This could be also a crucial step to cement the achievements of the Arab Spring: reforming the security culture to guarantee the road ahead for democratic transition.

Keywords: Arab Spring; Mediterranean security; security community; security culture; Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Introduction

From its onset in early 2011, the Arab Spring has been understood as a process of political change in the major area of the world where authoritarianism persisted unchallenged for decades (Beck, 2012). After decades of authoritarian rule and political stagnation, internal mass protests and popular movements were finally able to destabilize or overthrown a number of authoritarian regimes (Hüser, 2012). There is a growing consensus that the Arab transformations are an open-ended process that, independently of its outcome, can be regarded as an event of global and historical significance (Alessandri, 2011).
Initial visions of a region suddenly moving from authoritarianism to democracy have given way to assessments of what type of democracy, if any, the Arab world is transitioning to. Many predict that democracy will indeed take the root in many of the countries involved, but the emergence of a liberal type of democracy that values and respects pluralism, including in religious matters, may not be a likely outcome (Alessandri, 2011). The debate has also rightly become more country-specific stressing how countries will follow particular trajectories on the basis of their economic and political development diversifying the complex regional picture (Häser, 2012).

Furthermore, the Arab transformations have altered the region with significant security implications and challenges for both local and external actors (Dokos, 2011). In particular, threats and risks emanating from the disintegration of the old regional orders such as terrorism and crime, particularly organized crime with its close links to terrorism, irregular migration and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) today are more relevant than ever witnessed before (Beck, 2012). Given the crucial role that security institutions have played in sustaining authoritarian regimes in the region, any transformation towards democracy necessarily will have to include a reform of the countries’ security concept, and the related security culture, towards greater transparency, accountability and democratic control (Lutterbeck, 2012).

However, the attitude of the actors involved and their willingness to transform security cooperation dynamics in the Mediterranean depend primarily on the success of political transitions and the prospects for regional stability. In this sense, they should consider the transition towards democracy as an opportunity to build a more stable and secure region (Dokos, 2012). In order to take into account new dynamics of change, it could be useful to explore different scenarios and provide some policy recommendations to guide all the actors involved in redefinition of their security strategies towards and inside the region delineating, in this way, the future of the Mediterranean security.

The paper is organized as it follows. In the first section, threat- and risk-based security are briefly examined as the forms of (in) security that afflict the contemporary dynamics. In the second, attention is drawn to threats and risks that today, and with the relevance given them by the Arab Spring, constitute the greatest challenges to the Mediterranean security, delineating them in terms of terrorism, irregular migration, proliferation of WMDs and organized crime. In the third section of this paper, attention is drawn to security cooperation on the assumption that building collective action is the best way to go in order to face the security dynamics of the Mediterranean region in the years ahead. On this account, in the fourth section, it is sustained that as the countries of the MENA region now are moving from the moment of revolution to the process of transition, this could be a timely opportunity to actively engage in a joint security dialogue on the related security culture, firstly, to anchor the security political dialogue to the principles of representativeness and accountability, as a primary benchmark of the success of the democratic transitions and bulwark against the relapse into authoritarianism, and secondly, to show how a joint security dialogue among all Mediterranean’s involved actors could be a platform for a new security cooperation framework in the Mediterranean. Finally, some policy perspectives will be given.

Security in the 21st Century

Most of the literature which attempted analysis or prescriptions of the security concept has always stressed that the security of any referent object or level can not be achieved in isolation from the others and that then the security of each becomes, in part, a condition for the security of all depending also on both the nature of threats and vulnerabilities (Buzan, 1983 and 1991). In 1990s, the Copenhagen School, stressing the societal aspects of security, embraced a constructivist approach investigating the construction of security as a ‘social construction’ through ‘speech acts’, that is to say the definition of security threats and the identification of the relevant actors (Buzan et al., 1997). The speech act is based on elements such as the facilitating conditions, the internal and external following of the rules, the social conditions and the features of the threat; the referent objects, the things that seem to be existentially threatened; the securitizing actors, who securitize an issue declaring something – a referent object – existentially threatened; and, finally, the functional actors, that affect the dynamics and influence the decisions (Buzan et al., 1997).

In the recent decades, the latest wave of globalisation, with its technological innovation that increased virtual and physical proximity, population growth and urbanisation, has created a more interconnected, interdependent and complex world than ever witnessed before (Goldin and Vogel, 2010). It has been also largely characterized by the production of systemic risks that have the
ability to force, at the same time, an unlimited number of actors who want nothing to do with one another, who pursue different political goals and who adopt a number of measures to deal with them (Beck, 1999)

For risk theorists, this shift reflects a sociological change in how dangers arise but also an epistemological shift in how dangers are viewed (Coker, 2002). The fear of the unknown risks introduces a logic of defensibility rather than a logical appropriateness into the security policies and policy judgements (Kemshall, 2003). Moreover, since risk is subjective, its construction occurs through culturally biased lenses (Giddens, 2002: 18).

However, it should be made clear that risk is not a new concept. While in the past, risk had a specific definition based on quantification and calculation, in modernity, the definition of risk involved the separation of risk and uncertainty (Giddens, 2002). Moreover, a definition of risk could result from its comparison with threat. The concept of threat is predicated upon power and categorized by examining the military capabilities and intentions of the actors. Risk, instead, is not nearly as computable and is based upon the probability and magnitude of consequences (Heng, 2003). Summarizing, threats are finite because they emanate from a specific actor, with a limited amount of resources to support capabilities. Since risks are only possible scenarios - devoid of any ‘real’ capabilities - they can exist to a far greater extent than threats, so they are infinite (Williams, 2008).

Therefore, it seems prudent to assume that today threat-based security still exists but has been joined by another logic, that one of risk, and another kind of speech act able of establishing this logic (Williams, 2008). In this research, threats and risks are identified with that ones (terrorism, irregular migration, proliferation of WMDs and organized crime) related to the Mediterranean region security, the referent object, and that today, and especially after the Arab Spring, are requiring specific effective and efficient solutions. The northern and southern Mediterranean countries are regarded as the securitizing actors, considering that the gap between their security cultures could prevent, as in the past, any kind of security cooperation. The aim of these actors could be to set up appropriate actions, to deal with Mediterranean threats and risks, becoming, in this sense, functional actors. This functionality, in particular, is identified with the development of a joint security culture dialogue to anchor the security political dialogue to the principles of representativeness and accountability, as a primary benchmark of the success of the democratic transitions and bulwark against the relapse into authoritarianism, firstly, and show how it could be a platform for a new era of the Euro-Mediterranean relations, secondly. In this way, the dialogue could contribute to the emergence of a Mediterranean regional identity that in the longer time could lead to the creation of a Mediterranean security community, as a pattern of regional cooperation.

Mediterranean Security: Towards a Potential Co-Management

This research assumes that security in a region is the outcome of arrangements as different as national defence policies, dyadic pacts and opposite military alliances, on one side, and measures and mechanisms of co-management of threats and risks issues agreed on by (almost) all the actors of the region, on the other (Attinà, 2012). The goal of setting security management in a region assumes that normally the countries of the region act as the responsible members of the system they want to organize sharing similar views about the co-management of risk- and threat-security problems (Attinà, 2012).

References to the so called neo-regionalism could be useful to understand the dynamics that might take place in the Mediterranean. Neo-regionalism sees regions as the output of political, social, cultural and economic interaction between entities which are not necessarily homogeneous; where geographical contiguity is not an essential element and a regional identity could be the product of these interactions (Adler and Barnett, 1998). In this sense, the magnitude and symmetry of the flows of social and economic transactions and cultural communications could be seen as the indicators of the formation of a regional security community (Adler and Crawford, 2006).

The security community concept, pioneered by Karl Deutsch in 1950s and revived and modified by Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett 40 years later, offers a way of understanding how actors of a region might reconfigure their perception of security. According to Deutsch, a security community is one in which there is a real assurance that its members will not fight each other
physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way (Deutsch et al., 1957). Deutsch (1957) sustained indeed that cultural interactions and communications can grow so intense that the security community can become characterized by the shared sense of belonging to a community, a sense of weness, including also the development of diplomatic, political and military practices (Deutsch et al., 1957). Years later, the work of Adler and Barnet (1998) stressed the importance of communication, transparency and exchange of information among the security community’s actors as way to strengthen security cooperation as well as to denationalize their defense and security policies (Adler and Barnett, 1998).

In such perspective, a Mediterranean security community could be a process that, starting from the bottom up, contributes to create a sense ‘we-ness’ starting a joint security culture dialogue to reduce the violent confrontation and allow the flow of mutual communication to increase regional security, on the one hand, and to see the Arab uprising as a window of opportunity to revise security strategies, to redefine the relation between security, stability, and democracy according to the principles of representativeness and accountability, to dissociate national security from regime’s security, and to reformulate the security political dialogue and security cooperation frameworks in the Mediterranean, on the other (Adler and Crawford, 2006; Soler i Lecha, 2011).

If the dialogue becomes strong and durable over time, it will produce a regional identity and a strong Mediterranean security cooperation with common orientations towards common threat and risk security problems indispensable to prevent that security threats and risks emanating in this region could impact on European and international security (Liotta, 2002). For decades, partial and top-down attempts to improve regional security have been unable to challenge the existing securitizing approach, then, this could be a timely opportunity to actively engage in a bottom-up initiative to manage threats and risks security problems avoiding that them could put regional stability in danger (Soler i Lecha, 2011).

**Threats and Risks to the Mediterranean Security**

The Mediterranean security has always been characterized by multiple sources of insecurity, instability, and continuing change and evolution. The Arab revolts probably has caused an exponential increase in the region’s volatility and unpredictability and some key characteristics of the regional security have either changed in terms of importance or are no longer relevant and new ones have emerged (Dokos, 2011). The main trends and drivers, that have the potential to disrupt a linear evolution of the regional security, are in particular: domestic developments and foreign policies of pivotal regional states; hard security problems (proliferation of WMDs; military expenditure and the possibility of a conventional arms race; and jihadist or other forms of terrorism); changing role and influence of extra-regional actors; and soft security drivers (organized crime; demographic trends and population movements; climate change; natural resources; failed and dysfunctional states; and pace and impact of globalization (van der Lijn, 2011).

This research considers that threat and risks to Mediterranean security fall in particular into four hard and soft security drivers and trends: terrorism, irregular migration, proliferation of WMDs and organized crime. They, which cannot be readily defeated by the traditional defences that states have erected to protect both territories and populaces in the Mediterranean, reflect the remarkable fluidity that currently, and above all after the Arab Spring, characterizes international and Mediterranean politics and security – a setting in which it is no longer exactly apparent who can do what to whom with what means. Considering that terrorism, irregular migration, proliferation of WMDs and organised crime exists only as potentialities, their management mainly concerns with making sure that risks related to them are prevented from developing into concrete and acute threats to the Mediterranean security (Chalk, 2011).

**Terrorism**

In the last years, the issue of terrorism has deeply changed security perceptions and strategies at both global and regional level (Panebianco, 2010). Historically, the Mediterranean region has not been a major focus of terrorist activity, even if the 9/11 events,
the Madrid (March 2004) and London (July 2005) bombings and the terrorist attacks that have shocked Arab countries (e.g., Casablanca in May 2003 and Amman in 2005), have made of the Mediterranean a region highly characterized by terrorism (Murphy, 2007).

Terrorists, in the Mediterranean area, have limited resources and are conservatives when it comes to choosing attack modalities adhering to tried and tested methods that are known to work and offer reasonably high chances of success, and whose consequences can be relatively easily predicted (Block, 2006). Additionally, secular terrorism, which was used in the struggle for political power during the immediate post-colonial transition period, has been almost completely replaced by the terrorism of Islamist groups connected with the international jihadist network (Mattes, 2012).

Moreover, an increasing number of terrorism acts are conducted in collaboration with local gangs and focus on lucrative criminal acts (in particular, the trafficking of narcotics, cigarettes and humans) including the abduction of foreigners to generate funding for the organisation (Darif, 2010). Finally, due to widespread arms trafficking throughout the Maghreb region, the availability of weapons for terrorist and criminal acts has drastically increased (Mattes, 2012: 9).

Irregular Migration

The relationship between migration and security provide a wide range of possible security threats and risks that could derive from their interconnection (Davies, 2000). Myron Weiner (1993) identified five broad categories in which migrants may be seen as a threat as well as a risk: ‘as opponents of the home regime’, ‘as a political risk to the host country’, ‘as a threat to cultural identity’, ‘as a social or economic burden’ and ‘as hostages, risks for the sending country’ (Weiner, 1993: 10-18).

Migration is a phenomenon that can be explained mainly in terms of globalization. On one side, the production process, output of globalization of economy, tends to be concentrated in certain specialized regions of the globe where it is possible to reap the benefits of lower cost of labor and resources. In this way, it has created the regionalization of globalization characterized by regions with high economic integration which further exacerbates the marginalization of those areas of the planet not involved in the process of globalization (Watts, 2002). On the other, people of these areas start to experience a growing incentive to emigrate towards the most developed region of the world in search of better living conditions (Collyer, 2010).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, there has been a growing concern with irregular migration across the Mediterranean that is considered one of the most important gateways through which undocumented immigrants seek to reach the European Union (Europol, 2005). Given also its clandestine nature, the magnitude of the phenomena is difficult to assess and the only available data are the border apprehensions of would-be immigrants (Lutterbeck, 2007).

The main migration routes in the Mediterranean currently, specially after the Arab Spring, pass through Libya and Tunisia, while in the early 1990s the two main ‘entry gates’ were the Straits of Otranto and the Straits of Gibraltar (Panebianco, 2010). Between 65,000 and 120,000 of sub-Saharan Africans left the Maghreb yearly, of which 70 percent are believed to migrate through Libya and 20 to 30 percent through Tunisia to cross the Mediterranean (Europol, 2011).

Migrants are often relatively well educated and from moderate socio-economic backgrounds and move because of a general lack of opportunities, fear of persecution and violence, or a combination of both (Collyer, 2010). The flow of would-be immigrants is also controlled by smuggling networks becoming involved in narcotics trafficking and then assuming close connections between irregular migration, drug trafficking and other types of cross-border crime (Gomez, 1997). Subsequent to the Madrid bombings in 2003, in which Moroccan immigrants resident in Spain played a crucial role, migration from Morocco has also increasingly been associated with international and in particular Islamic terrorism (Paniagua, 2000).
**Proliferation of WMDs**

Proliferation represents also an important dimension of security. The proliferation of WMDs in the Mediterranean is generally considered by officials and analysts as a destabilising development in terms of security (Boyer, 2007). Reasons for concern include the large number of conflicts and the contemporary region’s endemic instability, the fact that such weapons have been used in the past, the geographic proximity to Europe and the vital interests of the West, and other security problems (including the spread of religious extremism). What worries is especially the confluence of WMD's proliferation and the possibility of a radical Islamist takeover (Kinsella, 2002).

The crux of the nuclear proliferation problem has always been whether it might increase the probability of the use of nuclear weapons (Andersen, 2005). The only conceivable use of nuclear weapons would be as a weapon of last resort, in the face of a conventional defeat. If there were to be the use of nuclear weapons by a new nuclear weapon state, it would most likely result from a miscalculation, an accidental detonation or launching of a nuclear device, or be an act of desperation in a crisis or conventional war (Hananel, 2004). Proliferation also would make the strategic chessboard more complex whilst at the same time multiplying threats and risks and complicating strategic decision-making (Bunn, 2003).

Alongside the Iran’s development of nuclear weapons, serious threats and risks in the Mediterranean area derive from the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. Egypt, Libya, and Syria are all believed to have active chemical and biological weapons programmes (Cottey, 2007). Chemical weapons are easier to develop than nuclear weapons and their destruction potential is rather high. Biological weapons represent a particular proliferation concern as well: if dispersed in a populated area they might cause thousands or millions of deaths (Panebianco, 2010).

**Organized Crime**

During the last two decades, general tendencies have been evident in the development of organized crime, related especially to the globalisation process, in the Mediterranean region. Arguing from a social perspective, it is possible to define the following three negative effects stem from globalisation (Mattes, 2012: 16):

- The proliferation of criminal organisations with substantial weapons supplies, access to financial resources and a systematic and transnational organisational structure. Moreover, their development has been aided by increasingly convenient means of transportation and communication.

- The strong and significantly increasing link between crime and the excessive use of violence; for instance, abductions, hostages takings, brutal robberies.

- The internationalisation of such kind of organisations and their operational territory (i.e. the development of transnational organized crime) in narcotics, explosives and arms trafficking; the counterfeiting of money and the illegal trade.

However, there are also local factors that are inherent to globalisation and merit attention. A central cause is the high rate of youth unemployment and the lack of prospects. Lastly, the deterioration of purchasing power and the increased social inequity in the Maghreb states are also additional causes (al-Alfi, 1998).
The cultural dimension, in particular the security culture, even if the distance between the Islamic and Christian worlds is quite large, is a fundamental requisite, when it comes to the joint management of Mediterranean security issues through mutual understanding and peaceful relations. In fact, in case of conflict among states, cultural homogeneity makes negotiation easier, when, instead, in non-conflict circumstances, cultural homogeneity facilitates the construction of common institutions that will boost security (Attinà, 2012).

Security culture is understood as pattern of thought and argumentation that establishes pervasive and durable security preferences by formulating concepts of the role, legitimacy and efficacy of particular approaches to protecting values. Through a process of socialization, security culture helps to establish the core assumptions, beliefs and values of decision-makers about how security challenges can and should be dealt with (Williams, 2008). In general, the security culture is intrinsically influenced by the past security experiences and by the beliefs, traditions, attitudes and symbols that shape the country’s culture. More precisely, security culture shapes the preference of national governments for security instruments, i.e. makes them inclined towards forms of regional security arrangements rather than others (Attinà, 2012).

However, security culture’s diversity is one of the distinctive features of the Mediterranean region. In this sense, communication and dialogue between the different security cultures have to be put in place by all the involved Mediterranean actors, the securitizing actors, to build common rules, norms and institutions for the joint management of the shared security threats and risks, becoming in this sense functional actors. Since security culture is never static, factors like learning from new events (Arab uprising for example) and processes, interactions with the security culture of other states and regions, and the influence of new ideas and values, can give place to a cultural change necessary in this age of interdependence (Attinà, 2012).

In particular, the social and political revolts began in the Middle East and North Africa in December 2010 generated unprecedented transformations in the countries of the region that could lead to expect from the northern and southern Mediterranean countries to go through a time of uncertainty on how to adjust even the security culture of the past to the present situation in order to take the appropriate security policy decisions. The interface between state and society, the prerogatives of the military actors, the role and place of civil society, the responsibilities of an elected and accountable government as well as the nature of the relationship between local authorities and external partners are fundamental components of this changing scene and have to be take into account within the security culture dialogue (Kawakibi, 2012).

The current security culture of the European countries is shaped by three recent experiences: (1) the arms control negotiations of the Cold War and détente periods; (2) the Helsinki Process with the three-decade long elaboration of new security ideas and values, and the formation of comprehensive and cooperative security mechanisms; and (3) the establishment of new defence policies in the early years of the current decade that are aimed at reacting to the systemic crises and unexpected risk problems. Briefly, the northern group is quite familiar with the principles of cooperative security - that is based on information exchange, dialogue and collaboration - and comprehensive security - that is based on dealing simultaneously with domestic and international security issues, and making use of economic, military, technical, and cultural resources, at the basis of a joint management of security (Attinà, 2012).

The security culture of the Arab countries is, instead, quite different. First, Arab governments, generally speaking, are attached to the traditional view of strategic secrecy, and national military power short of alliance coordination and did not have any important multilateral security experience up to now. Its distrust towards neighbours has historically led them either to go alone or form short-term alignments with like-minded states. They generally view cooperative-security forums and arrangements with suspicion due to its strong focus on national sovereignty. Second, in past years, lack of experience in cooperative security regionalism went along with cultural beliefs which were/are favourable to cooperation with Arab Islamic countries. Beliefs in the existence of the Arab nation as a trans-state community, and in the society of Arab states, continue to be strong and, therefore, will influence any project of security cooperation across the cultural division. Third, in recent times, the importance of the cultural division, seen as an obstacle to security cooperation, has been growing because the Arab Islamic identity is often invoked by the reformist and radical movements that ask for important changes in the Arab counties using also violent and non-violent means (Williams, 2008; Attinà, 2012).
As the countries of the region now are moving from the moment of revolution to the process of transition, there is a timely opportunity to actively engage in a consequential renovation reallocating a proper shifting towards the principles of cooperative and comprehensive security, as a strategic attempt of re-examination of the security culture in the Arab world, and as a primary benchmark of the success of the democratic transitions as well as a bulwark against the relapse into authoritarianism.

In such context, a post-Arab Spring joint security culture’s dialogue, shifting from the heterogeneity of the security culture and a supposed clash of civilization, could see the emergence of a homogeneous security culture until the creation of a regional identity. In particular, an efficient and effective joint security culture dialogue should focus on three elements (Tanner and Mohamedou, 2012). Firstly, the nature of the Arab security’s concept must be wholly redefined. After their rise to power, Arab leaders strengthened the security sector to stifle protest and better control the society where the government, instead of army, became the assurance of safety and security. In addition, they also established a ‘culture of fear’ which allowed political bodies to anticipate any form of challenge to their power or disagreement with their visions about the future of the country affecting also the implementation of security actions. Where security is a synonymous of arbitrariness and its function had shifted from protection of the citizenry and public order to that one of the regime’s interests, or where it is identified with abuse and violence, or where it was used in first line as a primary source of the persistence of authoritarianism, it is there that the redefinition aim of the dialogue has to take place. This could be achieved with taking structural changes within the interested societies wherein reworking the state-society interface and redefining security along new terms which prioritize accountability.

Secondly, the redefinition process must be thought both in quantitative and qualitative terms. On one side, this process will have to tackle the question of the different prospects that security could occupy. Downsizing or dismantling all the national military alliances is an immediate issue that must be resolved with enough wisdom to not generate further disorder. On the other, the reform of the military and police services can only take place if people understand that such change is part of a larger process of national transition towards the rule of law free from arbitrariness and corruption of the security sector, meeting in this way the expectations of transformation of the people of the Arab revolts.

Thirdly, these various aims could be achieved if there is the belief of the existence of an Arab nation as a trans-state community that continues to be strong and, therefore, will influence any project of security cooperation across the cultural division. Security reforms have to take place within the fusion between the security sector and the civil society consisting in, firstly, transferring the control of security sector into the hand of political representatives directly elected by people; secondly, connecting to the work of non-governmental organizations working in the domains of security, and thirdly, training in terms of security to initiate a new generation founded on the rule of law.

**Policy Perspectives:**

**Can the Dialogue Renew the Euro-Mediterranean Relations?**

After the Arab Spring, the EU has perceived the MENA region as a potential source of insecurity. This was particularly true for southern European countries which, due to geographical and historical proximity, are particularly afraid of the effects of political and social destabilization in their southern neighbours. In this situation, dialogue and cooperation with the new and future ruling governments is seen as the only effective way to fight against transnational terrorism, to control irregular migration flows, to reduce the proliferation of WMD and to combat organized crime. At the same time, Arab governments could demand assistance to contain these security issues (Wolff, 2008). These converging interests could then materialize in a new cycle of Euro-Mediterranean relations which has the potential to transform the treatment of security issues in this region in a new pattern of regional cooperation: the security community (Joffé, 2008). Different reasons let realistically to expect that a joint security dialogue, the rapprochement of the security cultures and the emergence of a regional identity could be the starting points for a reconfiguration the Euro-Mediterranean relations in the light of the development of a sense of we-ness but this will depend on some factors (Soler i Lecha, 2011).
First of all, it could be useful that the Arab world will engage in such period of change with the support of the external actors. European actors, in particular, have to provide the necessary security experience and the technical expertise, in the attempt that, in the longer time, southern partners might offer their collaboration and cooperation against threats and risks to Mediterranean security in the name of the ‘good conscience’ provided in the past by European. Future convergence would, in that respect, be productive, cooperating on roadmaps of what are perceived, by outsiders and insiders, as common priorities (Kawakibi, 2012).

Secondly, this wave of protest is not only resulting in more or less radical changes in regional security and the political systems of Maghreb countries but it is also forcing the EU, and EU member states to reconsider their policies towards this region, especially after the failure of the Union for the Mediterranean (Soler i Lecha, 2011). The EU and its member states would benefit from the consolidation of an area of stability, democracy and prosperity in the Maghreb contributing, at the same time, to reach this output. The EU could make a positive contribution in the political domain by unconditionally accepting the results of free and fair elections, by materializing its promises to support civil society and independent media, by providing support in electoral process and international observation, and by defining more sophisticated mechanisms to monitor ongoing reform processes (Balfour, 2011).

Thirdly, a stronger emphasis on what Europe itself can gain from this relationship and what is the contribution of southern countries can help to shape Euro-Mediterranean relations as a win-win pact between equal partners. Any Euro-Mediterranean policy needs to start from a shared political ambition between European and MENA countries articulating security interests and enhancing transparency (Kausch, 2012).

Fourthly, apart the U.S., the EU is no longer to be the only player in the Mediterranean region. The so-called BRICS are broadly regarded as new players in the region where the growing presence of the Chinese in Africa, the Brazilian-Arab cooperation in agricultural projects and the Russian-Algerian cooperation on energy and arms supplies are the most visible facets of this trend. The growing influence of these actors in the Mediterranean region can have multiple effects: it could trigger a competition for spheres of influence between old (EU and its member states for example) and new powers; it could imply a more direct intervention of new players in regional security matters; and, finally, it may also limit European influence in a region where it used to be the leading actor. Then the EU, to maintain its leading role, should pay attention to support a more balanced vision in which Arab partners are regarded as equal and not as clients and the Mediterranean as an opportunity and not as a source of threats and risks (Menon and Wimbush, 2010).

**Conclusion**

The Arab uprisings, independently of their outcome, have already challenge conventional approaches to the Mediterranean security and will continue to shape cooperation dynamics especially between EU and Arab countries in the coming decade. However, the attitude of Mediterranean partners and their willingness to transform security cooperation dynamics in the Mediterranean stand as factors that can either speed up or slow down the road ahead for democratic transition. They can consider change and democracy as an exceptional opportunity to build a more stable and secure Mediterranean region or, on the contrary, could reinforce a conservative approach conceiving political change as having a negative spill-over effect propagating threats and risks in the Mediterranean region.

Despite its heterogeneity and implementation problems, the proposed joint dialogue seems to be a strategic and potential opportunity. Transforming the previously perspective where the security of the state was equivalent to the security of the regime and instruments formerly used into new ones to ‘serve and protect’ the citizenry is, therefore, the primary benchmark of the success of the Arab Spring. A reformed security culture whose own dynamics will reflect new values and functions, as well as new institutions anchored to representativeness, accountability and transparency principles will be a crucial step to avoid the relapse into authoritarianism and cement the achievements of the Arab Spring being a starting point for a new era of the Euro-Mediterranean relations.
Rethinking Euro-Mediterranean Relations after the Arab Spring
Susana de Sousa Ferreira

Abstract

The year 2011 represents a turning point for the Arab societies. The social and political upheavals in North Africa and the Middle East ended with decades of oppression, changing the political landscape of the region and challenging regional security.

The outcomes of the Arab Spring are still uncertain and its results may differ from country to country. Nevertheless, the EU plays an important role in the construction of the new democratic and peaceful societies. Therefore, the EU must adopt an active position and take a step forward in regional cooperation. A mentality shift on the European side is necessary, in order to adopt a different and effective approach.

The social uprisings have triggered two major refugee crises in Europe’s southern neighborhood and increased the fear of massive flows to Europe. The EU responded by increasing control in its external borders and by adopting other restrictive measures.

This study aims to (a) get an integrated perspective of the main security challenges brought by the Arab Spring; (b) analyze the approach adopted by the EU to face migratory movements from the South; and (c) assess the challenges the Euro-Mediterranean relations now face.

Key-words: Euro-Mediterranean relations, Arab Spring, Security, Migrations

“Democratic uprisings are bringing dramatic changes to the Southern Neighbourhood, creating a new hope and opportunity to build a future based on democracy, pluralism, the rule of law, human rights and social justice. Progress and democracy go hand in hand. The European Council salutes the courage demonstrated by the people of the region and reaffirms that it is for them to decide their future, through peaceful and democratic means.”

Introduction

The future of the Arab world is at a crossroad. The political and social upheavals that started in 2011 challenged the old system and decades of oppression. The young and more educated population of these countries aims for freedom, justice and human dignity. The so-called Arab Spring represents a turning point for the Arab societies and an historical moment for the region. But the future is still uncertain.

94 Susana de Sousa Ferreira is a researcher from IPRI – UNL and CEPESE – UP. She is currently attending the Ph.D. course in International Relations, in the field of Security Studies and Strategy, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Nova University of Lisbon.
The social upheavals in North Africa and the Middle East have placed new challenges to international security and, particularly, in what concerns European security. The Mediterranean has long been characterized by antagonisms and relations of conflict and the instability created by the Arab Spring has accentuated these cleavages and created new challenges. Moreover, considering the asymmetries between both shores of the Mediterranean, migrations are inevitable. The way the European Union deals with these issues is determinant for the future of the region.

The movement for change that started in the streets aimed to overthrow the authoritarian regimes established and make way for a new era, based upon the values of “democratic governance, social justice and decent employment” (UNDP, 2011:1). Discontentment among people (due to unemployment, precarious social situations, lack of opportunities and others) and the constant violation of human rights by the political regimes triggered the Arab Spring, a new time of high expectations.

Countries in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region stand at different stages. In some of them there has been an effective overthrown of the regimes (as in Tunisia and Egypt), in others the established regimes have tried to avoid uprisings by making swift constitutional changes (take Morocco and Jordan for example), others are still facing contestation.

The outcomes of the Arab Spring are still uncertain and rely on people’s choices. History shows that “revolutions tend to be followed by years, and sometimes decades, of instability” (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012: 12). The possibility of an “Arab Winter” is still open. If the new established regimes fail to achieve the demands requested by the people or if Islamist regimes are established, a new dark moment may fall upon the region. Most of the new leaders are inexperienced and they will have to deal with a myriad of problems and demands in order to implement democratic states based on the values of justice, social cohesion and respect for human rights.

This paradigm shift in the Arab world calls for a “‘mental revolution’ on the European side” (Amirah-Fernández and Lecha, 2011: 2). The sociopolitical changes in Europe’s southern neighborhood should prompt a profound reflection on the Euro-Mediterranean relations, to rethink frameworks and avoid the constant frustration.

Therefore, it is our aim to (a) get an integrated perspective of the main security challenges brought by the Arab Spring; (b) analyze the approach adopted by the EU to face migratory movements from the South; and (c) assess the challenges the Euro-Mediterranean relations now face.

The New Security Paradigm
– Immigration and Security

The new international system, with new actors and new regional dynamics, challenges the traditional concept of security. In its complexity, according to traditional realist theories (vide Dorf 1994, Chipman 1992 and Walt 1991), security is the phenomenon of war and resource to military force (Ferreira, 2010: 8). During the bipolarity of Cold War, security conceptions were restrained to the military and political fields.

Globalization has led to new transnational threats and vulnerabilities, which require a new security framework. There is a proliferation of threats to states’ security (such as terrorism, organized crime, human being trafficking, etc), which call for a re-conceptualization of security. New security concepts aim to broaden the concept to new dimensions, such as economic, environmental and societal (Buzan, et al, 1998: 7). Moreover, states are no longer the only focus of security, but also the individual, which gives a new and human dimension to security (Garcia and Ferro, 2013: 36-37). The concept of human security developed by the United Nations emphasizes individuals’ protection from violence and respect for human rights (Ferreira, 2013: 4).

The concept of security in international relations differs from the common notion of security we daily use. The traditional politico-military perspective defines it as survival, or as Buzan et al. (1998: 21) put it “[i]t is when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated object (…). The special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them.” Actually security is beyond any threat or problem. These have to be considered existential threats to be object of
securitization. Nevertheless, desecuritization is the ultimate goal, as the shift of issues from an emergency mode to the normal policy-making process (Ferreira, 2010: 10-11).

A security framework of migrations aims to address the challenges migrations pose to international relations. When is immigration a threat to security and stability? Having in mind the difference between real and existential threats, Weiner (1992: 105-106) offers us the following categorization of situations in which migrants (refugees included) may be perceived as threats: (1) refugees and migrants as a threat to the relations between country of origin and host country; (2) as a political threat or a risk to security in the host country; (3) as a threat to the dominant culture; (4) as a social and economic problem to the host country; and (5) the use of immigrants by the host community as a threat to the country of origin. Furthermore, with the terrorist attacks of 9/11, immigration was also associated with the terrorist threat and the feeling of insecurity widespread (Ferreira, 2013: 3).

Immigration is often perceived as a threat to states’ sovereignty and to the freedom of society which leads to its securitization. Immigration as a security problem is the result of an assortment of threats, in which it is presented as a political and societal threat. Moreover, illegal immigration is often presented as an insecurity factor. However, legal migration requirements are established by national migratory policies. So it’s the political power that can declare the entrance of third country nationals as legal or not (Ferreira, 2013: 2).

The definition of the concept “immigrant” is not consensual and the national definitions adopted differ from the international one. The United Nations (1998: 17) defines “international migrant (…) as any person who changes his or her country of usual residence. (…) Temporary travel abroad for purposes of recreation, holiday, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage does not entail a change in the country of usual residence”. The concept also varies between states. Thus, a common concept is used to represent different realities which may lead to confusions and wrong interpretations (Ferreira, 2013: 2). The definition of this concept has implications in the policy-making process of immigration policies, it is the base upon which policies are devised, thus its importance.

Immigration as a threat to the Mediterranean results from the feeling of insecurity regarding migratory flows from North Africa, particularly from the Maghreb. The fast demographic growth in North Africa, the slow economic development and high unemployment rates along with the Arab regimes instability, challenge European security. Hence, the growing economic and demographic gap between both shores of the Mediterranean results in large migratory pressure from North Africa to Europe. The constant instability and political conflicts in the Mediterranean affect Europe’s security but cannot be considered a threat (Ferreira, 2010: 18).

In this turbulent international system, the EU emerges “as a bloc of peace and stability amidst countries in the process of fundamental transformations” (Biscop, 2003: vii). Concerned with the instability in its southern periphery, the EU has increasingly paid more attention to the Mediterranean. The adoption of a coherent Euro-Mediterranean dialogue allows the EU to address the security challenges in its southern border and to preserve common interests.

Instability in the Mediterranean Sea Basin

The MENA region has always been characterized by its political instability and insecurity. The uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in 2011 have focused the international community attentions in this region and brought new light to the importance of the Euro-Mediterranean relations.

The political and social upheavals of the Arab Spring and its aftermath challenge both regional and international security. The political instability of the region affects its neighboring countries as well as its partners (economic and political partnerships). Yet,
it created a unique political opportunity namely for the European Union. The EU can play an important role in the promotion of
democracy and in the demand for freedom and dignity.

The political instability has also had a negative impact in the economies of the region, as many economic sectors have disintegrated. The region, which already had high unemployment rates, has now a huge unemployment challenge, in terms of job creation, vulnerable employment and low salaries. The UNDP (2011: 6) indicates that “to address the employment challenge Arab countries would need to adopt more accommodating macroeconomic and sectorial policies”. Demographic pressure intensifies these economic problems as Southern countries’ economies cannot keep up with the youth bulge96 and the fast population growth.

A sustainable management of environmental resources is essential, as it is one of the most serious challenges in terms of development these countries face. Water scarcity, which is aggravated by the rapid population growth, is a huge problem in the region and climate change has a severe impact with episodes of drought, which jeopardize agriculture and food production, which may result in poverty and international migrations.

Another source of potential tensions and conflict is the management of energy resources. The Mare Nostrum is a crucial passageway for gas and oil from other parts of the world. Thus, instability in the region may endanger navigation and the supply of energy, which may lead to internal or inter-state conflicts (Biscop, 2003: 17).

The upheavals have highlighted challenges concerning migrations (IOM, 2012: 8). The instability caused by the Arab Spring has triggered two major refugee crises and has also increased irregular migrations in the Mediterranean. Migrations from the South have been triggered by feelings of frustration between young people, due to lack of opportunities (unemployment, low payments, authoritarian regimes, among others). Such scenarios accentuate South-North migratory pressure. Nevertheless, one should regard migration “(...) as the strongest bridge between the two contrasted shores of the Mediterranean” (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012: 2).

The convulsions in Libya and Syria have displaced a considerable part of the population. Both situations have created major humanitarian crisis, with unbearable violence, which has concerned the international community. Approximately 1.128.985 people fled violence in Libya to Tunisia, Egypt, Niger, Algeria, Chad and Sudan and a smaller percentage to Italy and Malta. Refugees from Syria were accepted in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and also Iraq (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012: 4-11). UNHCR97 along with local NGO98’s and the receiving states have played an important role in managing this crisis. Still, the outcome of the situation in Syria is unpredictable and remains volatile.

**Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue and Partnership**

The Euro-Mediterranean relations have been marked by ups and downs and the Arab Spring sets the time for a profound reflection. This is a unique political opportunity for southern Mediterranean countries and the Mediterranean region as a whole, therefore the EU should cease the moment to support the promotion of democracy within the region.

The EU has developed multilateral policy tools that deal with Mediterranean issues on a European level: the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and its predecessor the European Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Moreover, there are several international fora, also involving the EU or some of its member states, such as the Five Plus Five Dialogue, other from international organizations such as NATO or from international conferences, such as the Rabat Process and the Tripoli Process, both in 2006 (Figure 1). They all focus on the Mediterranean and on the promotion of dialogue in matters of security and stability, regional integration and cooperation, economic, social and human solidarity.

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96 More than 40% of the adults in southern countries are young people between the ages of 15-25 (Ferreira, 2012: 4).
97 UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
98 NGO – Non-governmental organization
Despite this array of spheres of dialogue, as Ayadi and Cessa (2011: 1) underline, until 2011 “(...) the EU-Mediterranean relations consisted of a blend of state un-sustainability and regional cooperation dominated by inter-governmental relations and increasing depoliticisation and securitization”. Rather than promoting political reform and human rights, the main focus was in securing EU’s borders, in containing migration and combating terrorism.

The Union for the Mediterranean aims to bring new life to the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and develop the political relation between the EU and the southern Mediterranean countries. It also aims for more balanced governance by reinforcing cooperation in matters of justice, migration and social integration. Security is still central to its program and one of the main issues in the Mediterranean due to the massive flows of illegal migrants that try to reach Europe (Rodrigues and Ferreira, 2011: 29).

So far, the EU-Mediterranean relations were mainly marked by stagnation due to internal and external factors that conditioned the relations between Mediterranean countries. Take the example of Israeli-Palestinian conflict which affects not only south-south relations, but also South-North relations. Or the priority divergences between both shores of the Mediterranean, while southern countries focus on issues of co-development and common dialogue, the northern ones focus on migratory fluxes control and managing illegal migrations (Rodrigues and Ferreira, 2011: 30-31).

**Managing the Crisis**

The Arab Spring has increased fear of large-scale migrations to Europe and exacerbated the feeling of insecurity among Europeans. The political and social tensions of the Arab Spring have shaken these states economies and have changed migration patterns and
challenged regional security. The increased volatility of the region has accentuated the migratory pressure and triggered two massive refugee crisis in southern Mediterranean, Libya and Syria. The Arab Spring did not cause a massive influx of migration to Europe, rather the population looked for shelter mostly in neighboring countries (south-south migrations). Still Mediterranean South-North migrations are and will always be a reality, due to the existing differences between both shores (Ferreira, 2012).

The EU stepped up to face these events by adopting a series of instruments. Although it may be considered that no significant steps forward were taken and that the measures adopted may be seen as “more of the same”, the new vision adopted aims to overcome the existing divergences. Whether it works or not is still to be seen.

In March 2011 the European Commission adopted a communication entitled “A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean countries”, which calls for a new approach to the region, based on more differentiation, a more-for-more approach. Thus, “those that go further and faster with reforms will be able to count on greater support from the EU” (COM, 2011: 5).

The EU immediate response to the uprisings were in terms of financial support for humanitarian aid; increase in border control, with FRONTEX joint operations; support for democratic transition (COM, 2011: 3) (Table 1).

Table 1: Emergency responses regarding migrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Border control and surveillance</td>
<td>- Joint Operation HPN Hermes;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Reinforcement of Frontex budget;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Joint patrol operations between Frontex and countries of origin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening ‘capacity building’</td>
<td>- Bilateral agreements between EU member states and countries of origin;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Financial incentives to support democratic transition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspending freedom of movement</td>
<td>- Modification to the Visa Regulation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Amendments to the Schengen Border Code (SBD).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address the refugee crisis</td>
<td>- Launch of the Regional Protection Programme (RPP) in North Africa in partnership with the UNHCR.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Author's elaboration from “COM (2011) 200 final”.

In order to support the democratic reform, the EU made its expertise available and called upon a greater role from civil society organizations and NGOs. Moreover, the EU started “supporting public administration reform aimed at streamlining and strengthening of basic policy processes, budget formulation and the capacity to raise domestic funding through efficient, fair and sustainable tax systems and administrations” (COM 2011: 6).

The Commission also called for a review of the European Neighborhood Policy, in order to face the challenges of the changing political landscape in the Mediterranean. With “A New Response to a Changing Neighborhood: A Review of a European Neighborhood Policy” (2011: 1) the EU aims to “strengthen the partnership between the EU and the countries and societies of the neighborhood: to build and consolidate healthy democracies, pursue sustainable economic growth and manage cross-border links”. It establishes the link between democracy-building and migrations. With new stable democratic countries migration will decrease and will be better managed, at least that is the expectation (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012: 5).

Despite the dedication to democracy-building, in terms of migration management the EU did not come up with new approaches, rather “reaffirmed old positions regarding Mediterranean migration” (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012: 5). The increased fear of massive flows of irregular immigrants led member states to further strengthen border control. FRONTEX Joint Operation Hermes was set up in February 2011 to monitor the Mediterranean Sea. In terms of regular migrations, Mobility Partnerships were launched with partner countries (Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Egypt) and the EU committed to support mobility of students and researchers, through university scholarships and Erasmus Mundus (COM 2011: 7).
Even though the refugee flows from Libya did not pose a true challenge to Europe, rather to its neighboring countries, member states were encouraged to facilitate humanitarian aid and asylum (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012: 10).

The Future of the Euro-Mediterranean Relations

The Arab Spring set in motion an assortment of political and social changes in the Arab world. The future is still uncertain, but difficulties will definitely be along the way. This uncertainty raises fears in Europe “(…) as to the potential threats and risks that might arise as a result of the transformation of the southern police states” (Amirah-Fernández and Lecha, 2011: 4-5). Fears of large-scale migrations from the Maghreb to Europe, of regional conflicts, or even of radical parties taking over the new regimes.

The policies adopted by the EU towards the Mediterranean region have long been criticized for its lack of political will to achieve its objectives and for often being one-sided. The measures adopted so far illustrate the ‘business as usual’ approach (Carrera, et. al, 2012: 23). The EU should cease the moment to rethink and reframe its Mediterranean policy and contribute to the region’s stability and prosperity. A new Euro-Mediterranean agenda should take into account the populations’ demands. Therefore, dialogue and bilateral cooperation is essential for a genuine partnership.

In order to analyze the future of the Euro-Mediterranean relations we created a SWOT Matrix that allows us to understand the opportunities and threats that the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation faces (Table 2).

Table 2: SWOT Analysis of the Euro-Mediterranean relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Available expertise;</td>
<td>- Political and social tensions;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Funding programs to support democratic transition;</td>
<td>- Lack of employment opportunities and increasing unemployment;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bilateral agreements between EU’s member states and countries of origin;</td>
<td>- Reinforcement of border control;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mobility Partnerships;</td>
<td>- Intensification of surveillance;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Funding for humanitarian aid and repatriation programs;</td>
<td>- Increasing flows of migrants from North Africa;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Re-launched European Neighborhood Policy (ENP);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Global Approach to Migration and Mobility.</td>
<td>- Visa restrictions;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- EU as a passive spectator;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very young population (South) vs aging population (North).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Commercial and economic liberalization;</td>
<td>- Fear of mass migrations from North Africa;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Facilitation of labour mobility;</td>
<td>- Regional conflicts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Promotion of democracy and good governance;</td>
<td>- Radical parties taking over the new regimes;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Promotion of circular migrations;</td>
<td>- Securitization of the Euro-Mediterranean relations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Management of illegal migration;</td>
<td>- Human rights violations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Visa liberalization for individual partner countries;</td>
<td>- Threats to human security;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Demographic complementarity between both shores;</td>
<td>- Political unwillingness;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Economic and political transformation;</td>
<td>- Lack of dialogue – unilateral approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Promotion of human rights;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Author’s elaboration.

The Matrix created allows us to identify possible strategies to overcome its weaknesses and gives us a vision of possible futures for the Euro-Mediterranean relations. Always having into consideration the international environment that surrounds this region and its inner fragilities we can draw some guidelines for the future of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.
A new approach to the relations between the EU and its southern neighborhood should be founded on strong and mutually cooperative partnerships that promote dialogue between both shores. Only by taking into account the interests of both parties involved can we develop an unambiguous approach, with common values. The focus should be on the promotion of democratic transformation and good governance; on sustainable growth and economic development; and also on a stronger emphasis on the people and on enhancing their opportunities (especially the young people).

Although the new global context does not favor migration, South-North migrations are essential, as they contribute to Europe’s demographic dynamic. The demographic cleavages will continue to pressure South-North mobility, along with political instability and the quest for a better life (Rodrigues and Ferreira, 2011: 33). Thus, the EU should focus on managing and promoting circular migrations, developing mechanisms to regulate migrations that do not jeopardize human security, and focus on the positive effects of migrations. Nevertheless, this should be the result of multilateral decisions and not unilateral ones.

Europe’s role in the Mediterranean region is dependent on its capacity to deal with the democratic transitions in its southern neighborhood and to encourage their development.

Final considerations

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring the future is still unforeseeable and the outcomes are still unpredictable. A successful transformation of the southern Mediterranean countries depends on the new development models adopted. The creation of an integrated system, that co-relates the political, economic, social and environmental circles, is fundamental.

The definition of viable cooperation policies that takes the people’s demands into consideration and focus on cooperative dialogue is essential. After decades of stagnation and frustration in the Euro-Mediterranean relations it is time for the EU to step up and reconsider its approach towards the Mediterranean. Short-term measures are always necessary but they should come along with coherent and comprehensive medium- and long-term ones. Moreover, there needs to be a closer political cooperation based on common goals, with both parties truly committed to its success.

The Arab Spring has offered momentum for the EU to rethink its strategy towards the Mediterranean, whether it ceases it and reconfigures its approach towards the Mediterranean, or whether it keeps doing ‘business as usual’ is up to member states’ willingness to change and promote stability in its southern neighborhood. Only a sustainable cooperative approach will promote a stable neighborhood.

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The European Union’s Mediterranean Policies after the Arab Spring Revolutions: Prospects and Challenges

Safaa Saber Khalifa99

Abstract

Being aware of the importance of maintaining a stable neighborhood, the European Union used different policies and instruments with the aim of bringing stability, prosperity, respect of human rights, rule of law and good governance in the Mediterranean region. The Arab Spring gave an important impetus to the European Union policy towards the region. The popular demonstrations that started in Tunisia in December 2010 touched every Arab State in the region and brought new trends and challenges in front of the European Union policies. More importantly, the European Union can turn these obstacles into opportunities by playing a crucial role in the events and helping the Mediterranean countries to stabilize the region, build constitutional states and develop democracy and rule of law.

This paper discusses three main themes:

1 A quick review for the historical relations between the European Union and the Mediterranean countries and discusses whether the necessary coherence between the political reforms and economic and social policies can guarantee EU’s success in the region as a soft power.

2 Constituting concrete steps to rethink the EU’s Mediterranean policies in line with the fundamental rights and principles which the EU seeks to advance in its external action with regard to the revolts sweeping across North Africa and the Middle East in 2011 with regard that the transitional processes that occurred in the southern Mediterranean countries has to be supported by a realistic approach, in which the European Union can lead the way as a long-standing partner and experienced leader of the transitional processes in the Mediterranean countries.

3 Investigating how the EU could transform the contemporary Mediterranean challenges into great opportunities beneficial for the European Union itself and for the Mediterranean countries.

99 Head of Researches & Studies Unit, Special Projects Department, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria.
**European Normative Agenda beyond the Mediterranean region (EU as a soft power)**

The South and East Mediterranean and the Middle East are an area of vital strategic importance to the European Union, which both the EU Council and the European commission have identified as a “key external relations priority for the EU”.

According to Joseph Nye: “Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others... with intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate as having moral authority”.

The EU’s soft power and its deep social, political and economic ties with the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean have provided it with considerable influence in Mediterranean affairs.100

There is no doubt that an assessment of European reactions to the Arab revolts started in 2011 can only be meaningful if the EU policies in the Mediterranean in the two decades preceding the Arab uprisings, including the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Program; the European Neighborhood Policy in the Mediterranean; the Union for the Mediterranean are adequately understood.101

**Arab Euro-Mediterranean Partners**

**Barcelona Process 1995:**
EMP “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership”

The EU proximity policy towards the Mediterranean region is governed by the global and comprehensive Euro-Mediterranean Partnership launched at the 1995 Barcelona Conference, between the European Union and its 12 Mediterranean Partners (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey) has observer status since 1999. The Middle East Peace Process is separate from, but complementary to the Barcelona Process. The Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, held in Barcelona on 27-28 November 1995, marked the starting point of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona process), a wide framework of political, economic and social relations between the Member States of the European Union and partners of the Southern Mediterranean.

The launch of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership took place a quarter of a century after the European community had begun to develop a conscious Mediterranean policy. Within the context of the new scope of the EU policy, the Barcelona Process is considered a unique and ambitious initiative, which laid the foundations of a new regional relationship and which represents a

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100 Behr, Timo, the European Union’s Mediterranean Policies after the Arab Spring: Can the Leopard Change its Spots?, Amsterdam Law Forum, Spring Issue, VOL 4:2, 2012.

turning point in Euro-Mediterranean relations. In the Barcelona declaration, the Euro-Mediterranean partners established the three objectives of the partnership. Through Two instruments:

**Bilateral level** (the Association Agreement): entered into force 2004;

**Regional level** (the Euro-Mediterranean conferences at the Ministerial Level).

Over the years, the EU considerably refined these tools and repeatedly adjusted the shape and content of its Mediterranean policies through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). It was developed in 2004 with the objective of avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbours and instead strengthening the prosperity, stability and security of all. It composed of “Ring of friends” – sharing the EU’s fundamental values and objectives, The ENP covers 16 countries; the 10 Mediterranean countries Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia, in addition to, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The EU’s ‘normative agenda’ has been facilitated by the shift from the multilateral framework of the Barcelona Process to the more intergovernmental UFM “Union for the Mediterranean”: UFM Launched by Nicolas Sarkozy during his Presidential campaign in 2007. On 3 March 2008, Franco-German agreement paved the way for the European agreement on the Union for the Mediterranean. On the 13/14 March 2008, The European Council approved the principle of a Union for the Mediterranean and invited the Commission to present proposals defining the modalities of what will be called “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean”. On July 13 2008, (Paris Summit for the Mediterranean – Heads of State), the first summit took place in Paris under the co-presidency of the ex-President of France Sarkozy and Mubarak the ex-President of Egypt. It composed of 27 Member States of the European Union; 10 Mediterranean countries which are members of the Barcelona Process, Other six countries bordering the Mediterranean (Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Monaco and Turkey.

EU and Arab Spring Revolutions: Initiatives and Opportunities

Introduction

Many analysts believe that the recent events in the Middle East/North Africa (popularly referred to as the Arab Spring) are a test for the future of Euro-Mediterranean relations. Certainly, the Arab Spring provided an important incentive to the European foreign policy towards the Mediterranean region. The popular demonstrations that started in Tunisia in December 2010 have touched every Arab state of the region and brought new trends and challenges that the European Union has to handle. More
important is that the European Union could turn these challenges into opportunities and play a crucial role in the events. With successful political and economic transition stories in the ex-communist Eastern Europe, with diverse and wide instruments at its disposal, the European Union can be a redoubtable an effective world player in the reconstruction game of the Mediterranean countries after regime changes and help to install democracy.

The EU’s response to the Arab Spring uprising
- initiatives:

Although the EU policies were both cautious and confusing in particular during the initial phase of the Arab Spring, in its formal pronouncements and new initiatives the EU has indeed welcomed the Arab Spring and has said that it wants to be on the side of the people in their call for freedom. In this theme of paper I will examine how do the political upheavals affect the European Union and its Mediterranean Policy? And perhaps this may also be an opportunity for the Mediterranean Policy especially after the events in North Africa which will force the EU to fundamentally reform its existing instruments.


The EU’s response to the Arab Spring began with the Commission Communication of 8th March 2011 “Partnership for Democracy and Shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean”: In its proposal, the EU outlined a number of measures to support the transition processes in its southern neighborhood, while in its communication on “a new response to a changing neighborhood” it revisited the implications of this shift in strategy for the ENP at large. Catherine Ashton has announced in February 2011 – immediately after the Tunisian and the Egyptian peoples have succeeded in toppling down Ben Ali’s and Mubarak’s regimes, respectively – that there should be a “Fundamental Review” of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) so as to face new emerging challenges from the South Mediterranean (Ashton 2011)106. This “Fundamental Review” revolves substantially around revisiting EU policies regarding the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights, and reinforcement of the rule of law in the Southern Mediterranean. The announced “Fundamental Review” came concretely out in May 2011, promising a new EU response to a changing neighborhood and interpreting Ashton’s three-fold strategy: building deep democracy, working on economic development, and facilitating people to people contacts.

Also, in these documents, the EU sketches out a new approach for its southern neighborhood that revolves around the promotion of “deep democracy.” According to the EU, the building of deep and sustainable democracies requires not only regular elections, but also demands a broader set of preconditions that includes freedom of association and expression, the rule of law, the fight against corruption and democratic control over security forces.107

With the “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity”, the political upheavals in North Africa are the first test for the EEAS and its head, the High Representative Catherine Ashton. A proposal by the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS)108, the promotion of democracy and human rights is now at the Centre of this new partnership, and signals the first concrete step taken by the EU to adjust to the new situation in the region. The EU is also proposing to pay more attention to non-governmental actors through the new Civil Society Facility and the Endowment for Democracy. This new body will provide grants to non-registered NGOs and political parties.109

106 Catherine Ashton EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Remarks at the senior officials’ meeting on Egypt and Tunisia Brussels, 23 February 2011.

107 Behr, Timo, the European Union’s Mediterranean Policies after the Arab Spring, Op.cit.

108 Since its formal start on 1st December 2010, the European External Action Service (EEAS) has become the central ‘institution’ dealing with EU-foreign policy. Uprisings in the Arab world brought the opportunity to test its effectiveness. Currently there is a division between the EEAS and the Commission. On the one hand there is the EEAS, responsible for strategic guidance and co-ordination in some policy fields. The Commission is responsible for the financial instruments and their implementation. This requires coordination, but achieving this is difficult due to a lack of communication and interaction between the institutions.

109 Knoops, Vera, Euro-Mediterranean relations and the Arab Spring, EU Centre in Singapore, Background Brief, No (6), October 2011.
“More for more” approach: the EU sets out an incentive-based approach that relies on greater differentiation amongst Mediterranean countries, which reemphasizes the role of political conditionality. Support will be granted according to the principle of “more-for-more”. This implies that those countries that are willing to go further and faster than their counterparts can count on more generous European assistance. A joint Commission-EEAS Communication illustrated a first step in rebranding the “more for more” concept: those countries which carry out free and fair elections will receive more of what Catherine Ashton called the three “Ms”: Money, Market access and Mobility.110

The EU’s attempt to advocate a radical shift in the contents of its Mediterranean policies and refashion its role from that of a “Stability Promoter” to that of a “Democracy Promoter” with the aim of creating a ‘democracy partnership’ that legitimizes itself through its support for the ongoing transition processes in the EU’s southern neighborhood which will lead to democratization and stabilization of its neighbors at the same time. So, The EU needed to take a clear stand in favor of pro-democracy protesters served as the basis for a revision of EU policies in the region that emerged out of two documents prepared jointly by the EU Commission and the EU High Representative in March and May 2011 respectively.111

Despite continuing intra-European differences over the details of EU policies, a broad consensus soon emerged in favor of supporting the democratic transition processes in the Mediterranean. This had become possible as European member States realized that their interest in a stable neighborhood could no longer be guaranteed by authoritarian Arab regimes. For the time being, this seemed to signal an end to the EU’s long standing democratization - stabilization dilemma in the region and allowed for a realignment of European values and interests. This realignment was announced in a statement by Commission President José Manuel Barroso in March 2012, when he stated that: “I think it is our duty to say to the Arab peoples that we are on their side! From Brussels, I want to specifically say this to the young Arabs that are now fighting for freedom and democracy: We are on your side”.112

EU and Arab Spring: Challenges and Recommendations

While the Arab popular revolts appear to have opened the door to a more modern, free and democratic Arab world, they also put the EU’s role as a regional power and reference point in a changing region into question?!

Challenges and Obstacles

The Arab Spring and the changes taking place in the Mediterranean region have given the EU and its Mediterranean partners the opportunity to review and restart their partnership. In doing so, they face several challenges.

110 Contributions by European Members to the 12th November 2011 Panel Discussion on Europe’s Response to the Arab Awakening, 35th European Meeting, the Hague, 11-13 November 2011.

111 Behr, Timo, the European Union’s Mediterranean Policies after the Arab Spring, Op.cit.

112 Behr, Timo, the European Union’s Mediterranean Policies after the Arab Spring, Op.cit.
In the past the EU had focused on creating a ring of firmly governed states to establish a stable region. The concerns for maintaining order and stability in the south of Mediterranean and the Arab region overrode concerns about democracy and human rights. This has affected the EU’s credibility, especially with regards to democracy promotion in the Mediterranean region.

Since the launch of the Barcelona Process in 1995, the EU’s Mediterranean policy has been criticized for not linking financial aid to democratic reform, and for giving priority to European concerns like immigration, security, and cooperation on counter-terrorism over the needs of its partners for political and economic reforms. Also, the role of political Islam has been one of the main obstacles to the deepening of Euro-Mediterranean relations. Before the Arab Spring, the EU remained cautious in its cooperation with Islamist opposition in the Arab states. Recently, I think after the collapse of Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt, it will be a good chance for EU to support and cooperate with new civilian powers.

Beyond the partial implementation of conditionality, a deeper problem exists regarding the appropriateness of conditionality as a method of action. Some scholars have argued that the EU has missed its chance in using conditionality to support political reforms in many of the Mediterranean partner countries. The EU continued its engagement with the authoritarian regimes in the southern Mediterranean for three reasons: political security such as preventing the rise of political extremism, energy security (mainly oil) and lastly, to manage immigration.

In a post-Arab spring context, the EU is faced with a dilemma. The EU may have to develop further democracy promotion methods through civil society development, good governance and rule of law promotion within sectoral policy areas in which the EU engages with the neighbors.

For decades, the EU’s policies in North Africa and the Middle East have been forced to strike a difficult balance between the Union’s ambitions to promote political pluralism and human rights and its member states’ interests in safeguarding regional stability. Whereas Europe’s normative ambitions and self-understanding support a more value-led foreign policy agenda, its commercial and security interests have usually tended to tip the balance in favor of stability. European policy-makers argued that these initiatives would eventually create the conditions for sustainable political change while avoiding the destabilizing effects of a sudden regime collapse.

This means that, when it comes to the democratic transition processes in the region, the EU’s new policy is unlikely to have a significant impact or to translate into a new role for the EU as a promoter of “sustainable stability” in the region. And Instead of acting as a driver for change in the southern Mediterranean, EU seems to pursue a new variation of its long-standing Euro-Mediterranean vision that places “Partnership” over “Democratic Principles”.

The substance of “democracy promotion”?!?

At the conceptual level, attempts to draw up a European Consensus on Democracy, have failed. What should be the aim of and what should be promoted. What the EU aims to support is still unclear. The “deep democracy” concept has been defined in various and rather vague terms. For instance, formal descriptions do not take into account the level of maturity of democratic practice. Also, the ambiguity about whether the EU aims to promote a certain democratic model, what the elements of such a “European

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model” might be and what the EU promotes in practice. The EU should illustrate both the conceptualization of democracy and the means to achieve it; conceptualize the relationship between the different elements of democracy promotion which basically are; (human rights, governance, civil society and socio-economic development) on one hand and democratization on the other hand.116

Implementation of Democracy?

Wait and see approach?!

The new ENP does not specify in practical ways how exactly the EU is going to assess its partners’ reform progress and their actual implementation of proclaimed reforms; the EU’s assessment of its partners’ progress in democratization, rule of law, and human rights is simply scheduled to take place too late, as it is not until 2014 that the EU is going to actually consider applying its conditionality clause.117

In 2004, the European Union enhanced the Barcelona Process by adding to it the southern dimension of the European Neighborhood Policy. Whereas the ENP tends to favor a bilateral approach, the policy initiated in Barcelona—which was transformed into the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008—withdrew a multilateral framework. However, Barcelona and later the Union for the Mediterranean have turned out to be a failure, largely on account of the gridlock caused by the Middle East conflict and the lack of political will displayed by the EU member states and the partner countries.118

“More for More” OR “Less for Less”

The “more for more” and “less for less” restatement needs further specifications; what are the starting points for both the offering of positive incentives and negative measures? There will be a need to find a careful balance between general principles and credibility of EU commitments with the pragmatism advocated by differentiation and the emphasis on bilateral relations.119 It seems that any attempt to strictly enforce the new “more-for-more” approach on human right and democratic governance seems likely to encounter considerable obstacles. While the documents do not directly refer to punitive measures, most analysts have argued that the approach also implies a “Less-for-Less” policy, according to which the EU will have to punish democracy stragglers in return. Beyond that, more assistance and closer political cooperation will be offered in accordance with each country’s progress “Towards High Standards of Human Rights and Governance.” To measure progress, the EU proposes the development of certain “minimum benchmarks” that it plans to relate to the ENP Action Plans for each country. However, neither of the documents contains any concrete suggestions concerning the nature and content of these benchmarks or how they might eventually be evaluated and enforced.

Intra-European divisions

The Arab Spring is proving to be a significant test for the EU foreign policy if the EU succeeds in setting a coherent policy for the region.120 Concerning the Arab Spring, considerable differences remained between EU member states regarding the means and

116 Wetzel, Anne and Orbie, Jan, the EU’s Promotion of External Democracy: In search of the plot, CEPS Policy Briefs, No. 281, 13 September 2012.
117 Isaac, Sally, Europe and the Arab Revolutions from a Weak to a Proactive Response to a Changing Neighborhood, (KFG Working Paper No.39| May 2011).
119 Balfour, Rosa, the Arab Spring, the changing Mediterranean, and the EU: tools as a substitute for strategy? Policy Brief, European Policy Centre, June 2011.
120 Knoops, Vera, op. cit.
ends of EU policies. For example: Many of these divisions revolved around the format and funding of the ENP. Another example; Further differences emerged in time concerning the role of the UFM and its relationship to EU institutions, Intra-European differences over the future institutional set-up, by late 2011 the UFM had still failed to launch a single development project in the Mediterranean.

This means that all European attempts to address the Arab Spring have tended to focus only on the bilateral ENP, while its multilateral framework, in form of the UFM, has continued to remain.121

Recommendations

Now, the Arab Spring opened new challenges where the European Union can play a crucial role by responding effectively to the demands and aspirations of the peoples of the region. It is time that the EU reflects on its policy and rethinks its approach in engaging with its neighbors.

These obstacles undermine the ability of the EU to influence progress towards democratization in the region. So, I will discuss how to constitute concrete steps to review the EU’s Mediterranean policies in line with the Union’s fundamental rights and principles in its external action and how the challenges could be opportunities?

The “Democracy-and-Stability” paradigm which littered EU declarations and intentions was far from being translated into practice is a welcome first step, but the reasons for this also ought to be understood. The Member States need to address the underlying reasons for the EU’s poor performance: the fears of Islamic fundamentalism, uncontrolled migration, and terrorism remain the chief concerns in European capitals. Then, finding new ways to understand these phenomena, the degree to which they are grounded in reality, and novel assessments of the risks that exist in the region. If this starting point were to be carried out, it could lead to significant changes in diplomatic relations with countries on the Southern shore. However, it is in the interests of the EU to promote a process which will lead to the democratization and stabilization of its neighbors at the same time. All of this suggests that the EU has not yet managed to define a new role for itself when it comes to the democratic transition processes in the Mediterranean region.

The “proposal for the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity” is a step in the right direction but the EU has to listen more closely to the needs and priorities of its partners and broaden its engagement beyond the elite level to the groups and communities in the societies of its partners. This would require a definition of policy goals that responds far more to local demands, the establishment of multilateral policy instruments that welcomes the engagement of regional and extra regional actors, The Union must make good on its quest for effective multilateralism if it is to remain a relevant actor in the neighborhood.

The substance of the revised ENP rests on a more detailed definition of political conditionality and democratic expectations. The application of such conditionality, however, is notoriously full of dilemmas. Conditionality can have a degree of impact if the receiving country is sensitive and committed to the principles upon which conditionality is based. It also requires a degree of equality in treatment between various countries, finding a balance between pragmatism and consistency.

The historic events in the Arab region 2011 suggest that the EU should not merely revise its own ENP with the Southern Mediterranean. However, it should develop a comprehensive vision and an all-compassing approach to the entire Arab region, from the West Mediterranean to the Gulf. In geographic terms, it needs to develop a vision that is not limited to the South Mediterranean region. In substantive terms, it should achieve a needed balance between three considerations: security; democracy and governance; and economic development. This vision should not be limited to the narrow consideration of the role of the EU or individual European countries, but one that takes into account the visions, strategies, and moves of other Mediterranean and Middle East powers.

Achieving the necessary coherence between the political reforms and economic and social policies are a sure guarantee of EU’s success in the region and the way the EU can transform the contemporary Mediterranean challenges into great opportunities

121 Behr, Timo, the European Union’s Mediterranean Policies after the Arab Spring, Op.cit.
beneficial for the European Union itself, for the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa and also for the rest of the
globalized world.

The EU’s willingness to endorse the demands of the protesters still did not translate into a new EU strategy for the region. Although the EU has the merit of installing the values of the democratic world in the Arab countries of Middle East and North Africa, The transition process of the southern Mediterranean has to be supported by a realistic approach not normative one, where the European Union can lead the way as a long-standing partner of the Mediterranean countries in their transitional processes.

Indeed, there are some scholars that connect the current events with the revolutions of 1989. Back then, events were informed by a desire of Eastern European countries to “rejoin Europe”. Today, the “dignity revolutions” in the Arab world are partly driven by a desire for national autonomy and an end to the post-colonial era in the Middle East. This means that most of the young Arab democracies are unlikely to pursue a policy that binds them ever more closely to a declining Europe. This trend is already evident in several North African countries. Egypt, most notably, has been reluctant to accept IMF funding, has refused to admit EU elections observers and has sought to restrict the activities of western NGOs. Instead, the focus has been on reclaiming the European assets of former dictators. In this situation, the EU’s existing offers are likely to fall on deaf ears in a number of countries. EU has little to offer to a region that is seek for reclaiming its international independence and own identity.

The EU also should offer the transformation states a singular form of partnership that is not only intergovernmental but also draws in the societies involved: openness must relate to people who played such a major role in the Revolutions including a major one by women.

“It is thus right to emphasize that the new leaderships and people in the region are masters of their own destiny”.

Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, Remarks at the senior officials’ meeting on Egypt and Tunisia, Brussels, 23 February 2011, Speech/11/122.

Consequently, it would be advisable to launch a wider debate on the substance of EU democracy promotion, In this regard; the role of elections, human rights, socio-economic development, civil society and governance should be conceptualized more clearly. This debate would take into account the views of different stakeholders, including those from the target countries, without neglecting existing. Institutionally, the EU should establish a reflective democracy promotion policy. The “Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy” only takes a small step in this direction.

In response to the need to engage with the civil society actors that are emerging anew in the South Mediterranean, the EU will require a more thorough debate of the EU’s democratization objectives. The EU also proposes to pay much more attention to non-governmental actors through a new Civil Society Facility (a tool used in the Balkan countries) and by creating a new Endowment for Democracy. This would be a grant-making body for non-registered NGOs and political parties, and could have been achieved without creating a new budget line but simply by changing the regulation of the existing European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Thus, mutual confidence will be built.

**Towards a More Institutional European Role**

The EU declarations beyond Mediterranean region opened the door for a revision of European decision making process and institutions. On important strategic issues the national preferences according to national interests still tend to dominate over the common European spirit. Although the EU cannot change the national foreign policies of its member states, it can try to increase its coherence in the medium term. However, division between the Commission and the EEAS should be prevented at lower levels by regular co-ordination meetings. In the long run, the EU should aim to prevent incoherence. This could be done by trying to restore trust between the member states, and work towards a common strategic culture by promoting an EU-level dialogue on
divisive issues. All this could be complemented by regular EU crisis management exercises, which brings together officials from different EU institutions and staff from the member states defense and foreign ministries.

So, if the EU’s highest representatives all speak with one voice, the message will get stronger. If this does not happen, the EU will not be seen as a unified actor. The more the EU operates as a single bloc, the greater its chances of success.

In this spirit, Europe must show far greater ambition and embrace an optimistic political vision for the future when defining the new relationship between both shores of the Mediterranean. The Union must propose a strategic vision to its Southern neighborhood with a clear destination including a viable roadmap that will be acceptable, palpable and directly beneficial to the peoples – civil society - of the region as they open a new chapter in their history. This vision should be the setting up of a true Euro-Med Community.

To conclude, the EU has remained an impotent bystander to the events that are reshaping its southern neighborhood. Bridging this vital time intermission will “make or break” the future of a cooperative, coherent and sustained Euro-Mediterranean community.

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Thinking Out of the Box
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University of Minho - EEG
Estela Vieira
Tel.: + 351 253 601904
E-mail: estelav@eeg.uminho.pt / nepasproject@gmail.com

Instituto dos Vinhos do Douro e do Porto, I.P.
Rua Farreira Borges, 27 - 4050-253 Porto
Tel.: + 351 22 2071 602/606
E-mail: ivdp@ivdp.pt