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Erzsébet N. Rózsa

Arab awakening or a new regional order emerging in the Middle East?

Abstract: The demonstrations that have swept through the Arab world since mid-December 2010 have taken everybody by surprise: domestic, regional and external actors alike. The Arab uprising began at a time when the Middle East is undergoing profound re-structuring, and thus it may change not only the course, but also the direction and the context of events. While the media talk of a “domino effect,” we claim that the events were not organically and directly interlinked, and although the demonstrable effect of the events in one country over those in another cannot be underestimated, the Arab countries have gone a long way down the path of “nation-statehood” and have become independent states with specific, and sometimes contrasting interests. The 2011 Arab uprisings are indicative of the beginning of a new chapter in the newly evolving regional order: they seem to have restored and re-confirmed the dignity, self-esteem and to a certain extent the sense of unity of Arabs. At the same time, they reflect a new phase of development in the duality of the patrimonial system (in the real sphere) and the institutions (of the virtual sphere), in the course of which, the inhabitants, refusing to remain “subjects,” may only – either temporarily or eventually – turn into “citizens.” In this new regional order Egypt has a new chance: political transformation and the constitutional process offer an opportunity which may make Egypt the unquestionable political leader of the Arab world again.

The Middle East has not escaped the transitions that followed the Cold War: the dissolution of the Soviet Union meant not only the loss of a superpower ally for the “socialist” Arab countries, but also that the (European) ideology on which their regimes were based has disappeared, resulting in a “unipolar” direction of the whole region in the sense that in the Middle East context the US has

remained the sole superpower. While the EU has played a complementary role, it has never been able to “grow up” and fill the “superpower vacuum” the Soviet Union left behind. On the other hand, although the decline of Arab nationalism is linked to the 1967 defeat by Israel, with an unprecedented clarity the 1990–1991 Gulf War revealed that the myth of Arab unity had been seriously eroded, if not debunked altogether in practical terms. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the twin towers in New York, President George W. Bush announced the democratization of the Middle East and it has become increasingly clear that the – potentially non-existent – unity of the Arab Middle East or the “Arab world” has come to an end once and for all. Of the “nation-state” borders drawn following the First World War, the Arab countries have started their own, specific development, in the course of which they have increasingly formulated themselves and their relationship to others along their individual specific interests. This has been strengthened by a joint Arab sense of failure,¹ since they have been able to represent their common causes with less and less success on the international fora, and are left with one big common issue over which masses can still easily be mobilized: the Palestinian cause. Paradoxically, this is the same Palestinian issue which initiated the third biggest development in the region: the Cold War in the Middle East ended with the Arab–Israeli peace process (1991) and the Oslo Accords (1993) and changed the whole context of the regional dynamics in that the Israelis and Palestinians have come to acknowledge one another, and – temporarily – it seemed that the Palestinian cause would be off the “obligatory” agenda of the Arab states.

By the first decade of the twenty-first century the “Arab world” had lost much of its relevance compared to the three non-Arab centers of power which emerged on the borders of the Middle East: Israel, Iran and Turkey. Israel has come a long way since the proclamation of the state in 1948, when its very existence was at stake. The 1967 war brought about a profound change, since afterwards Israel’s existence came to be grudgingly and indirectly accepted even by those states which had not officially acknowledged it. (This was reflected in the Arab participation in the Arab–Israeli peace process and the 2002 Arab peace plan, which has not been withdrawn since.) The debates that followed centered much more on the borders that might/should exist around Israel. Although after a series of Arab-Israeli wars and a halted peace process, the same questions still remain (including those regarding the borders, the refugees and the status

¹ E.N. Rózsa, “Gáza előtt, Gáza után – a gázai intervenció regionális és nemzetközi összefüggései” [Before Gaza, after Gaza – regional and international implications of the Gaza intervention], *MKI Tanulmányok* No. 1, 2009. Available online: <http://www.hiia.hu/index.php?menu=23&ev=2009> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

of Jerusalem), it is no longer the Arab countries who challenge Israel, but Iran and the non-state actors in its direct neighborhood (Hamas and Hezbollah). Further, Israel will soon have to face the fact that following the transformation of the region, the former Arab nationalist secular adversaries have been replaced by new enemies who have come to define themselves increasingly in Islamic terms.²

Following the 2001 war in Afghanistan and the 2003 war in Iraq that led to international controls being placed on the two hostile regimes in Iran's immediate neighborhood thus preventing them from keeping it in check, Iran gained a historic opportunity to establish and strengthen its regional power status. While there had been clear previous endeavors on Iran's part to build alliances and exert regional influence (Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria), it was the regime changes in Iraq and Afghanistan that opened the way for a new Iranian regional effort. In this context the new governments in Afghanistan and Iraq established good political relations with Iran and let it develop considerable economic influence in both countries. At the same time Iran has improved relations with Turkey and its Gulf Arab neighbors, who both fear and try to appease the Islamic Republic. With Arab fatigue over the Palestinian cause and Israel negotiating with the Palestinian National Authority, Iran increasingly stepped up its rhetoric as the champion of the Palestinians. Paradoxically, it is precisely the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that have posed the greatest challenge for Iran in the shape of the continuous presence of foreign troops on its borders, practically encircling the country.³

By the first decade of the twenty-first century it had also become evident that in spite of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkey cannot be "written off." Having a stable and reliable ally on the border between Europe and the Middle

The failure of the Arab states to realize their political aims even where there is unanimous Arab support – the Palestinian cause or the Israeli nuclear arsenal – has increased the sense of frustration.

² E.N. Rózsa, "Shifting balances of power in the Middle East," lecture at a roundtable organized by the Center for Strategic Research, Tehran, on November 30, 2010.

³ It should be noted that this encirclement is commented on by Iranian politicians and analysts alike and weighs heavily in every Iranian strategic analysis. D. Gazsi, "Irán: Irak csak ürügy volt, a valódi célpont mi vagyunk" [Iran: Iraq was only a pretext, we are the real targets], *Kül-Világ* Vol. II, No. 4, 2005. Available online: <http://www.freeweb.hu/kul-vilag/2005/04/gazsi.pdf> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

East has become increasingly important despite the differences between the US and Turkey, and the EU and Turkey respectively. Turkey has become the most positively perceived regional power in the Middle East,⁴ a status it achieved through the launch of its “zero problems with the neighbors” policy, its mediating activity and its increasing distance from Israel. Furthermore, it is also a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (2009–2010) and has emerged as an increasingly self-confident actor en route to being a regional power.

In the context of this shifting of regional balances, the failure of the Arab states to realize their political aims even where there is unanimous Arab support – the Palestinian cause or the Israeli nuclear arsenal – has increased the sense of frustration.⁵ Dismissed as “authoritarian” regimes and failing to cope with an exploding population and the social consequences thereof, (most of) the Arab countries were ill-prepared to face the global economic crisis. Many of the roots and causes of the fast expanding demonstrations were similar; yet, each and every case had its own specific characteristics, too.

The roots and the causes

The Arab countries have undergone a demographic explosion. While demographic data, especially total fertility rates, show that in most Arab countries the explosion has ended, in Egypt – the Arab country with the biggest population – it is still well underway. Nevertheless, as a consequence, the percentage of young people (under 25) is very high, generally constituting around 50 per cent in all the countries. This not only means that, over the past few decades, the state provided social network has required rapid expansion, and that in most cases the state could not deliver properly, but also that in the near future the state will have to provide jobs and – since young people will want to start their own families – housing on an unprecedented scale. On the other hand, since public education, of varying quality, is compulsory for all, on average the new generations are relatively better trained than their elders. Especially since, in keeping with global trends, dozens of universities have sprung up in the Arab countries as well, and provide further education and a temporary solution to unemployment. Yet, unemployment is not only very high generally, but it affects the young much more as they are entering the job market in far greater numbers than their elders, who tend to occupy many of the jobs the young cannot even

⁴ S. Telhami, “2010 Arab public opinion poll,” The Brookings Institution, 2010. Available online: http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2010/OB_arab_opinion_poll_telhami/OB_arab_opinion_poll_telhami.pdf (accessed on June 6, 2011).

⁵ E.N. Rózsa, op.cit.

Figure 1.

	Egypt	Tunisia	Libya	Yemen	Jordan
Total population (1990/2011)	54,705,746 / 82,079,636	8,095,492 / 10,629,186	4,221,141 / 6,597,960	7,160,981 +2,585,484 / 24,133,492	3,064,508 / 6,508,271
Total fertility rate (1990/2011)	4.7 / 2.97	4.0 / 2.03	5.2 / 2.96	7.6 (North) / 7.0 (South) / 4.63	6.2 / 3.39
Population under 15 (1990/2011)*	39.7% / 32.7%	37.6% / 23.2%	45.8% / 32.8%	48.3% / 43%	44.4% / 35.3%
Unemployment (2010)	9.7%	14%	30%	35%	13.4%
Access to Internet (2009)	20,136,000	3,500,000	353,900	2,349,000	1,642,000

Sources: CIA World Factbook. Available online: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (accessed on June 6, 2011); the United Nations Human Settlements Program. Available online: <http://ww2.unhabitat.org/> (accessed on June 6, 2011).

* Given the many figures available, the figures for “population under 15” were double-checked, but very similar results were given for 2010 by the US Global Health Policy website: Egypt 33%, Tunisia 24%, Libya 30%, Yemen 45%, Jordan 37%. Available online: <http://www.globalhealthfacts.org/data/topic/map.aspx?ind=82> (accessed on June 6, 2011).

aspire to hold for decades to come. Therefore, youth unemployment is usually much higher than on average, and particularly among those with a university degree. The young are not only better educated but also have a far greater array of modern technical skills and tools (mobile telephones, the internet etc.) at their disposal than did their fathers and grandfathers. In a way, therefore, we can say that demography coupled with mass public education has been a major defining factor in the events of the Arab Spring.

It is also widely acknowledged that the Arab countries, and societies, have been undergoing a modernization crisis. The indigenous Arab reforms that were started in Egypt and Tunisia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were halted by colonization, which forced upon the Arabs European style institutions, as a consequence a dual system has come into being, which is usually labeled and described, but so far not much attention has been paid to understanding how it operates. The “real sphere–virtual sphere” paradigm offered by social scientists is of extreme relevance here. The patrimonial system of the Arab societies represents the real sphere of everyday life and also policy-making. This is where decisions are made, disputes are managed and solved, and where the “ruler–subject” hierarchy of society thrives. The globally accepted

“normal” structures and institutions, European and “universal” values and norms belong to the virtual sphere, where they have come to constitute the global “rules of the game.” Therefore, instead of undergoing modernization – either indigenously or in the European sense – the Arab countries have adapted to the rules established first of all by the colonizers, and then by globalization. They established states (kingdoms, republics and *jamahiriyya*), parties, parliaments, constitutions (even if sometimes it was only some of these institutions) only to fill them with patrimonial hierarchical substance. (It should be noted that even the institutionalization of the *shura*, an ancient tribal platform, can be attributed to Western influence.) That is why Arab countries are generally referred to as authoritarian regimes – if we are to describe the system in European terms – where the leader (king, monarch, president, prime minister or “the leader of the revolution”) exercises power through a small elite bound to him through the *bay’a* (the pledge of oath), and where, if elections are held, the ruler and/or his ruling party receive a substantial majority of the vote. Even if there is a multi-party system operating in the country, the opposition parties cannot even come close to

Instead of undergoing modernization, the Arab countries have adapted to the rules established first of all by the colonizers, and then by globalization.

gaining a two-digit percentage of the votes. And this is why Moammar Qaddafi, who has had no official position (i.e. in the virtual sphere) since the end of the seventies, cannot resign.⁶

Within this system, therefore, the patrimonial system prevails, based on a morally and religiously based “social contract” sanctioned by the *bay’a*. In this framework the ruler undertakes to rule with justice (*’adala*) and to provide for the dignity (*karama*) of his people, i.e. living conditions worthy of man as created by God. In return, the people accept his guidance and power. Should the ruler cease to (be able to) perform his tasks, the contract ceases to exist. These were precisely the slogans used in the demonstrations, *’adala* and *karama*, and should be understood as much more than a complaint about the sharp rise in food prices etc. When the rulers, Ben Ali and Mubarak, announced reforms, raised salaries and so forth, they indirectly acknowledged their “mistakes,” that these basic principles (*’adala* and *karama*) had been infringed and had become – even

⁶ For example, “I am not president, that is why I cannot resign,” *NewsLime*, February 22, 2011. Available online: <http://www.newslime.com/i-am-not-president-that-is-why-i-cannot-resign-says-gaddafi/106405> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

Figure 2.

	Egypt (2005/2010) (in %)	Tunisia (2004/2009) (in %)	Yemen⁷ (1997/2003) (in %)
Party of the "ruler"	NDP ⁸ 69.5 / 81	RCD ⁹ 87.59 / 84.59	GPC ¹⁰ 43.1 / 58
Opposition party 1	Independents (Muslim Brotherhood) 19.4 / 0.2	Movement of Socialist Democrats 4.63 / 4.63	Al-Hislah / Yemeni Congregation for Reform 23.4 / 22.6
Opposition party 2	New Wafd Party 1.3 / 1.1	Party of People's Unity 3.64 / 3.39	Nasserite Unionist People's Organisation / Yemen Socialist Party 2.3 / 3.8

Sources: CIA World Factbook and the election data of the different countries. Available online: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

by their own assessment – unsuitable for performing their tasks according to the old political–social order. Attempting to respond to the people's demands, therefore, however much it was urged by the Western states, could only prove to be counter-productive and indeed did. Qaddafi, on the other hand, when fighting back, not only proved that he still had the strength and will to “restore order,” but also demonstrated that the rebels were “traitors” who had to be punished. In this sense, his ability to withstand international pressure, sanctions and even the world's most powerful military alliance has paradoxically strengthened his position.¹¹ While it is too early to suggest that the NATO operations demanding Qaddafi's departure were a failure, in the absence of a clear mandate to that effect, NATO cannot do much more than it has been doing so far.

Despite the fact that the patriarchal society and patrimonial system continue to define the political and social structures, they have both been seriously challenged in the past few decades – a fact which will, in the long run, most certainly give a new direction to social and political development. Ultimately, it is urbanization that has a leading role in breaking up the social hierarchy and that

⁷ The 1997 data are given separately for the North and the South respectively.

⁸ National Democratic Party.

⁹ Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique (Constitutional Democratic Rally).

¹⁰ General People's Congress.

¹¹ E.N. Rózsa, “Why Qaddafi may still stay in power?,” *Hiia Policy Brief* No. 5, 2011. Available online: <http://www.hiia.hu/index.php?menu=26&gyors=2065> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

provides for new patterns of re-structuring. Urbanization may prove to be the ultimate force (or tool) in breaking the tribal system, which even Islam was only able to overcome temporarily in the first centuries. Its power – among other factors – is clearly reflected in the declining demographic data we saw earlier, for instance in the changing pattern of marriages. Endogamy (marrying within the closer family) has fallen to 20–30 per cent in Egypt and Tunisia, but is on the decline in other Arab states as well.

It is evident that this massive well-trained and eager-to-act economic “class” intends to demand and occupy a decision-making position as soon as possible.

Finally, when analyzing the roots and causes of the Arab Spring, the economic factor also has to be taken into account. In recent decades the Arab countries have undergone enormous economic liberalization, which was partly directed and enjoyed by the ruling political elites, including the military, and by others, sometimes even by Islamist organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, who have now come to demand a share in political decision-making. Although the experiments of economic liberalization over the last decade failed to produce the

expected outcome, they convinced those with stakes in the economy that the main underlying causes of failure were the patrimonial system’s incapability, bureaucratic self-defense and the fact that it stayed away from any reform, all of which were a consequence of its strength and force. It is evident that this massive well-trained and eager-to-act economic “class” intends to demand and occupy a decision-making – “bourgeois” – position as soon as possible.

The events

The Arab Spring has taken everyone by surprise, political elites and ordinary people alike. While the demonstrations are usually referred to as “revolutions,” so far the Arab world has not been able to produce a revolution in a classical sense. What have been called revolutions in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and elsewhere, were usually successful military *coup d’états*,¹² and were later named

¹² K. Dévényi, “Forradalmak és puccsok az arab világban a II. világháborút követően – paradigmaticus elemzés” [Revolutions and coup d’états in the Arab world following the Second World War – a paradigmatic analysis], lecture at a conference entitled “Forradalmi hullám az arab világban?” [Revolutionary wave in the Arab world?] held at Corvinus University of Budapest, March 9, 2011.

revolutions, yet again according to Western (Eastern, i.e. Soviet) terminology. There is no doubt that they were a series of (on the side of the people) peaceful, but unrelenting demonstrations, which in the first two cases, in Tunisia and Egypt, achieved their biggest symbolic aim: the departure of the "ruler" and the introduction of changes to the constitutions and election laws, and the holding of new elections in the nearest possible future.¹³ Nevertheless, according to some assessments, the old elites have also started re-grouping and re-surfacing: "the Arab protest movement has come to a standstill, and the kings, emirs and sultans are rallying to launch a counterrevolution."¹⁴ While it is too early to say if the events of the Arab Spring were/can develop into real revolutions, they do have this potential since they have initiated structural changes which may enforce the structural transformation of the political sphere. Therefore, in our assessment, these processes can indeed be termed "revolutions" in our terminology.

Another common characteristic of the events of the Arab Spring was the total lack of "classical" Islamist slogans and programs. This was all the more surprising given that in recent decades the Arab societies have undergone an Islamization process, the extent of which is mostly manifest in the dress-code of the people (mainly the *hijab* of the women) and the overcrowding at the mosques at Friday noon to the effect that in many places even the streets neighboring the mosques have to be laid out with carpets for midday prayer. Politically, the greatest challenge for the regimes in power has been the existence of different organizations wielding Islamic slogans and political aims, while the scope of their popularity and general impact on the societies could only be guessed at. The outside appearances of Islam in everyday life and the presence of some Islamic organizations on the sidelines of politics have suggested that political Islamic organizations may have the support of relatively large segments of society all over the Arab world. Yet, the different regimes have become relatively successful in "managing" Islamist activities, thus most influential Islamists were forced into exile or underground. On the other hand, the political elites, following the Islamization of the societies, have learned to present their Islamic credentials publicly. This was manifest in the leaders publicly going

¹³ Tunisia elections originally planned for July have been postponed to October due to "the lack of proper conditions." "Tunisia to postpone elections until October," *Times Live*, May 23, 2011. Available online: <http://www.timeslive.co.za/africa/article1081552.ece/Tunisia-to-postpone-elections-until-October> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

¹⁴ A. Smoltczyk, V. Windfuhr, "Has the Arab Spring stalled? Autocrats gain ground in the Middle East," *Spiegel Online*, May 26, 2011. Available online: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,762861,00.html> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

to Friday prayer or performing the hajj, or even – as in the case of some of the monarchies – their reliance on genealogy, i.e. tracing their ancestry back to the family of the Prophet, or holding the position of the keepers of holy places.¹⁵

After the first initial successes in Tunisia and Egypt it seemed that these would have a “domino effect” and that wherever people went out demonstrating for reforms, the “leader” would be ousted from office; however, this has not proved to be the case. Some leaders are better liked by their people and were able to initiate changes that have, for the time being, satisfied the people, while other leaders are fighting back. So far three scenarios can be drawn up:

1. peaceful demonstrations that force the leader to go (Ben Ali in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt);
2. the ruling power “manages” the situation by offering reforms and benefits (Jordan, Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia) or by military force (Bahrain);
3. the ruling power cannot “solve the problem” even by military force, nor can it be forced out of office (Yemen, Syria) and eventually the situation develops into a civil war and open confrontation with the international community (Libya).

The consequences

While there are still many questions to which we do not yet know the answer and we are still in the midst of the events, some important developments can be distinguished socially and politically, domestically and regionally.

The events have exposed the modernization crisis already referred to and added a very important momentum at the level (sphere) of polity, namely that the people have come out into the open and expressed their will. This may still prove too little in the long run, especially given that on the people’s side there is no organized force and the old elites they may turn to might try to exploit the situation to their own benefit (“counter-revolution”). Yet it seems that the Arab societies have come to a point where the duality of the patrimonial system and the “modern structures” can no longer be maintained. The ongoing process has the potential to develop “subjects” into “citizens,” especially since despite all the contradictory aspects, almost a hundred years after the Arab territories divided up into some twenty political entities, the Arab states have developed national identities and turned into nation-states in many aspects. The public embracement of the notion was clearly visible when the demonstrators

¹⁵ For instance, the Saudi king is the “Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques,” the Moroccan king is the “Amir al-Mu’minin” [Lord of the Believers], while the Hashemite Jordanian royal family can trace its origin back to an ancestor of the Prophet Muhammad.

emphasized their Tunisian/Egyptian/Libyan identity. The depth of national indoctrination is a direct consequence not so much of the colonizers' nation-state legacy, but of the proliferation of the media and growing literacy. The increasingly national character at the state level has become visible not only in diverting capabilities and interests, but in increasingly independent foreign and regional policies, including inter-Arab conflicts and wars. People are still shocked by the fact that Gamal Abdel Nasser fought a war in Yemen¹⁶ or that Saddam Hussein's army invaded fellow Arab Kuwait.¹⁷ Likewise, the importance of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates of taking a stance and participating in the NATO-led operations against Libya cannot be underestimated.¹⁸

Another important consequence is related to the role of Islam in these transforming societies. Currently it seems that the Arab world has entered a post-Islamist phase,¹⁹ in the sense that while the Islamization of everyday life is something that will probably define the life of these societies in the short-to-medium term, the political attraction of Islam as an ideology offering a solution to the political, social and economic problems of the region has decreased or even ceased to exist. Part of the reason is that those states which were founded with Islam as the underlying state ideology²⁰ have failed to deliver:

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¹⁶ The Egyptian–Yemen War was fought between 1962–1967, in the course of which the Egyptian Army used chemical weapons.

¹⁷ On August 2, 1990 the Iraqi army invaded Kuwait and annexed it as the 19th province of Iraq. As a result of the ensuing Gulf War, Kuwait regained its independence, but Iraq came under severe international sanctions.

¹⁸ "UAE, Qatar join no-fly efforts in Libya," *UPI.com*, March 25, 2011. Available online: http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2011/03/25/UAE-Qatar-join-no-fly-efforts-in-Libya/UPI-64631301061245/ [accessed on June 6, 2011].

¹⁹ A. Bayat, "Democracy and the Muslim world: the 'post-Islamist' turn," *openDemocracy*, March 6, 2009. Available online: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/democratising-the-muslim-world> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

²⁰ Within the Arab world, Saudi Arabia and Sudan might be mentioned and some organizations like Hamas, while in the broader Islamic world Pakistan, Iran, and maybe the Afghanistan of the Taliban are examples. While Islamic rhetoric and terminology often confuse the picture, it should be noted that the model of a "state based on Islamic ideology" has been confined to two of the 22 Arab states, and five of the 57 OIC members.

- politically (they pursued their Islamic political ideals too aggressively for others to follow course);
- socially (they could not solve social tensions and differences); and
- economically (Islamic solidarity was not enough to balance differences between the economic welfare states and the poorer ones, and between the different groups within the societies).

As a consequence, political Islam has lost much of its credibility and ceased to be an attractive political mobilizing force, while Islam has come to increasingly rule the everyday lives of the people.

The Arab Spring has given a new direction and meaning to the already shifting, re-arranging patterns of the balances of power in the Middle East. While the events themselves took different turns in the different countries and some even remained detached and undisturbed, the centre of gravity shifted into the Arab world. On the one hand, the ruling elites were watching the events unfold with concern, while the public was filled with enthusiasm and pride, especially over Tunisia and Egypt, but also the other countries where people forgot their fear and repression and demonstrated in a joint public effort to demand a greater share in political decision-making. After years of frustration and humiliation people yet again have become proud of being Arab, and after decades of being lectured to as non-democratic, authoritarian, radical, and so forth, they feel that they have proved they are capable of peaceful, spontaneous, democratic grass-root political mobilization. The practically empty/hollow phrase of Arab unity has become filled with a new meaning, a new sense of belonging together. It is yet to be seen if such public sentiment can be turned into some kind of political capital among the Arab states themselves or on a higher regional, or even global level, but the potential is there to promote the emergence of a new Arab world.

“What next?” has been a recurring theme all through the Arab Spring. At the beginning especially, there was much talk of different models,²¹ mainly in the context of the two existing modernizing patterns of Islamic societies in the region, the Iranian and the Turkish. Islam and the already mentioned Islamization of everyday life stood at the core of any such “modeling,” especially the idea that political Islam and terrorist attacks committed in its name have been one of the gravest security challenges inside and out of the region alike. Yet, since the demonstrations themselves lacked all possible external signs and signals of an Islamic character, partly due to the “managed” (by the regimes) Islamization

²¹ “Harag Észak-Afrikában – az egyiptomi tüntetések okai és következményei” [Wrath in North Africa – causes and consequences of the Egyptian demonstrations], lectures held at the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs, February 7, 2011. Available online: <http://www.hiia.hu/index.php?menu=31&ev=2011&id=6148> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

processes and the relative absence of the political Islamic organizations on the political scene altogether; it was rather difficult to predict what role Islam and the different Islamic organizations (political, charity, cultural etc.) would play in the aftermath.

The Iranian leaders claimed that the roots of the current wave of “revolutions” should be sought in the 1979 Islamic revolution of Iran. Consequently, they talk of a series of Islamic revolutions and Islamic unity, which recalls the universal Muslim character of the Islamic revolution and the proclaimed aim to export it as put forward by Ayatollah Khomeini. However, the Shiite Islamic character of the regime (the *velayat-e faqih*),²² the Iranian nationalism of the people, the defiant Iranian politics on the global scene and the closely watched situation following the 2009 elections kept even the most enthusiastic revolutionaries away from the Iranian example. (It should also be noted that many think that it far more likely that the demonstrations following the 2009 elections were the model.)

The Turkish model seemed to be favored not only by the West, but, for a while, even within the Arab world. Turkey's recent proximity to the Arab world, its role in mediating regional problems, its readiness to challenge Israel over its behavior towards the Palestinians, its being an acknowledged partner of the West (a NATO member and a potential member of the European Union), and the fact that it is a country with a dominantly Muslim population have made it into a reliable partner and friend for the Arab political elites and public alike. Although the popularity of Turkey is an unprecedented move away from the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, it has become increasingly clear that the Arab transition(s) will require Arab solution(s).

While it is possible that one Arab model might develop, it is much more likely that each country will have a model of its own, and that the models will differ from country to country and will depend on the indigenous characteristics of the country in question. And yet, the Egyptian case of ousting a politician of Mubarak's stature and power through peaceful demonstrations may have a greater impact. On the one hand, Tahrir Square has become the symbol for

It has become increasingly clear that the Arab transition(s) will require Arab solution(s).

²² The *velayat-e faqih*, or the ruling of the jurisprudent is the basis of the Islamic Republic of Iran, where, based on the Shiite concept that in the absence of the Hidden Imam, people need a well-educated, wise person who can give guidance and who can interpret the divine law.

the entire “Arab Spring.” On the other hand, Egypt has always held a leading position in the Arab world. Politically its influence may have dwindled in recent years, but culturally it remains the Arab country that sets the example and dictates the discourse. Therefore, the developments following the ousting of Hosni Mubarak, the preparations for the elections and the amendment of the constitution are being closely watched by the whole Arab community. Tahrir Square and the political transition may ultimately give Egypt back its political leading role in the region. In a way, the revitalization of Egyptian foreign policy is already visible in such issues as its being successful in mediating and bringing about the Palestinian reconciliation or the rapprochement between Egypt and Iran.

Paradoxically, while no Arab state is considering following the Iranian model, any change in any Arab country is beneficial for the Islamic Republic. The best example of this is the opening up of the Suez Canal to Iranian ships.²³ Nevertheless, the transformation of the region poses certain dangers for Iran as well. The “proxy war” that has been fought by Iran and Saudi Arabia over the past decade or so²⁴ could potentially have developed into an open confrontation in Bahrain. After the initial phase, the protests developed into a sectarian conflict in which Iran supported the Shiite community in rising up against the Sunni ruling regime, which in turn was supported in “re-establishing order” by the mostly Saudi-manned GCC security forces. The thus far only tentatively mentioned Cold War in the Gulf – between Iran and Saudi Arabia – seems to have entered a decisive phase.

Turkey, with its positive image among the Arab public referred to earlier, had its cards reshuffled by the Arab Spring,²⁵ but retained the ability to maintain and even strengthen this image. The Turkish leaders, especially Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, have taken on a supportive role and were among the first to call for Mubarak and later Qaddafi to step down,²⁶ and are negotiating a “roadmap” of bilateral relations with the Libyan National Transitional

²³ “Iranian warships sail via the Suez Canal amid Israeli concern,” *BBC News*, February 22, 2011. Available online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12533803> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

²⁴ “The real battle of Bahrain: Saudi Arabia vs Iran,” *Business Insider*, March 14, 2011. Available online: <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-proxy-war-in-bahrain-saudi-arabia-vs-iran-2011-3> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

²⁵ R. Dergham, “The Arab Spring reshuffles Turkey’s cards,” *aHayat*, May 13, 2011. Available online: <http://mespectator.blogspot.com/2011/05/arab-spring-reshuffles-turkeys-cards.html> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

²⁶ N. Sobecki, “Turkey offers Egypt a way forward,” *Global Post*, February 5, 2011. Available online: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/egypt/110204/turkey-egypt-erdogan-mubarak> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

Council.²⁷ With regard to Syria, Erdoğan has come to express doubts about Bashar al-Asad's ability to enact serious government reforms in spite of the personal friendship that exists between the two of them.²⁸ The Syrian situation is a threat to many Turkish foreign policy aims including the "zero problems with the neighbors" policy and the recently launched Shamgen²⁹ initiative, and may open the way to a re-strengthened Iranian influence in Syria, should Turkish-Syrian relations deteriorate.

In the short term, the losers of the Arab Spring are Israel and the United States. Yet, at a closer glance it is evident that they have been losing ground continuously in recent years, partly due to diplomatic and foreign policy failures and partly due to the changing situation on the ground. In the medium term, Israel's isolation in the region is likely to grow and the present Israeli domestic political context can only make this situation graver. The Arab Spring and the democratization efforts have not been in the interest of Israel (proud of being the "only democracy in the region"), if that means – as is feared in Israel – that undesirable forces, i.e. Islamists, may come to power: Israel has become alienated from all regional actors, while its relationship with the United States under the Obama administration has developed from tense to even tenser: Although presently there is nothing threatening the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, it has been increasingly evident that the "cold peace" between the two countries has developed into a series of grave differences. Israel is not only concerned with the Egyptian domestic transition, but was shocked by the Iranian ships passing through the Suez Canal, the opening of the Rafah crossing-point to Gaza and the Palestinian reconciliation brokered by Egypt. It does not help either that some representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood announced at a very early stage

In the short term, the losers of the Arab Spring are Israel and the United States.

²⁷ S. Küçükkoşum, "Ankara, Benghazi sketch out roadmap for relations," *Hürriyet Daily News*, May 24, 2011. Available online: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=a-roadmap-for-bilateral-relations-between-ankara-and-benghazi-is-being-constituted-2011-05-24> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

²⁸ K. McEvers, "Syria strains Turkey's 'no problems' foreign policy," *NPR*, May 25, 2011. Available online: <http://www.npr.org/2011/05/06/136035297/syria-strains-turkeys-no-problems-foreign-policy> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

²⁹ SHAM-gen is the name of a regional visa system involving Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, which takes its name from the Arabic for Syria (Sham). This cooperation is foreseen as a key step towards boosting regional cooperation among Islamic countries. "Shamgen, bright future for united Asia," *Press TV*, May 8, 2011. Available online: <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/168894.html> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

that should they come to power, they would bring the question of the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty to a referendum (a proposal they have been pursuing for several years).³⁰ Israel's situation is further aggravated by the rapidly changing political environment. Israel still seems unprepared for the change from-secular-to-Islamic dynamics; yet, the region is entering a politically post-Islamic phase, which socially remains firmly Islamic.

Nevertheless, it is the Palestinian issue, which influences Israel's space of maneuver the most. In fact, the Arab Spring has confronted Israel with two serious options: make peace with the Palestinians now, when the whole region is in turmoil, in order to have a fixed point, as was put forward by President Shimon Peres,³¹ or use the turmoil as a disguise behind which to enjoy a "free hand" in settling old scores. In this context the worst nightmare scenario for Israel is if (and when) the Palestinians in the occupied territories and/or Gaza start to protest peacefully, or brave the borders as they did on the day of the Nakba,³² which by many accounts indicates that the third *intifada* has already started.³³ It is exactly this scenario that American foreign policy analysts and politicians dread the most: namely, that the Palestinians proclaim the establishment of their state in September at the UN General Assembly, and afterwards start peaceful mass demonstrations to Jewish settlements in the territory of the new state. In this case the Obama administration would have to choose between the peaceful and legal demands of the Palestinians (supported by the whole international community) and Israel. Since the Obama administration wants to

³⁰ J. Mayton, "Brotherhood calls for referendum on peace with Israel," *Daily News Egypt*, June 16, 2006. Available online: <http://www.dailystaregypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=1916> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

³¹ "The dramatic events of the recent period make it necessary for us to take the Israeli-Palestinian conflict off the regional agenda ... We must do this as soon as possible because the conflict is being exploited to the detriment of all sides." President Shimon Peres in his remarks to the 11th annual Israeli security conference at Herzliya. "Peres: Israeli-Palestinian peace urgent in light of Egypt crisis," *Haaretz.com*, February 6, 2011. Available online: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/peres-israeli-palestinian-peace-urgent-in-light-of-egypt-crisis-1.341633> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

³² On May 15, 2011, when Israelis celebrated the proclamation of the State of Israel, which the Arabs refer to as the *nakba* (catastrophe), Palestinian demonstrators from four directions – Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt – marched to the borders of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Golan Heights protesting against Israeli occupation. J. Muir, "Palestinian protests: Arab spring or foreign manipulation?," *BBC News*, May 15, 2011. Available online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13406869> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

³³ "The third Intifada. back to the future in the Middle East," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 18, 2011. Available online: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703509104576327063991351984.html> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

avoid this scenario by all means, there is no way out other than bringing the parties back to the negotiating table.³⁴

The Obama administration, and the President himself, are not in an easy situation. All public opinion polls – and everyday Arab public sentiment – show that the United States stands in very low esteem in the Arab countries, even in those which are the closest allies of the US. They usually blame the US of having double standards, and of being biased towards Israel. The hesitancy on the side of Barack Obama (and of some other western leaders) at the beginning of the Arab uprisings (supporting Hosni Mubarak, then calling on him to leave; staying away from the Libyan crisis, then participating in the military operation; condemning Iranian interference, but closing their eyes to the GCC/Saudi security forces in Bahrain; condemning the Syrian regime for trying to suppress the demonstrations, while supporting the re-establishment of order in Bahrain etc.) did not help to convince the Arab public.

Consequently, Obama's Mideast speech on May 19, 2011³⁵ was much more a political "must" than a choice, if the President wanted to alleviate some of these concerns and to try to convince the international community in general, and the Arab world in particular, of his – and America's – intentions and capabilities as a global leader. Therefore, the speech concentrated on two big issues: the Arab Spring and the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. With regard to the first, he wanted to make good on his previous speeches (the 2009 Cairo speech and the one given on the occasion of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize) and offered support to the democratization efforts in the region and the restoration of US credibility in this respect. On the Palestinian–Israeli conflict he emphasized that the present situation is unsustainable, and demanded compromises from both sides: Israel should start negotiating on the basis of the "1967 lines" with land swaps where necessary, and the Palestinians should not try to isolate Israel and proclaim their state unilaterally. While the speech fits into the series of statements made by Obama openly to the region, it evoked criticism practically from all sides, nevertheless, Ban Ki-mun, the Secretary-General of the UN and Lady Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union, came out in praise of it. After all, however, it will be the region itself which finally decides the real value of Obama's initiatives.

³⁴ M. Indyk, former US ambassador to Israel, in "Obama's Middle East vision: opportunity and obstacles," *BBC News*, May 19, 2011. Available online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/13449626> [accessed on June 6, 2011].

³⁵ "Obama's Mideast speech," *NYTimes*, May 19, 2011. Available online: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/20/world/middleeast/20prexy-text.html?_r=1 [accessed on June 6, 2011].

It has yet to be seen if the Arab awakening will realize and accomplish the real transformation of the region, not only in a social, but also in an economic and political sense, and if the domestic dynamics of the Arab states are leading to the emergence of a new – more democratic, more peaceful – regional order in the Middle East.

Ioannis Saratsis

The Arab spring, Iran and the United States: what next?

Abstract: The Western world's response to the Arab Spring revolutions has varied. The uprising in Egypt was relatively bloodless; Libya is being thrown into a civil war. Europe has seen the opportunity to re-exert its military might, lest the world forget they too have a military that can be depended upon. Israel has remained relatively quiet, glad that attention has shifted away from Palestine. Among all this, the US is trying to figure out where its foreign policy should focus. The question of what kind of relationship the US will, and should, have with the Middle East, is at the top of discussions domestically. And despite all the international media coverage, the multitudes of academic articles and a plethora of material and expertise available to policymakers, no concrete strategy has emerged from the Obama administration.

The Arab Spring, as the various revolutions that have spread throughout the Middle East have been termed, is only the latest in a series of major movements in the region. The Western world's response to these revolutions has been as varied as the peoples that create the cultural and historical make-up of the region today. The uprising in Egypt was relatively bloodless; on the other end of the spectrum, Libya is being thrown into a civil war where an end seems to be nowhere in sight. Europe, long the colonial masters of the current Middle East, has seen the opportunity to re-exert its military might, under the guise of NATO, lest the world – amidst all the talk of Russia and China as (re)emerging superpowers – forget they too have a military that can be depended upon. Israel has remained relatively quiet, content to follow the revolutions – albeit extremely closely – from the sidelines, glad that attention has shifted, momentarily, away from Palestine and ongoing settlement issues.

Different revolutions

Among all this, the United States is trying to figure out where its foreign policy should focus. With the death of Osama bin Laden, and ongoing draw-downs of American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, the question of what kind of relationship the US will, and should, have with the Middle East in general, and each country specifically, is at the top of discussions domestically.

And despite all the international media coverage, the multitudes of academic articles that have been written on the topic, and a plethora of material and expertise available to policymakers, no concrete strategy has emerged from the Obama administration.

This not only emboldens anti-democratic forces in the Middle East – ranging from Al-Qaeda, to Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, to domestic security forces cracking down on protesters – but also has created a massive vacuum into which Iran has inserted itself neatly. And not only does Iran exert influence, subvert American leadership, and generally undermine democracy in the region to promote its own version of a theocratic Islamist state, it has been emboldened by a lack of American attention on the region to export its anti-Western views to American's own backyard – Latin America. The ongoing relationship between Iran and Venezuela, and the emerging relationship with Argentina, are areas that should come under intense scrutiny, and should be dealt with as part of a

cohesive American response – whatever form it may eventually take – to Iran's renewed influence in the Middle East.

However, one cannot fall into the analytical trap of considering the Arab Spring revolutions as one whole piece. In fact, they are as different in origin and nature as the extreme differences in responses to uprisings in individual Arab countries. In his June 2009 Cairo speech, President Obama declared that the US will support those that fight for the

... ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed;
confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justices;

government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose...¹

Yet long has the United States been accused of turning a blind eye towards the human rights violations of the Arab rulers it supported for strategic reasons, while at the same time pushing for the promotion of universal rights, freedom of the press, and democracy. However, as we have seen in Palestine with the majority Hamas election in Palestine in 2006 and in other Arab countries that held "democratic" elections, the push towards "free and fair" elections that has been the hallmark of American foreign policy has not always produced results that are in line with American objectives in the region, and tend to be inimical to a continued US basing presence in countries such as Bahrain, directly contravening US counter-terrorist objectives. President Obama said it himself in his Cairo speech:

No matter where it takes hold, government of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who hold power: you must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party. Without these ingredients, elections alone do not make true democracy.²

It is along these lines that the Arab Spring revolts began. And while there are many that like to paint the Arab Spring with the same brush, arguing that in essence all the revolts were the same – the masses, tired of being ground under the heels of an elite, rose up against their rulers and overthrew them – the reality is that each revolution had different elements, which in turn makes predicting US policy towards the Middle East in the future that much more difficult. Yet this does not mean that the US should neglect to formulate a long-term strategy for the region until everything has settled down. The opportunities provided to Iran to continue to subvert American interests make it even more urgent that the US formulate a policy to counter these maneuvers now, before it is too late.

A very quick look at the various revolutions allows us to look at where and how Iran could influence events, and thus how the US might be able to counter this

¹ "Transcript: President Obama addresses Muslim world in Cairo," *Washington Post*, June 4, 2009. Available online: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/04/AR2009060401117.html> (accessed on May 15, 2011).

² Ibid.

influence. As argued above, however, each revolution differs from the other. For instance, the largely student and youth-led protests in Egypt are of a completely different character than the rebel uprisings in Libya, which themselves are different in nature to the radical Islamist-supported uprisings in Yemen. As Lisa Anderson writes,

The patterns and demographics of the protests varied widely. The demonstrations in Tunisia spiraled toward the capital from the neglected rural areas, finding common cause with a once powerful but much repressed labor movement. In Egypt, by contrast, urbane and cosmopolitan young people in the major cities organized the uprising. Meanwhile, in Libya, ragtag bands of armed rebels in the eastern provinces ignited the protests, revealing the tribal and regional cleavages that have beset the country for decades.³

Moreover, the United States has found itself between a rock and hard place in strategic terms in recent months, forced to bend to the will of the people and abandon long-time allies such as Hosni Mubarak, or, in the case of Yemen, tacitly supporting the incumbent ruler Ali Abdullah Saleh – despite public support for his ouster – as his removal would most likely result in massive gains for Al Qaeda, which, following the death of bin Laden, has been scrambling to regroup, and would increasingly destabilize what many thought would be the next “Afghanistan” following the attempted 2009 Christmas Day bombing.

It is widely agreed that the Arab Spring began with the self-immolation of a fruit stand vendor in Tunisia on December 18, 2010. Despite a tepid response at the beginning, as the protests against Ben Ali grew in size, and as the violence against the protesters grew, Secretary of State Clinton presciently gave a major speech at Doha, telling Arab leaders that

You can help build a future that your young people will believe in, stay for, and defend. Some of you are already demonstrating that. But for others it will take new visions, new strategies and new commitments. It is time to see civil society not as a threat, but as a partner. And it is time for the elites in every society to invest in the futures of their own countries.

Those who cling to the status quo may be able to hold back the full impact of their countries’ problems for a little while, but not forever. If leaders don’t offer a positive vision and give young people meaningful ways

³ L. Anderson, “Demystifying the Arab Spring,” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 90, No. 3, May/June 2011.

to contribute, others will fill the vacuum. Extremist elements, terrorist groups, and others who would prey on desperation and poverty are already out there, appealing for allegiance and competing for influence.⁴

However, that the revolution began in Tunisia came as a surprise to many. Tunisia has long had an excellent education system, a large middle class, and was a draw for tourists around the world. Behind the scenes, however, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali behaved as a stereotypical Arab dictator – restricting free press and expression and limiting political parties, coupled with massive corruption. As Elizabeth Dickinson writes in a *Foreign Policy* piece, “the country’s ruling family is described as ‘The Family’ – a mafia-esque elite who have their hands in every cookie jar in the entire economy.”⁵

Unlike in Egypt, however, Tunisia’s military did not play a significant role in the uprisings. In fact, unlike in any other Arab spring movement, Tunisia’s long-influential labor movement was able to continually organize strikes to fuel the youth-driven protests, directly contributing to Ben Ali’s ouster. And despite the return from exile of Islamist Rachid al-Ghannouchi, the future of Tunisia’s political landscape will be, as Anderson writes,

Incorporate[ing] a generation of young people with only theoretical exposure to freedom of belief, expression, and assembly into a system that fosters open political debate and contestation. And it [the new Tunisian leadership] must respond to some of the demands, especially of the labor movement.⁶

Egypt’s long-time ruler, Hosni Mubarak, was the next domino to topple. While much has been written already about the many steps it took to get rid of Hosni, the short story is that the Egyptian government was for decades unable to provide basic services to its citizens, and this, combined with widespread unemployment and poverty, created the background in which the Tunisian uprising spread. With mounting public pressure to remove Mubarak – the US remained relatively silent given the long-standing relationship it has had with Mubarak and Egypt – the army was forced to step in and remove him.

⁴ Remarks of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the *Forum for the future: partnership dialogue panel session* in Doha, Qatar, January 13, 2011. Available online: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/01/154595.htm> [accessed on May 15, 2011].

⁵ E. Dickinson, “The first Wikileaks revolution?” *Foreign Policy*, January 13, 2011. Available online: http://wikileaks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/13/wikileaks_and_the_tunisia_protests [accessed on May 15, 2011].

⁶ L. Anderson, op. cit.

This move was, as Anderson writes, “a carefully calibrated intervention in the uprising [which] indicated the continuing power of a military establishment hone by equal parts patronage and patriotism.”⁷

Unlike in Tunisia, the Egyptian military influenced all aspects of society. And while this military control might on the surface seem positive for the US – after all, the generals in power have been running things since the 1973 wars with Israel and have been the direct beneficiaries as the world’s second largest recipient of US aid – the fact that they are relatively set in their ways does not herald a quick return to “normalcy” in Egypt. Anderson points out that “the military leadership remains hostile to economic liberalization and private-sector growth...”⁸ These two parts, however, are what the US and the Western world have been prescribing to nations coming out of revolutions since the collapse of Communism.

While the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt resulted in the ouster of their respective leaders, the situation in Libya and Syria continues to spiral downwards.

While the military tries to influence politics in Egypt, one of the largest and well-organized Islamist groups, the Muslim Brotherhood, is presented with an ample chance to increase its influence in Egypt. Despite a relatively poor showing during Egypt’s post-Mubarak elections, the Brotherhood remains a daunting group, which the US has to factor into any policy-making decision moving forward. More critically, the historical link between the Brotherhood and Iran brings the

problem of Iran once again to the forefront. With elections around the corner (planned for September), Israel’s military intelligence chief has sounded the alarm bells, warning that “Iran is attempting to influence the political process in Egypt through efforts to connect with the Muslim brotherhood.”⁹

While the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt resulted in the ouster of their respective leaders, the situation in Libya and Syria continues to spiral downwards. Libya has descended in an outright civil war, and despite NATO bombing runs, no-fly zones, international recognition of the rebel leadership as the “real” government of Libya, and a unified Western call for Moammar Qaddafi to step

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ L. Harkov, “IDF Intel chief: Iran intervening in Egyptian elections,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 5, 2011. Available online: <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Article.aspx?id=227983> (accessed on June 5, 2011).

down, the conditions on the ground are only getting worse. Libyan society has fractured along kin and tribal lines, and it is these centuries-old connections that are at the root of any solution for Libya. As Anderson writes, "...Libya has no system of political alliances, network of economic associations, or national organizations of any kind."¹⁰ And while the younger generations throughout Libya call for liberal democracy, human rights, and secularism, ideals that transcend old tribal and kin alliances, the rebel forces, once joined in a common goal to remove Qaddafi, have now started to fracture. In a great op-ed just a couple of days ago, Jackson Diehl, the *Washington Post's* deputy editorial page editor, wrote,

It [the killing of Abdul Fatah Younis, the Transnational National Councils' senior military commander] also illustrated one of the enduring themes of the uprisings across the Middle East: the constant tension between the yearning for modernism – for democracy and personal freedom – that is driving a huge rising generation into the streets, and the atavistic forces of tribalism, sectarianism, corruption and autocracy that keep threatening to drag the revolutions under.¹¹

While this would make it seem as if these fractures would be ripe for Iran to exploit for its own gain, in Libya Iran finds itself torn between supporting the revolution as part of the so-called "Islamic awakening," and opposing Western intervention – in the form of NATO airstrikes supporting the rebels – in another Arab country.¹²

The situation in Syria is also going from bad to worse quickly. The daily violence perpetrated by the Assad regime against protesters – culminating in the continued bombing of protesters in the city of Hama – has forced the Western world to react. The importance of the Arab spring in Syria is not lost on Washington's analysts, with Lee Smith eloquently writing:

The uprising in Syria is turning out to be one of the central events of the young century.

¹⁰ L. Anderson, op. cit.

¹¹ J. Diehl. "Will turmoil drag Libya's rebels under?" *Washington Post*, July 31, 2011. Available online: http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/will-turmoil-drag-libyas-rebels-under/2011/07/29/gIQAQcwzCml_story.html [accessed on July 31, 2011].

¹² S.N. Nikou, "Iran backs Libyan rebels, chastises West over oil, Bahrain," *PBS Frontline*, April 6, 2011. Available online: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2011/04/iran-backs-libyan-rebels-chastises-west-over-oil-bahrain.html> [accessed on April 6, 2011].

To talk about social media and the Arab Spring is to miss the significance of what's happening. Facebook and social media networks have hardly altered the tempo of the regime's violence. They have only made clear to young Syrians what they're in store for when they take to the streets. Those who note that Bashar al-Assad is not as brutal as his father Hafez might recall that the massacre at Hama, where tens of thousands were killed, was the culmination of a civil war that had been underway for several years. In five months, Bashar has killed thousands already. Who knows what the future has in store?

What we're seeing every day in Syria is remarkable. It is the opposition that has made Syria matter. Now is the time for Obama to commit America to stand with a peaceful movement that is undoing an authoritarian regime that is a state sponsor of terror and a proxy for that larger threat, Iran – a regime opposed to the United States, our interests, our allies, and our principles.¹³

With the uprisings ongoing in Libya and Syria, the next country facing unrest due to the Arab Spring is Yemen. Yemen is of particular interest to the US, as it has long been considered a hotbed of terrorism and a platform from which Al Qaeda has been able to operate. The unique make-up of Yemen – “the fractious mix of insurgents, tribes, Al Qaeda and secessionists...”¹⁴ – could cause significant problems in the region should Saleh be overthrown.

Were Yemen's transition to collapse into conflict, the ramifications for the region and the United States would be grave. Yemen could mirror Somalia across the Red Sea, allowing lawlessness to encircle a major chokepoint for international energy flows; Yemen's 300,000 barrels per day of oil exports could be disrupted, further tightening global energy supplies; AQAP could gain greater freedom of maneuver; internal Yemeni conflicts could flare into a Saudi-Iranian proxy war; and Yemen's already impoverished population could face a major humanitarian disaster.¹⁵

¹³ L. Smith, “Free Syria,” *The Weekly Standard*, August 1, 2011. Available online: http://www.hudson.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication_details&id=8163 [accessed on August 1, 2011].

¹⁴ M. Makovsky, B. Misztal, J. Ruhe, “Spring trap,” *The New Republic*, March 31, 2011. Available online: <http://www.tnr.com/print/article/86043/yemen-tunisia-egypt-arab-uprising> [accessed on May 15, 2011].

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

In Yemen, Iran's ability to influence events is more overt. Since at least 2009 there have been reports that Iran is financing rebels in the Saada province, and recent movements in Washington, including accusing Iran of secretly funneling money through Al Qaeda from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan,¹⁶ only serve to underscore the influence that Iran hopes to achieve in Yemen.

The unique nature of each uprising, in combination with the distinct make-up of each country, has not only created layers on complexity for American foreign policy looking forward, but has also created a power vacuum in which state actors, namely Iran, have been, and will be able to, exert their nefarious influence in the Middle East. As Michael Scott Doran argues,

Even more worrisome, the porousness of Arab politics will give states greater opportunities to meddle in the affairs of their neighbors. This will take many forms: indirect cultivation of constituencies located across frontiers, the formation of loose networks of direct association, overt construction of proxies (on the model of Iran and Hezbollah), and covert sponsorship of terrorism...Years will pass before a stable order emerges.¹⁷

Opportunity for Iran

This in turn has created a great opportunity for Iran to gain more regional power. It had already started to flex its muscles during the Iraq war, using their Gods forces to provide Shiite militias with training and material to create even more deadly IEDs. In this new wave of revolutions, Iran has found itself face-to-face with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity – the lack of an overarching US policy for the region, a lack of a concrete US ally (apart from Israel), all combined with turmoil in almost every Middle East country. And while countries such as Egypt are all too aware of Iran's attempts to influence events, the continuing political turmoil in the country and throughout the Middle East makes them almost powerless to stop it. As Doran continues to write

In countries divided along ethnic, tribal, or sectarian lines, such as Iran, it [Iran] will use terrorism and will search for partners on the ground that are willing to make direct alliances. In more homogeneous and stable

¹⁶ "Obama administration accuses Iran of 'secret deal' with Al Qaeda," *Fox News.com*, July 28, 2011. Available online: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2011/07/28/obama-administration-accuses-iran-secret-deal-with-al-qaeda/> [accessed on July 28, 2011].

¹⁷ M.S. Doran, "The heirs of Nasser," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 90, No. 3, May/June 2011.

countries, such as Egypt, it will resort to more subtle and insidious means – for example, inciting violence against Israel.¹⁸

There is no doubt that should Iran be successful in its endeavors, the strategic interests of the United States – both in terms of energy security, but also in its fight against radical Islam and terrorism – would be in dire peril. Yet Iran's efforts do not extend just to its immediate region. What has gone relatively unremarked, except by a few individuals in Washington, are Iran's inroads into what has traditionally been seen as the US's backyard, Latin America.

The source of Iran's influence in Latin America begins and ends with Hugo Chávez, Venezuela's long-time ruler, and spreads from there to Chávez's cohorts in his so-called Bolivarian revolution, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and beyond. Iran has

invested billions in Venezuela's infrastructure, and has promised to invest millions in Bolivia and Nicaragua. And with international diplomatic and economic pressure mounting on Iran over its nuclear programs, the one place where Iran can find allies willing to deal with it on multiple levels is in Latin America. These allies, in turn, are viewed in Tehran as counterparts in Iran's struggle against the "imperialist" forces of the US.

In Chávez, Iran has found more than a willing partner; in fact, due to the expansionist nature of Chávez's brand of radical populism, which he exports to other countries in the region on the back of Venezuelan petrodollars,

Iran has found the perfect vehicle to supplement their fight against the US. For instance, Jaime Daremblum, one of the leading analysts of Iran's influence in Latin America, and a colleague of mine, writes:

What has gone relatively unremarked, except by a few individuals in Washington, are Iran's inroads into what has traditionally been seen as the US's backyard, Latin America.

Chávez is well placed to facilitate Iran's penetration. His rabidly anti-American agenda has greatly benefited the Ayatollahs. Although Chávez doesn't have a coherent system of beliefs, his brand of radical populism – inspired by that of his mentor Fidel Castro – finds fertile ground in the poverty, inequality, and corruption that are endemic in Latin America. In addition, Chávez has spent and continues to spend huge amounts of money to export his model of government, transforming other populist

¹⁸ Ibid.

leaders in Latin America into his 'clients' and acting – one could say – as the head of a regional franchise for radical populism.¹⁹

There is a more tangible threat to US interests in the area that comes from an Iranian–Venezuelan alliance. Hezbollah, the perpetrators of two bombings during the early 1990s, have once again expanded their reach, using Venezuela as a base for activities. There have been many reports of Hezbollah – and through them Iran – of using Venezuela to serve as a safe haven for Hezbollah²⁰ and it is widely recognized that Hezbollah likes to use the free-trade zone of Margarita Island as a fundraising center, as well as, according to some reports, the base of “support cells.”²¹ And it is not just an Iranian-supported Hezbollah that is allowed to grow freely in the region. In April last year, the *Washington Post* reported that Iran is “increasing its paramilitary Qods force operatives in Venezuela while covertly continuing supplies of weapons and explosives to Taliban...”²²

The threat to US interests from Iran's increasing inroads into Latin America is not only limited to the Western hemisphere. One of the chief reasons Iran is allying itself with Chávez and other regimes in Latin America is to evade the sanctions in place against the Iranian regime. According to Douglas Farah, one of the region's top analysts, “Venezuela is of particular concern because Chávez has taken several steps to point to a calculation that allowing Iran to evade the international sanctions regime is in his own interest.”²³ This sanctions-evading maneuver poses a direct threat to US interests not only in Latin America, but also in the Middle East. For instance, it was widely reported that Russia would sell its S-300 air defense systems to Venezuela, rather than to Iran as was previously believed. Chávez would then be free to turn around and sell that system back to Iran. While this has not yet happened, and nor has Chávez been able to build nuclear capability, as some here in Washington believe he is using his ties to Iran to achieve, the S-300 news broke just before Chávez made a visit to Iran, where he

¹⁹ J. Darembaum, “Iran and Latin America,” Hudson Institute, January 2011.

²⁰ C. Kraul, S. Rotella. “Fears of a Hezbollah presence in Venezuela,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 27, 2008. Available online: <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/aug/27/world/fg-venezterror27> (accessed on May 15, 2011).

²¹ I. Berman, “Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere,” Testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, July 7, 2011. Available online: <http://homeland.house.gov/hearing/subcommittee-hearing-hezbollah-latin-america-implications-us-homeland-security> (accessed on July 8, 2011).

²² B. Gertz, “Iran boosts Qods shock troops in Venezuela,” *Washington Post*, April 21, 2010.

²³ D. Farah, “Iran in Latin America: an overview,” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Summer 2009.

...signed several energy and economic deals. As Bloomberg News reported, citing Iranian media coverage, 'Iran and Venezuela also agreed to set up a joint oil shipping company and jointly construct petrochemical plants.' An Iranian government official subsequently announced that Venezuelan state oil firm PDVSA would be investing \$780 million in the South Pars gas field, located in southern Iran.²⁴

This alliance with Venezuela should be enough to raise the alarm in Washington, but Iran's inroads into Latin America are not just limited to the reach of Hugo Chávez and his Bolivarian cronies. For instance, in the last year or so Argentina has slowly started a rapprochement of sorts with Iran under the leadership of President Cristina Kirchner, despite the fact that Hezbollah was directly responsible for the two attacks that took place in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994. As in Venezuela, the main expeditor of this relationship is money – Iran is a great source of funds for Argentina, who has found it increasingly difficult to borrow money to finance its failing infrastructure. In fact, in March the Argentinean newspaper *Perfil* reported that Argentine Foreign Minister Hector Timmerman had agreed to enter into negotiations with Iran over the two bombings. And just last week, Timmerman was reportedly overjoyed at Iran's recent offer for dialogue. Accordingly,

in light of the initial revelations in March and Timmerman's delighted response to Iran's offer of 'dialogue' last week, it seems hard to doubt that the Buenos Aires is negotiating with Tehran to sweep the bodies ...under the carpet, and that these negotiations were entered into with the assistance of the government of Syria, itself embroiled with massive unrest and responsible for the deaths of some 2,000 pro-democracy protesters.²⁵

Conclusion

With Iran operating terrorist forces in America's backyard, and attempting to influence events in the Middle East at every twist and turn, how should the US meet this challenge? What could an American response to the uprisings in the

²⁴ J. Daremblum, "An Iranian satellite in Latin America," *The Weekly Standard*, November 1, 2010.

²⁵ E. McDonagh, "Why is Argentina appeasing Iran?," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 29, 2011. Available online: http://www.rferl.org/content/argentina_appeasing_iran/24281329.html (accessed on July 29, 2011).

Middle East entail? Most importantly, the United States should not view the Arab Spring as one coherent movement. As shown above, each country has a unique structure, and the revolutions have unfolded in unique ways. In some countries, such as Yemen, where the threat to American interests is more immediate, it is in their strategic interest to support the incumbent ruler. And while this may go against everything that the US stands for; in the immediate future, there is not much more that can be done. In other countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia, the immediate focus must be on not allowing the military to remain in control for long, as they are by their very nature antithetical to the long-term goals of resolving the underlying corruption, lack of education, unemployment, and support for government institutions that promote freedom of the press, speech, and religion.

Moreover, the Arab Spring revolts have given the United States the opportunity to change the lens through which they view the Middle East. It can no longer be viewed as a Cold War style zero sum game, where in order to fight terrorism, or limit Iran's influence, the US must support a ruler that goes against its very principles. As Cooley and Nexon argue in their great analysis of the situation in Bahrain, "US officials should make efforts to decouple the rationale of a given basing relationship from support for a particular regime...abandoning the zero-sum trade-off between pragmatism and idealism is particularly important..."²⁶

And while the threat of Iran to regional hegemony – both in the Middle East and in America's backyard – is very real and tangible, going forward the Obama administration, and subsequent administrations, must keep in mind that to those that are protesting in the streets, being put down violently by government security forces, regional hegemony is the farthest thing from their mind. Michael Scott Doran eloquently writes,

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²⁶ A. Cooley, D. Nexon, "Bahrain's base politics," *ForeignAffairs.com*, April 5, 2011. Available online: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67700/alexander-cooley-and-daniel-h-nexon/bahrains-base-politics?page=show> (accessed on May 15, 2011).

The widespread influence of Bouzazi's desperate cry for justice and dignity should stand as a sharp reminder for Washington: for all that the struggle with the resistance bloc is about power politics, the emphasis must be on politics as much as on power. However vital the struggle for regional hegemony is to Washington, it is certainly not the central concern to the people who are protesting in the streets.²⁷

This will of course be difficult for the United States, especially given its history of supporting dictatorial rulers, or "sultanistic" rulers as Goldstone calls them, and they must keep in mind that

Any efforts to use aid to back certain groups or influence electoral outcomes are likely to rouse suspicions. What revolutionaries need from outsiders is vocal support for the process of democracy, a willingness to accept all groups that play by democratic rules, and a positive response to any requests for technical assistance in institution building.²⁸

Elections might be the next step for Egypt and Tunisia, and are hopefully in the very near future for Libya, Syria, and Yemen, but they are not the end-all that many believe. The focus, once again, must be on the response to fixing the problems of corruption, the role of the military in politics, minority rights, etc. It is only through an unwavering long-term focus on resolving the problems that the United States will be able to help the Middle East stabilize itself, and in the process both guarantee that its strategic interests are not in jeopardy and also cut off any avenue that Iran may have to gain regional influence. Obama's Cairo address bears repeating here, as it is only a focus on these components that will 'solve' the Middle East riddle for the US

The ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justices; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose...²⁹

²⁷ M.S. Doran, *op. cit.*

²⁸ J.A. Goldstone, "Understanding the revolutions of 2011. Weakness and resilience in Middle Eastern autocracies," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 90, No. 3, May/June 2011.

²⁹ "Transcript: President Obama addresses Muslim world in Cairo," *op. cit.*

Katarína Pevná

Revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt and political participation of Islamists

Abstract: Engaging with Islamists in the process of political bargaining vis-à-vis the post-revolutionary opening up of the political space in Egypt and Tunisia is both unavoidable and necessary. However, their anticipated performance will depend on a crucial and strategic assessment of the nature of the political, social and cultural spheres in both countries as well as a profound inquiry into the nature of the respective Islamists. Generally, the issue of Islamist participation in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries is approached from two directions. One is the subversion and containment of the Islamists within the framework of authoritarian measures, which has the side effect of increasing their popularity; the other is inclusion into the electoral processes, which raises questions over their possible undemocratic performance once in power. Both of these approaches are interconnected and will be addressed in the analysis.

Arab revolutions and roots of discontent

The Arab world has generally been referred to as a region where people have become accustomed to the authoritarian ways of their political leaders. This is in sharp contrast to the ongoing incremental challenges, threatening the stability of the regimes, which have been posed by democratic movements and Islamists over the last few decades. The current revolutions can be attributed to wider phenomena. During the 1980s and 1990s the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region was struck by a sudden wave of “bread revolts” in response to decreasing oil prices. Protests erupted in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Jordan whenever the rulers tried to lift food subsidies, especially those for bread. Liberalization had meant that the economies and especially the citizens of the MENA countries became extremely vulnerable to floating world food prices.

Given that two fifths of household income in the Middle East is spent on food, it comes as no surprise that this phenomenon also triggered the most recent uprisings that led to revolutionary changes.¹

A police state ruled by a robust coercive apparatus is the typical state of affairs in most of the MENA countries. After all, even in the Egyptian and Tunisian attempts to overthrow the regime, provisional political power was surrendered to the armed forces as the most compatible institution to secure stability.

As outlined above, the majority of the MENA countries adopted certain incremental but insufficient economic and political reforms from the 1990s onwards. Structural adjustment programs sponsored by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund after the Gulf War in 1991 have opened up a phase of economic liberalization and privatization. This step, however, has brought enormous social costs.² According to estimates by the International Labor Office, the countries of MENA account for the highest unemployment rate – around 10 per cent in 2010 – when aggregated regionally. Additionally, approximately every fourth young person is unemployed.³ This trend is disturbing given that it is estimated that to sustain their economies, the Arab countries will require around 51 million new jobs by 2020 based on current demographic trends.⁴

How pressing these issues are is illustrated by the case of Tunisia. Unlike in Egypt and Algeria, Zine Abidin Ibn Ali created a well-functioning education system, a thriving middle class and relatively efficient public sector, while eliminating the influence of Islamists

¹ V. Cheterian, “The Arab revolt: roots and perspectives,” *GCSP Policy Paper*, No. 11, 2011.

² In Egypt, for example, the government was obliged to undertake neo-liberal reforms and privatized more than one third of the public sector. Yet income-levels for workers did not increase substantially, while private investors were free to reduce the number of employees, further increasing unemployment. Equally, these countries remained ineffective in managing the job market and facilitating GDP growth. These liberal reforms mostly benefited the rich and foreign capital, while a disproportionate burden fell on the subordinate classes.

³ “Global employment trends 2011. The Challenge of a jobs recovery,” International Labour Office, 2011, p. 49. Available online: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_150440.pdf [accessed on May 12, 2011].

⁴ “Arab human development report 2009. Challenges to human security in the Arab countries,” United Nations Development Programme, 2009, p. 10.

through a ban on their organizations. Nonetheless, he was unable to secure jobs for the educated youth that makes up almost two thirds of the available workforce. Hence, the unfulfilled economic promises, the frustration of tech-savvy generations and the authoritarian clampdown all contributed to the rising widespread dissatisfaction that resulted in the Jasmine Revolution and inspired the January 25 Revolution in Egypt.

These “middle class” revolutions fit well into Huntington’s concept of the development gap and the subsequent rise in demands for representation that led to social tensions.⁵ Seizing this progress, ineffective governments striving to secure legitimacy for their regimes have opted for far-flung violence and systematic oppression to manage state affairs. A police state ruled by a robust coercive apparatus is the typical state of affairs in most of the MENA countries. After all, even in the Egyptian and Tunisian attempts to overthrow the regime, provisional political power was surrendered to the armed forces as the most compatible institution to secure stability.

Ideology of Islamists

In order to understand the potential role of the Islamists⁶ in the political systems of the MENA countries, it is crucial to examine the tenets of their political ideology. Hence, it is worth noting that political Islam as such is by no means a monolith, rather it encompasses a broad array of movements, groups, political parties and intellectual trends. The diversity of the phenomena is linked to the centuries-long struggle over the interpretation of Islamic sacred texts (*Quran*, *hadith* and *sunna*) within its political theory. The Islamic scripture and creed is definite and recognizes no state boundaries; however, embedded within the social, political, historical and cultural realities of the particular countries are the collective and individual interpretations, verbal messages, the framing of and emphasis on specific religious duties. The context therefore shapes the nature of Islamist political ideology, the political imagination of their proponents, the maneuvering space and organizational structure.⁷ These movements build

⁵ “F. Fukuyama: is China next?,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 12, 2011. Available online: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703560404576188981829658442.html#articleTabs%3Darticle> [accessed on May 08, 2011].

⁶ This study distinguishes between the Islamic movement and the Islamist movement. Whilst the former describes the broader cultural, social and mainly religious sector, which need not necessarily be connected to politics, the latter term describes the specific Islamic political sector.

⁷ E. Gombár, “Islamistické organizace v Sýrii, v Jordánsku a v Libanonu,” *Mezinárodní vztahy* Vol. 37, No. 3, 2002, p. 96.

upon and seek to transform “socially acceptable behavior” in the respective society.

Regime policies are therefore one of the key factors determining and shaping the character of the Islamist movements. On the one hand, authoritarian governments limit political pluralism in order to maintain their power structures and resist pressure from opposition movements. Closed authoritarian systems try to coerce, suppress and divide the secular opposition (liberals, Marxists and leftists), thus creating a space for Islamist movements and ideologies to fill the void. Islamists have naturally become the strongest political forces due to their dual character operating within the political context and as a social movement, channeling discontent with the respective regime. Moreover, Islamists were able to develop an extensive and largely effective social and charitable infrastructure substituting the care-taker role of the non-representative government wherever they sensed a socio-political vacuum.⁸ The Egyptian and Tunisian regimes capitalized on the presence of the Islamists, legitimizing their methods by claiming to contain the threat that the Islamists might come to political power. However, this conflict has always been derived less from ideological conflict than from a power conflict in terms of the Islamists being the most autonomous political actors in the respective countries.

Investigation of goals, methods and target audiences of Islamists

The majority of Islamists these days share a common platform of Islamizing their societies. They stipulate a pressing need to return to the fundamental tenets of faith and rebuild the state according to Islamic values. The notion of an Islamic state governed by the divine law of sharia is one of the key concepts.⁹ However, there are diverging trends within Islamism with differing goals, ranging from full-fledged support for an Islamic state to support for a democratic establishment, with an emphasis on the role of religion in public life. This dynamic evolution of political ideology will be discussed within the Egyptian and Tunisian political frameworks.

As far as the methods of Islamization are concerned, Islamists can be divided into violent and non-violent groups. Radical violent groups are those

⁸ S. Roy, “ Hamas and the transformation(s) of political Islam in Palestine,” *Current History* Vol. 102, No. 660, 2003, p. 13.

⁹ Radicals go even further by claiming *hakimiyyah*, the exclusive sovereignty of God, which is in contradiction to man-made laws. It is based on the notion, popularized initially by the Muslim Brotherhood, that there are only two political parties, Hizb Allah (party of God, covering all believers, [Quran, 5:56]), and Hizb al-Shaitan (the party of Satan representing all enemies of God, [Quran, 58:19])

that advocate Islamization from above, engage in the project of substituting the infidel state with an Islamic state by seizing control of the security apparatus or through the use of terrorist methods. Inspiration for these movements can be traced to Islamist thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb of the Muslim Brotherhood and Sayyid Abul A'ala Mawdudi of Jamaat-e-Islami, who popularized criticism of contemporary Muslim societies and their backwardness by drawing parallels between the current state of affairs and that of *Jahiliyyah* (the pre-Islamic era of barbarism). These groups are notorious in each of the MENA countries due to their fear inducing strategies. Examples can be found in Egypt (Takfir wal-Hijra, Islamic Jihad, al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya), Tunisia (Islamic Jihad, Islamic Liberation Party), Algeria (MIA, GIA), and Morocco (Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group), and there are various Sunni and Salafi jihadist groups associated to varying degrees with al-Qaeda. This section of Islamists aspires to change human conduct through violent jihad, even in Muslim countries, by practicing *takfir* (branding Muslims as "infidels" or apostates).¹⁰

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Non-violent Islamists are represented by transnational groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Hizb at-Tahrir, and various others. Nevertheless, the majority of Islamists have settled for the gradual Islamization of society within the confines of the nation state, rejecting the use of violent means to achieve their goals. This is the case, for instance, with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the an-Nahda movement in Tunisia. However, this process of moderation is a result of multiple actions at the national level and should not be seen as automatic.¹¹

¹⁰ Besides acts of collective terror, these groups were often involved in assassinating individuals, who were vocal or active against the Islamic radicals and therefore labeled as apostate and, who according to hadith al-Bukhari had to be executed. The Islamic Jihad group assassinated President Anwar Sadat for signing a peace deal with Israel and Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, the writer Farag Fouda.

¹¹ For example, in the 1980s the Syrian section of the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to overthrow the illegitimate government of Hafez Assad by force. One of the reasons for this was the extremely brutal containment of the Islamists by the regime. The Palestinian Hamas movement is another branch of the Muslim Brotherhood that has not given up on armed struggle.

The radicalization of Islamists is generally attributed to the legal restrictions and mass arrests that authoritarian regimes impose on them in order to limit their political activities. Nevertheless, the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and the an-Nahda movement have not chosen the path of armed struggle vis-à-vis the restrictive activities of the state. There are several reasons for this.

The most prominent is the attempts made by the Islamists to maintain and extend their popular base. This survival strategy is coupled with oppositional

The Islamist opposition's emphasis on religion and the institutionalization of sharia serves on the one hand to criticize the failure of laic, imported ideologies and on the other to revitalize indigenous sources of justice found in Islam, in comparison to the repression and injustice of the current regimes.

activities undertaken in tandem with secular parties aimed at criticizing the current state and developing its own, rather inconclusive Islamic solutions. Whether acting legally or illegally, the Islamist opposition's emphasis on religion and the institutionalization of sharia serves on the one hand to criticize the failure of laic, imported ideologies and on the other to revitalize indigenous sources of justice found in Islam, in comparison to the repression and injustice of the current regimes. The Islamists were partially successful in changing the preferences of individuals within the MENA states when they adopted the slogan "Islam is the solution", as if religion offered solutions to all the problems facing these societies. The prevailing social problems were thus put down to corrupt government behavior, materialistic goals and an inability to confront the "US-Zionist influence." In this way the secular regimes

and their departure from Islamic values were identified as the cause of the current state of affairs. Despite the appeal of the specific Islamic message these group disseminate, it is not the use of a moral and religious frame of reference that garners most of the support for the Islamists, rather it is their criticism of the failures of the government that appeals to larger audiences, especially struggling younger generations, the middle classes and impoverished city migrants.¹² The continuous demographic boom and lack of job vacancies mean that the poorest segments of Egyptian society based in the cities are

¹² T. Butko, "Unity through opposition. Islam as an instrument of radical political change," in B. Rubin, ed., *Political Islam. Critical concepts in Islamic studies*, London: Routledge, 2007, p. 26.

more radical than the leadership of the Islamist movements generally is, and thus may influence Islamists' agenda.

The cases of Islamist movements in Egypt and Tunisia

In order to understand the underpinnings of the ideology, commitment to democratic practice and overall performance in the upcoming free elections, a closer analysis of the Islamist movements in Tunisia and Egypt is necessary. The Islamist movements in Egypt and Tunisia, mainly the Muslim Brotherhood and an-Nahda, have repeatedly shown that they are pragmatic and able to compromise their conservative ideology and act within the rule of law whenever faced with a threat to their political survival.

The Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwaan al-Muslimiun) is the oldest movement of political Islam in Egypt. It was established in 1928 in the town of Ismailia and was initially led by the charismatic ideologue Hassan al-Banna. From the outset, the movement has been known since its beginnings for its Islamic activism, rigid hierarchical structure, strong emphasis on piety and moral conduct and tradition of clandestine operations within the Egyptian political and social landscape, and for exporting its structures to other Arab countries. Before the Free Officers' Revolution it worked with the liberation movement; however, it was officially banned in 1954 following an assassination attempt on President Nasser. The Brotherhood has consciously rejected violent action since the 1970s, but remains the main target of the repressive regime. Under the Sadat presidency, the regime cooperated with the Brotherhood in order to counterbalance opposition from the leftists and Nasserists in light of the Infitah's liberal reforms. The relationship between the Brotherhood and the government remained confrontational after the Camp David Accords and Sadat's assassination in 1981. It only became more relaxed after Mubarak stepped in. This marriage of inconvenience would, however, prove to be short-lived and from the 1990s onwards Mubarak attempted to destroy the Brotherhood's political and social infrastructure, especially when he sensed the Brotherhood was getting stronger. Before each election to the National Assembly the government cracked down on members of the Brotherhood, targeting mainly ordinary members, rather than senior leaders, in order to avoid creating new symbols of resistance.¹³ Despite the crack-down, the Brotherhood remained loyal to non-violent, largely political strategies.

¹³ J. Stacher, "Post-Islamist rumblings in Egypt. The emergence of the Wasat party," *The Middle East Journal* Vol. 56, No. 3, 2002, p. 421.

In this respect, the wider relationship between the Egyptian regime and the Islamic sector needs to be examined as well. Generally, illegitimate governments facing Islamist opposition have often sought refuge in the hands of official religion, while trying to penetrate its organization to secure smooth functioning in compliance with regime. While the Egyptian regime succeeded in controlling the appointment and finances of official *'ulama* (Islamic scholars), they were less successful in containing them. The government was trying to protect its vital interests by exercising power in the political sphere, while leaving issues

The 'ulama succeeded in transforming Egyptian society into one that is more deeply religious and traditional than is the case with Tunisia.

of secondary interest to religious leaders.¹⁴ In this way it created an environment within which institutions such as al-Azhar and Dar al-Ifta¹⁵ could exert their influence over the educational, social and cultural spheres, which regularly extended to the political sphere as well.¹⁶ The *'ulama* succeeded in transforming Egyptian society into one that is more deeply religious and traditional than is the case with Tunisia. The regime's strategy of allowing the official religious establishment to shape the identity of society in return for political non-interference and religious legitimization

of the regime's agenda created an atmosphere in which opposition to certain religious practices (such as censorship, the limited public role of women, etc.) is communicated as disagreement over faith and not over political choices.

Maintaining this strategy, the Egyptian regime created a limited political space for the Islamists instead of giving them scope to formulate political agendas which could be questioned solely on a political basis rather than a religious one. This policy, coupled with the success of the Muslim Brotherhood in penetrating

¹⁴ B. Kodmani, "The dangers of political exclusion: Egypt's Islamist problem," *Carnegie Papers. Middle East Series* No. 63, 2005, p. 10

¹⁵ Al Azhar is the most prominent institution of Sunni Islam, Islamic university. Sheikhs of al-Azhar are among the most prominent Islamic scholars. Dar al-Ifta is an institution formally recognized as the sole source for issuing fatwas (opinions by Islamic jurists), even if this does not hold true for Islamic jurisprudence nowadays. The Grand Mufti of Egypt is the leader of this institution.

¹⁶ There were cases of overlapping interests, where non-political issues vested in the hands of the official religious establishment became politicized. Such was the case of the government pressurizing the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar into renouncing the previously evoked ban on interest rates as un-Islamic; or the case of the government's legal subjugation of appointments to the leaders of professional associations, when the *'ulama* started dominating.

professional associations, the state and education and even the secular political parties, contributed to the Islamists having a stronger presence on the ground as well as within the ideology and in shaping the identity of the Egyptian political scene. Put simply: in return the Muslim Brotherhood capitalized upon the general Islamization of society and positioned itself as political interlocutor for society's preferences. The Muslim Brotherhood has become even more popular since the 1990s due to its practice of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning in Islam), as it neither occupied the position of a radical militant movement, nor the position of the official al-Azhar authority, which following the appointment of Sheikh Tantawi was seen as highly pro-regime.

The Islamist movement in Tunisia developed along different lines than that in Egypt. The most influential group, forced to act clandestinely, was established in 1981 as the Islamic Tendency Movement (Harakat al-Itijah al-Islami or MTI). This movement was led by Rashid Ghannushi and Abd al-Fatah Muru and in the initial years following its inception was subjected to a severe crack-down by the Tunisian governments. Stripped of any real political power, members of MTI concentrated on giving lectures and speeches in mosques and madrasas criticizing government disrespect of the cultural underpinnings of Islamic religion in Tunisia and advocating re-Islamization as a solution to all the ills in Muslim societies. After the constitutional coup by General Ben Ali in 1987, relations with the Islamists improved for a while. In 1989 MTI changed its name to an-Nahda (Renaissance) and reorganized and moderated its political ideology to conform to the secular legal code of the country. Despite these positive signals, an-Nahda was not allowed to enter the political arena; it therefore remained an illegal movement, similar to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Nonetheless, the 1989 elections were a success for Ben Ali's challengers from the Islamist movement an-Nahda who ran as independent candidates, gaining around 17 per cent of the country vote.¹⁷ In response the government launched targeted confrontations with an-Nahda between 1989 and 1990.¹⁸ This resulted in the party being outlawed in 1991 and the forced immigration of its leaders. Around 8,000 followers were arrested, Islamic education was again put under close scrutiny, and mosques were closed after prayers to avoid organized resistance.

The essential logic of the authoritarian regime's approach to Islamists in Tunisia was very similar to that in Egypt. The government strived to secure

¹⁷ A. Enhaïli, "Tunisia," in B.M. Rubin, ed., *Guide to Islamist movements*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2010, p. 397.

¹⁸ S.E. Ibrahim, "Special report: crises, elites, and democratization in the Arab world," *The Middle East Journal* Vol. 47, No. 2, 1993, p. 295.

¹⁹ A. Enhaïli, "Tunisia," in B.M. Rubin, ed., op. cit., p. 392.

its position of dominance by eliminating alternative power centers. However, President Habib Bourguiba's grip on the Islamic establishment was more comprehensive, emulating the example of Kemalist Turkey. The modernization efforts were more extensive than in Egypt. Tunisia closely monitored the appointment of religious leaders, had full control over drafting the national curriculum, especially for Islamic institutions, such as az-Zaytouna, and eliminated the threat of mobilization in mosques and madrasas. The Tunisian Personal Status Code of 1956 remains one of the most secular codes in the countries of MENA, advocating women's rights and bans on Islamic dress and on polygamy. Bourguiba even expressed discontent with religious practices stating that refraining from work during Ramadan and the Eid al-Adha feasts harms the common good of society by lowering its economic productivity.¹⁹

The specific character of an-Nahda was crafted against this particular background; namely, the initial failure of the socialist experiments and the later liberalization process, which attracted the criticism of conservatives from the left. Bourguiba and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali both pursued a process of incremental Islamization in a previously secularized state, mainly in order to disperse the organizational leadership of the Islamists and destroy any challenges presented by the left.²⁰ Tunisian an-Nahda therefore could not count on extensive membership on the ground nor on a vital Islamic discourse within society. Nevertheless, even from exile, Ghannushi was able to maintain his political influence and the continuity of the Islamist movement. In their latest general conferences, an-Nahda has reasserted their positions on moderate Islam, their commitment to pluralism and reforms, drawing on the distinctive Tunisian belief system.

Post-Islamism and the emergence of liberal Islam

As has previously been shown the roots of unrest in the Arab world lay in the deeper structural problems of the respective societies. The Islamic revivalism and the demands of the movements of political Islam voiced during the revolutions were not the main starting points. However, the closer the countries of MENA are to crafting a truly democratic and free political system, the more crucial the issue of Islamist participation becomes. Since the 1990s the Islamists have become an integral part of the rich heterogeneity of political ideologies indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa.

²⁰ A. Enhailli, O. Adda, "State and Islamism in the Maghreb," in B.M. Rubin, ed., *Political Islam: critical concepts in Islamic studies*, London: Routledge, 2007, p. 328.

The culmination of the Arab revolutions seems to prove Asef Bayat's thesis about the coming age of post-Islamism in the wider Middle East.²¹ His supposition may be approached from two different perspectives. On the one hand, it presumes that there will be an era in which the influence of the Islamists gradually declines and a more secular agenda will be evident. As witnessed at Tahrir Square, where cheering crowds employed pragmatic slogans (such as the leitmotiv Kefaya, Enough or the slogan "change, freedom, and social justice.") The works of Gene Sharp on non-violent protest were distributed by protesters and resentment was fueled around non-religious symbols such as Khaled Saeed, a man allegedly tortured to death by the regime forces. The toppling of the regimes in Egypt and Tunisia also challenged the passive support of Arabs for radical Islamists, such as al-Qaeda, by exposing its ineffectual resistance, when compared to the power of non-violent civic action.

On the other hand, post-Islamism represents a single element in the Islamists' political accommodation and clearly departs from previous fundamental policies. This trend can be seen as a means of reformulating the basic symbols of political Islam and meeting democratic demands. Post-Islamism is expressed in "[...] freedom from rigidity, and in breaking down the belief in a monopoly of religious truth."²² Such conceptions are clearly found in the foundations of the Egyptian al-Wasat movement, made up of more liberal former Brotherhood members. Despite having sought legal political status since 1996, it was repeatedly denied recognition on the basis of an electoral law prohibiting the establishment of religious parties. The al-Wasat movement advocates tolerance, compromise, elections, and the peaceful transfer of power; most notably, it supports the active participation women and Coptic Christians.²³

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²¹ A. Bayat, "No silence, no violence: a post-Islamist trajectory," in M.J. Stephan, ed., *Civilian Jihad, nonviolent struggle, democratization, and governance in the Middle East*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 43–52.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²³ J. Stacher, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

Wasat became an official party in February of this year. Other examples of this approach can be identified in the Moroccan Party of Justice and Development (PJD) and Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP), which criticize rigid Islamic movements and invent their own inherently more liberal tradition, based on *ijtihad* rather than fundamentals of faith.

The cases of the strongest Islamist political movements, such as an-Nahda and the Muslim Brotherhood, which have a significant chance of succeeding electorally, must be taken into account. The Brotherhood has been pursuing incremental reforms since 2004 in order to capitalize upon the general spirit of reform in Egypt. This was followed by the 2007 Platform, which sought to clarify its position on a wide spectrum of issues, mainly addressing the "gray zones"²⁴ and articulating devotion to *wasatiyya* (a centrist, more liberal Islamist trend). Furthermore, the same positions were taken up by the Brotherhood under the concept of Re-introducing the Brotherhood to the West, which sought rapprochement with western professionals and launching a renowned English-language website. These commitments, however, deepened the internal strife between Old Guard traditionalism and the Young Guard, as evidenced during the revolution. The Young Guard joined the protests from day one, expressing their enthusiasm for pluralism, democracy and reform. Meanwhile, the Old Guard reluctantly joined in after three days and continues to resist opening up the Shura Council to a larger, moderate membership and weakening the rigid structure and centralized authority of the General Guide (Murshid).

Since 1957 the Tunisian Islamist political sector has been crushed systematically, first of all by the pro-western reformist and secular reign of Habib Bourguiba, and later by the rule of Ben Ali. Nonetheless, the Jasmine Revolution opened up a space for Islamist an-Nahda to reassert its previous position. The scenes of Ghannushi being welcomed by thousands at the airport as he returned from exile in the first days after the revolution may have inspired parallels with Khomeini. These views seem to be largely unfounded, based on ideas proposed by Ghannushi himself. He cautiously stresses his intent not to run for presidential, ministerial or parliamentary office.²⁵ He also rejects calls for a theocratic state and envisions full-fledged democracy in Tunisia as well as

²⁴ These comprises include the attitudes of the Islamists towards Islamic law, the possibility of using violence as a political strategy despite having initially renounced it, the threat to political pluralism, civil and political rights, the rights of minorities and women and attitudes to the monopolization of education.

²⁵ "Tunisian Islamist leader: I'm no Khomeini," *CBS News*, January 30, 2010. Available online: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/01/30/world/main7300475.shtml> (accessed on April 26, 2010).

the continuation of secular norms, such as the ban on the hijab and polygamy and supports the further emancipation of non-Muslims and women.²⁶ Little is known about the position of the larger organizational base of the party and about how the leader is accepted; these tend to be the subject of speculation. Nevertheless, the reformist postures of an-Nahda confronted with free electoral politics may serve as a test of the ultimate maturity of the Islamists and inspire far-reaching reforms within similar movements.

The role of Islamists in the future political framework

Since the 1990s it has become evident that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and an-Nahda have undergone a process of internal change, assisted by developments within the context from which they operate. Both organizations have stressed the importance of enhancing democratic reform, alternating power, and reforming the judiciary. Following the success of the revolutions, there is now a pressing need for western powers to begin dialogue with both the “moderate” Islamist movements that will lead to the creation of a working relationship that could secure their vital interests in a democratic setting in Tunisia and Egypt. Yet, the degree of support for liberal democracy by both movements has to be closely monitored. This development does not necessarily mean they have given up on their social conservatism. Although we may wish to question their commitment to pluralism, and minority and women’s rights, it is highly likely that Islamists will become part of the tapestry of political alternatives in the possible democratic process. However, democracy brings with it a moment of instability, especially in terms of the interests of the West.

The political inclusion of the Islamists in the subsequent phase of the revolutions is likely to be reflected at several points. The first is cooperation with the secular parties. The Arab Spring of 2005 and the current revolutions have demonstrated the relatively broad capacities of the civil societies in Egypt and Tunisia. The resistance to the regimes was initiated by a coming together of various actors, such as journalists, lawyers, intellectuals and the middle classes, thus challenging the notion that an Islamist opposition is the only viable political force. Even the Muslim Brotherhood acknowledged this by cautiously avoiding any possible signs of a monopolization of power. In the past, the most obvious example of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt working with secular parties was when it joined ranks with the New Wafd party, the Labor party and the Liberals

²⁶ M. Nawab, M. Osman, “Tunisia: New model for progressive Islamism?,” *RSIS Commentaries* No. 5, 2011.

during the 1984 and 1987 elections.²⁷ Moreover, the movement reconsidered its relationship to secular alternatives when it was accepted into the coalition of parties and social and political activists brought together by the National Coalition for Reform. Even the *Kefaya* reform movement, alongside the April Sixth Movement, one of the leaders of the revolution, allowed itself to be affiliated with the Brotherhood.

Before it was suppressed, Tunisian an-Nahda had a record of cooperating with human rights groups and in several instances joined the secular parties in boycotting the manipulated elections. After the return of the leadership, an-Nahda joined the Committee to Defend the Revolution, which includes the General Union of Tunisian Workers, the National Lawyers' Movement, the Tunisian League of Human Rights and the Communist Workers Party of Tunisia.²⁸ This coalition together with the Higher Committee for the Achievement of Revolutionary Objectives seeks to monitor and draft objectives to purge the administration of the members of the Constitutional Democratic Rally and to preserve the gains from the revolution. It is an important factor in learning consensus-building and practicing plurality for the Islamists and might eventually lead them to reconsider their basic objectives according

to the changing facts on the ground.

The second concerns possible voting patterns. Whenever electoral and party politics were more open, the Islamists gained majority or substantial gains. The list includes the Islamists in Jordan in 1989, Tunisia in 1989, Algeria in 1991, Lebanon 1992, Turkey in 1995 and 2002, Morocco in 2002, Egypt in 2005 and Palestine in 2006. So there is sense in assuming that once confronted with democratic elections it might happen again. This basic argument made by the authoritarian leaders about needing to contain the Islamists in order to

Generally it is believed that individuals opt to support Islamist parties as an expression of their desire to extend the role of religion into the public sphere; it does not necessarily indicate that citizens hold radical attitudes.

²⁷ "Mustafa Bakri: liberals speak in tongues," *Al Ahrām Weekly*, No. 248, 1995. Available online: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/archives/parties/liberals/tongues.htm> (accessed on April 29, 2011).

²⁸ "Graham Usher: the reawakening of Nahda in Tunisia," The Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), April 30, 2011. Available online: <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero043011> (accessed on May 15, 2011).

maintain stability has proven to be self-serving. Although analyses of political support for the Islamists based solely on the results of un-democratic elections is not comprehensive, currently, some polls estimate the popularity of the Brotherhood to be around 17 per cent, while others argue these figures are too low.²⁹ The electoral popularity of Tunisia's an-Nahda is estimated to be 23 per cent.³⁰ Subsequent developments may depend on two factors: the degree of conservatism of the respective societies and the success of the campaigns led by secular parties.

Generally it is believed that individuals opt to support Islamist parties as an expression of their desire to extend the role of religion into the public sphere; it does not necessarily indicate that citizens hold radical attitudes.³¹ In fact Robbins argues that the role of religion is rather loosely understood as they do not equate it with calling for an Islamic state.³² Three general observations can be derived from what has previously been stated. Firstly that support for Islamists is partly a protest vote,³³ given in acknowledgement of the fact that the Islamist parties hold critical attitudes on the regime. Islamists flourish in dictatorships where there is an absence of other viable and effective alternatives. At the same time their lack of coherent economic policies might decrease their potential. Secondly, Islamists benefit from the unstable party system. However, if substantial and influential secular parties emerge ahead of free elections, their organization capacities may outnumber the Islamists. Thirdly, a well-crafted balance between much needed secular, modernization reforms and religion must be devised.

The third point is the sphere of practical politics. Democracy and political openness facilitate the emergence of competitive politics, even among the

²⁹ "Gihan Shahine: what do Egyptians want?," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, No. 1046, 2011. Available online: <http://weekly.ahram.org/2011/1046/eg11.htm> [accessed on May 12, 2011].

³⁰ "Tunisia: political parties unknown to 61% of Tunisians," *Ansamed*, March 9, 2011. Available online: <http://www.ansamed.info/en/news/MEXEFO2959.html> [accessed on April 27, 2011].

³¹ For example as the latest PEW polls indicate, 71 per cent of Egyptians prefer democracy over any other type of political system, even at the expense of risking a period of unstable development. At the same time, six out of ten people expressed the belief that the laws of a country should be in accordance with the teachings of the Quran. However, these views do not correlate with support for the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic fundamentalists, which is substantially lower.

³² M. Robbins, "What accounts for the success of Islamist parties in the Arab world," *Dubai Initiative Working Paper*, 2009, p. 9.

³³ In the 2005 Egyptian parliamentary elections the Brotherhood won 88 out of 434 contested seats, mainly because the secular parties were weak (crushed by the regime organizationally, ideologically weakened through cooptation by government and politically divided). For many, voting for candidates from the Brotherhood remained the only viable way of casting a protest vote.

spectrum of Islamist parties. This way mainstream Islamists may reconsider and liberalize their core ideologies in order to gain a competitive advantage.³⁴ In Egypt and Tunisia, as well as in other MENA countries, the Salafist movement, more rigid and radical and supported by the Saudi Arabian government, is gaining prominence. Established Islamist parties can counter and neutralize the proliferation of these groups within the framework of the Islamic religion. Additionally the competition presented by non-Islamist parties and the need to devise a common political language may act as a break to ambitions such as the imposition of sharia law and the creation of an Islamic state. Possible participation in government brings new challenges, especially when Islamists are faced with coalition-building and modest political gains. Tunisia and Egypt remain in a phase of uncertainty over the prospects of Islamist participation. On the one hand the Muslim Brotherhood has stressed that it plans to field a limited number of candidates, not enough to gain a majority in parliament and will not enter a candidate in the presidential elections.³⁵ The same was proclaimed by Tunisian an-Nahda.

The extent to which this projection is genuine is questionable, mainly because these groups have never nominated candidates for all the contested seats, suggesting that ruling is not the only way for them to secure their gains. Acting as a pressure group may allow them to achieve their goals overall.³⁶ Nevertheless, changes to the electoral laws in Tunisia and Egypt have already been made and Islamist movements are being registered as official parties. This development may be shortsighted but it is a natural consequence of a revolution that is trying to institute a break with its authoritarian past. As Zakaria notes, it is time to allow a limited space in the political arena for the Islamists, so that they eventually come to be viewed as politicians who succeed to varying degrees when confronted with real problems, and not as "distant heroes."³⁷ This becomes more obvious as the contemporary revolutions are primarily

³⁴ The cases of Turkey, Morocco and Algeria are illustrative in this case. Turkey's moderate Islamist party AKP became the ruling party only after it broke away from the banned and more radical Refah and Milli Görün parties. In a similar vein, the Algerian Movement for Society and Peace has been extremely cautious to distance itself from the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), its more radical counterpart, by pursuing a relatively liberal agenda.

³⁵ "Muslim Brotherhood says it will not run for presidency," *Jerusalem Post*, December 2, 2011. Available online: <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?ID=207938&R=R1> [accessed on May 25, 2011].

³⁶ S. Hamid, "The Islamist response to repression: are mainstream Islamist groups radicalizing?," Brookings Doha Center Policy Briefing, 2010, p. 6.

³⁷ "Fareed Zakaria: Islamská výnimka," *Občianska spoločnosť*, October 5, 2009. Available online: <http://www.magazinos.sk/Kalligram/OS/Islamska-vynimka> [accessed on May 8, 2011].

concerned with people's demands for deep structural reforms to catch up with more developed countries in the world.

The fourth point is foreign policy. Whether considered from an Islamist perspective or not, post-revolution foreign policy, especially in Egypt, which is at the forefront of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, will undergo a series of shifts. Firstly, towards Palestine, the Egyptian interim government has already made large concessions: brokering peace between the rival factions of Fatah and Hamas; opening the Rafah border with the Gaza Strip; and quietly supporting the marches towards the Israeli border during the commemoration of an-Nakba day. The attitudes of the general public towards Israeli and Egyptian foreign policy are closer to the opinions of the Islamists, rather than those of the ousted pro-western dictators Mubarak and Ben Ali. Therefore even without the participation of the Islamists in the democratic government, any government with a popular mandate would have to give into the demands of the people for change.

Ayman Nour, one of the most prominent secular oppositional figures from the al-Ghad Party, has called for a re-negotiation of the peace deal with Israel,³⁸ siding with the general opinions of the Muslim Brotherhood. This attitude stems from broader popular resentment towards Israeli handling of the Palestinian issue, especially the non-implementation of the principles of the Camp David Accords.³⁹ It is noteworthy that around 54 per cent of Egyptians favor an annulment of the peace treaty with Israel.⁴⁰ These sentiments are mainly ill-founded as most of the citizens favor peace over conflict and receipt of US financial assistance is conditional upon continuation of the treaty. Moreover, the treaty resolved the conflicting issues of the Sinai Peninsula and Suez Canal claims. The current government led by Hussein Tantawy supports the continuation of its commitments, although this may not endure once the free elections are in place.

³⁸ "Oren Kessler: Egyptian opposition figure: rethink Camp David Accords," *Jerusalem Post*, February 14, 2011. Available online: <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?ID=208085&R=R1> (accessed on May 3, 2011).

³⁹ The general discontent with Israel over the implementation of the Camp David Accords and the treatment of the Palestinians is growing more bitter as the Egyptian government, in accordance with the conditions of several treaties, has been selling its gas to Israel for preferential rates (40 per cent lower) and supported Israel in its efforts to monitor Palestinian crossings into Egypt. To a certain degree, the Egyptian government contributed to the tightening of the grip of the Gaza blockade.

⁴⁰ "U.S. wins no friends, end of treaty with Israel sought. Egyptians embrace revolt leaders, religious parties and military, as well," Pew Research Center, April 25, 2011. Available online: <http://pewglobal.org/2011/04/25/egyptians-embrace-revolt-leaders-religious-parties-and-military-as-well/5/> (accessed on May 20, 2011).

Public opinion on foreign policy issues shows that most people do not support their countries' commitments to the western powers, especially the USA. After the revolution Egypt and Tunisia will have to find a balance between a pragmatic relationship with the western powers and an increased emphasis on cooperation with the Muslim, and especially, Arab states. The western policy of double standards, supporting authoritarian leaders for the sake of envisioned regional stability in recent decades, has helped to boost the popularity of the Islamists as they are traditionally the most outspoken critics of foreign interference and western materialistic values. Nevertheless, even the Muslim Brotherhood and an-Nahda elites have stressed the need for continuity with regard to relations with the United States. This can be attributed to their realization that historical

Public opinion on foreign policy issues shows that most people do not support their countries' commitments to the western powers, especially the USA.

patterns of the radical Islamists winning the elections in Algeria in 1991 and Palestine in 2006 clearly show that much is at stake – significant Western assistance, loans from international financial institutions, and trade and investment.⁴¹

Additionally, having an economically strong and viable Egypt and Tunisia is also at the core of western policies. Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood and an-Nahda have displayed a more or less positive attitude to economic liberalization. The Islamists were capable of creating a precise agenda for economic reform, stemming from Islamic social solidarity (the religious duty of *zakaat* – contribution of a proportion from one's wealth to be redistributed to the needy; the rejection of interest-based banking and independence from foreign intervention) as well as a profound respect for private property, respect for standards of productivity and curbing the size of government.⁴² The Islamists also present themselves as agents in the fight against corruption. This being said, western countries should approach foreign aid more consistently and apply conditionality, realizing that even Islamist movements count on their financial assistance. Western countries could also make use of the current goals of mainstream Islamists to eradicate al-Qaeda, continue anti-terrorism

⁴¹ S. Hamid, "The rise of the Islamists. How Islamists will change politics, and vice versa," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 9, No. 3, May/June 2011.

⁴² S. Abed-Kotob, "The accommodationists speak: goals and strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 27, No. 3, August 1995, p. 327.

policy, improve living standards and economic conditions across the Arab world, and consolidate democratic governance.⁴³

Conclusion

It is still premature to predict the trajectory of the possible integration of the Islamists into the political systems of Egypt and Tunisia after the regimes have been toppled. The participation of Islamists is an inevitable outcome of the revolutions and thus can be seen as a necessary evil. Yet in order to avoid the Islamists hijacking the results of the revolutions, an assessment of their potential role has to be developed. On the one hand this article argues that the participation of an-Nahda and the Muslim Brotherhood in the political process might encourage these movements to moderate their ideology. Moreover, their participation might lower the influence of the official religious establishment and the radical Islamists. It may delegitimize them as the self-styled source of religious interpretation and guidance that controls the direction of social reform within society. The need to devise realistic political strategies and a reform agenda, specific political steps and ensure the subsequent accountability and containment of the Islamists through political instruments might put these movements into a vulnerable position and possibly weaken their monopolistic positions.

On the other hand, the Islamists claim to represent Egyptian and Tunisian identity, which is above all Islamic. The opposite holds true. In both countries despite the de-politicization efforts of governments, a vital and pluralistic society has developed where resolute agreement over what constitutes national identity is difficult. Egypt is characterized by the continued existence of former oppositional secular parties and the creation of new ones which are slowly gaining prominence, which compete with the Muslim Brotherhood. The Tunisian revolution revealed the political demands of the people, but at the same time the degree of de-politicization was much higher and thus created a political vacuum. It might be filled by Islamist an-Nahda, even though Tunisian society is the most progressively secular of the MENA countries. In order to eliminate the negative effects of the Islamists' participation in the democratic processes, their secular counterparts should be nurtured to establish a truly competitive political environment.

⁴³ S. Hamid, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

Michele Comelli

The impact of the changes in the Arab world on the Southern dimension of the ENP

Abstract: Starting from an analysis of the main features of the EU's existing Mediterranean policies and specifically of the European Neighborhood Policy and the problems concerning its implementation, this article analyses the proposals for the revision of the ENP and the launch of a Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean countries. It argues that while it is too early to judge whether the EU and its member states will be able to help the Southern Mediterranean countries change their political and economic systems and consolidate their democracies, two outcomes of the new approach already seem well defined: first, the unequal balance between the Eastern and the Southern dimension of the ENP seems to have been redressed. Second, the pendulum of the EU's Mediterranean policy has again swung towards bilateralism at the expense of multilateralism, and this approach is likely to continue if one considers the increasing heterogeneity of the countries in the region and the difficulty of conceiving of the Southern Mediterranean as an integrated space.

The democratic revolts that have swept the Arab world since January 2011 are not only having a strong impact on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) but they have also led to a process of re-adjustment in the European Union's policies towards this area. The EU has had a policy towards the Mediterranean for over forty years, but the outcome has been rather unsatisfactory and in fact the policies have changed frequently, often more as a result of internal EU reasons rather than of developments in the region itself. Also in the case of the revision of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), the process began in July 2010, months before the Arab Spring, but the latter made it more urgent and necessary. Starting from an analysis of the main features of the EU's existing

Mediterranean policies and specifically of the ENP and the problems concerning its implementation, this article analyses the proposals for the revision of the ENP and the launch of a Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean countries. It argues that while it is too early to judge whether the EU and its member states will be able to help Southern Mediterranean countries change their political and economic systems and consolidate their democracies, two outcomes of the new approach already seem well defined: first, the uneven balance between the Eastern and the Southern dimension of the ENP seems to have been redressed. Second, the pendulum of the EU's Mediterranean policy has again swung towards bilateralism at the expense of multilateralism and this approach is likely to continue if one considers the increasing heterogeneity of the countries in the region and the difficulty of conceiving of the Southern Mediterranean as an integrated space.

The launch of the ENP and the shift from the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

It is a kind of paradox that the current most important EU policy towards the Mediterranean (although not limited to it), the ENP, was not initially conceived for this region. In fact, some of the first proposals, such as the one outlined by former British Foreign Minister Jack Straw,¹ were specifically intended for the Eastern European countries (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and even Russia) that would become neighbors of the EU following the 2004 or 2007 enlargement. The Southern Mediterranean countries were inserted later on as a result of the pressure coming from Southern EU member states, such as France, Italy and Spain. While the neighborhood initiative filled a "policy vacuum" in the Eastern neighborhood, where the EU did not have a strategy, the situation was completely different in the south, where the EU's relations with the Mediterranean countries were already framed in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), better known as the Barcelona Process. The differences between the EMP and the ENP go well beyond a simple difference in letters (N instead of M); they are numerous and significant, the first being the shift from the principles of multilateralism and regionalism that characterize the Barcelona process to the principle of differentiated bilateralism that characterizes the ENP.² On the

¹ For a reconstruction of the genetic process of the ENP and an analysis of the initial documents outlining a new EU policy towards its neighbors see M. Comelli, "The challenges of the European Neighbourhood Policy," *The International Spectator* Vol. 39, No. 3, 2004, pp. 97 - 110 and/or P. Kratochvil, E. Tulmets, *Constructivism and rationalism in EU external relations. The case of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, Nomos, 2011, p. 61.

one hand, the main innovation brought about by the Barcelona process was its regional focus. Although the Barcelona process also included a bilateral dimension, through the Association Agreements, its main objectives were to be achieved at the multilateral level: from the creation of an “area of peace and stability in the Mediterranean,” to the establishment of a free trade zone in the Mediterranean in 2010. The final aims were presented as being collective and indivisible. By contrast, the ENP privileges a bilateral, differentiated dimension.

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While the general aim of the ENP refers to the setting up of an area of security, stability and prosperity on the eastern and southern periphery of the EU, the ENP ends up operating on an individual basis. What counts is the kind of bilateral relationship that each neighboring country is willing and able to establish with the EU. In adopting a bilateral approach in the context of the ENP, the EU has departed from its traditional focus on regional co-operation, which has always been one of its typical features.³

The second peculiar feature of the ENP relates very much to the differentiated bilateralism: the principle of conditionality or, rather, the principle of positive conditionality. In general, “political conditionality entails the linking, by a state or international organization, of perceived benefit to another state, to the fulfillment of conditions relating to the protection of human rights and the advancement of democratic principles.”⁴ In particular, positive conditionality entails the promise of a benefit in exchange for the fulfillment of some pre-determined conditions. The logic underpinning the ENP is a logic of conditionality that was, however, more explicitly formulated in the initial documents. For example, the first Commission paper outlining the policy, the “Wider Europe-Neighborhood”⁵ reads like this: “in return for concrete

² R.A. Del Sarto, T. Schumacher, “From EMP to ENP: What’s at stake with the European Neighbourhood Policy towards the Southern Mediterranean?,” *European Foreign Affairs Review* Vol. 10, No. 1, 2005 pp. 17–38.

³ K.E. Smith, “The outsiders: the European Neighbourhood Policy,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4, 2005, pp. 757–773.

⁴ K.E. Smith, “The use of political conditionality in the EU’s relations with third countries: how effective?,” *European Foreign Affairs Review* Vol. 3, No. 1, 1998, p. 256.

⁵ “Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: a new framework for relations with our Eastern and Southern

progress demonstrating shared values and effective implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms, including aligning legislation with the acquis, the EU's neighbours should benefit from the prospect of closer integration with the EU." Subsequently, ENP documents tended to downgrade the principle of positive conditionality, which does not even appear among the ENP principles in the Commission Strategy Paper. On the contrary, the Strategy Paper cites joint ownership and differentiation among the principles on which the ENP is based. In particular, the joint ownership principle entails that the EU and neighboring countries "share values and common interests," and that the former "does not seek to impose priorities or conditions" on the latter. In actual fact, the EU is not capable of imposing priorities or conditions in this case, as it was successful in doing with the candidate countries, because neighboring countries do not have the prospect of EU accession. However, even though the leverage of a neighboring country in negotiating an Action Plan is surely greater than that of a candidate country negotiating EU accession, the two parts are clearly still not on an equal footing.

In practice, the design of the ENP as a hub-and-spoke relationship between the EU and single neighboring countries, where the first is the model and the latter the followers of that model, betrayed both the confidence of the EU in its transformative power that worked successfully in the enlargement process and the presumption of being the only key actor in its neighborhood. In particular, the EU has traditionally tended to see the Mediterranean as a sort of "mare nostrum," where it could have a specific presence and influence, also because other actors, such as the United States, did not conceptualize the Mediterranean as a region of its own.

The problems of the ENP in the Southern Mediterranean and the divergence between Eastern and Southern neighbors

It is interesting to note that there is a (partial) coincidence between what the demonstrators were demanding on the streets and what the EU promised the ENP would bring to Southern Mediterranean countries: democracy and prosperity. In any case, the ENP has not contributed to advancing the objectives that it set out, particularly in the Mediterranean. When the people in the Arab countries took to the streets asking for real democracy, they did not have the EU model in mind. It is notable that the people demanding democracy in Tunis and Cairo did not wave the EU flag, unlike the people who brought about the "colored revolutions"

neighbours," COM (2003)104 final, March 11, 2003. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf [accessed on June 6, 2011].

in Kiev and Tbilisi in the 2000s. In fact, in spite of its rhetoric on a foreign policy that has among its objectives the promotion of democracy and human rights, as enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, the EU shied away from doing what it preached. The main reason for that is that, particularly following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the EU and its Member States increasingly feared that a genuine democratic process in the Southern Mediterranean could result in the success of Islamist parties with an unpredictable foreign policy agenda. Therefore, for all its talk about the promotion of democracy and human rights, the Union supported the authoritarian regimes and refrained from cultivating relations with the opposition parties and civil society at large. In addition, the EU did not offer Southern Mediterranean countries adequate incentives for

them to reform their political and economic systems and embrace democracy and the free market.

When the people in the Arab countries took to the streets asking for real democracy, they did not have the EU model in mind.

The two main requests coming from these governments – that is the liberalization of visas for their citizens and the opening up of the EU internal market to their agricultural products – both fell on deaf ears. The statistics support these countries' perception that Europe is very difficult to enter for someone coming from the Southern shore of the Mediterranean: between 2003 and 2009

the increase in the number of visas issued to nationals from a Mashrik country was just 14 per cent, while there was no increase at all for the Maghreb.⁶ This figure is striking if compared with the increase in the number of visas issued to citizens of Eastern countries during the same period, which amounts to 190 per cent.⁷ In fact, measures of visa liberalization and visa facilitation were taken vis-à-vis Eastern countries but not vis-à-vis Southern ones. When it comes to trade, the situation is not much different: in the period from 2004 to 2008 trade between the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries increased much less than that between the EU and Eastern countries, respectively 69 per cent and 146 per cent.⁸ In addition, it is noticeable that the majority of trade between the two shores of the Mediterranean is made up of energy products exported

⁶ K. Kirişci, "Comparing the neighbourhood policies of Turkey and the EU in the Mediterranean," in M.B. Altunışık, K. Kirişci, N. Tocci, *Turkey: reluctant Mediterranean power*, GMF-IAI Mediterranean Paper Series 2011, 2011, p. 26.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

from the South to the North. In particular, the export of agricultural products from Southern Mediterranean countries to the EU internal market is negligible, even though these countries would have a comparative advantage in producing them.

As mentioned above, the main failure of the ENP and, more broadly, of all the EU's policies in the Mediterranean, has been the lack of any credible attempt to advance democracy and promote human rights. The main preoccupation of the EU was in fact securing the support of the Southern governments in the fight against terrorism and illegal migration, as well as the continuity of energy supplies. On the one hand, ruling elites in these countries were more interested in improving their economic cooperation with the EU than in engaging in a political dialogue for real democratic change. Their main concerns remained political stability and security, which are necessary for their survival. However, this does not mean that the ENP main documents, the Action Plans (APs) do not contain any reference to the need to undertake political reforms. Rather, the measures that they envisage are limited to rather technical governance issues, such as strengthening domestic and international dialogues on democratization, and legislative reform.⁹ In other words, the APs have avoided tackling the three major obstacles to political liberalization in Southern Mediterranean (SM) countries, which are the lack of a separation of powers, the oppression of civil society and political parties, and flaws in electoral procedures.¹⁰ Compared to the political reforms, the economic ones have undoubtedly proceeded more quickly, but progress on the macroeconomic level has remained vulnerable in so far as the structural causes of fragile growth have not been addressed. In particular, the reforms have failed to deliver the expected economic benefits to the majority of the population. The established elites resisted the reforms that would harm their economic or political interests, while making use of other reforms in a way that allowed the regimes to survive and favored their economic interests only. In addition, there was no business sector independent of the government, and no dynamic and competitive business sector able to take advantage of trade and investment opportunities. Finally, the outcome of many of the economic reforms envisaged in the APs are not immediately

⁹ M. Comelli, M.C. Paciello, "The ENP's potential for reform in the Southern Mediterranean: a cost/benefit analysis," in M. Comelli, A. Eralp, C. Ustun, *The European Neighbourhood Policy and the Southern Mediterranean. Drawing from the lessons of enlargement*, Ankara: Middle East Technical University Press, 2009, p. 56.

¹⁰ E. Baracani, "From the EMP to the ENP: A new European pressure for democratization? The case of Morocco," *The Centre for the Study of European Politics and Society*, 2005. Available online: <http://hsf.bgu.ac.il/europe/uploadDocs/csepspeb.pdf> [accessed on September 30, 2007].

positive and are in fact likely to have negative effects, especially on the low-middle social strata. The global and financial crisis simply added to this difficult situation, bringing the majority of the population, and especially the young people, to a point of exasperation.

Therefore, the implementation of the ENP has been rather unsuccessful, also in comparison with the relatively better results that the same policy has achieved in the East. In fact, over the years the ENP has produced very different results for each country, but there is no doubt that generally the South has seen minor progress in all fields, leading to a progressive diversification

It is interesting to note that at the same time the European Commission was communicating its ideas on the Union for the Mediterranean, Sweden and Poland were suggesting the idea of strengthening the Eastern dimension of the ENP through a new initiative, the Eastern Partnership.

between the two policies. A further sign of this diversification came in 2008, when the EU launched the ill-conceived Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), basically an intergovernmental policy that would, in the view of its proponent, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, re-energize the stagnant cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Sarkozy's initial idea that the organization should group together the littoral Mediterranean countries exclusively was not accepted by other EU countries and in the end the UfM came to include up to 44 countries, comprising all the EU member states. The focus of the policy was on developing joint projects in six areas deemed to be important for Euro-Mediterranean relations, leaving aside all the ambitious plans to contribute to the transformation of the Southern Mediterranean countries and to promote democracy and human rights. It

is interesting to note that at the same time the European Commission was communicating its ideas on the UfM, Sweden and Poland were suggesting the idea of strengthening the Eastern dimension of the ENP through a new initiative, the Eastern Partnership (EaP), which was finally launched the following year. Unlike the UfM, the EaP provided for objectives such as promoting democracy and contacts between the civil societies of the EU and of the Eastern countries. Therefore, while the UpM represented a break from previous Euro-Mediterranean policies, like the EMP and the ENP, the Eastern Partnership represented a continuation.

The Arab Spring and the EU's response: the launch of the Partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean

While the political, economic and social situation of the Southern Mediterranean countries was widely considered to be unsustainable, as it presented a combination of a lack of democracy, freedom of expression and human rights, sustained GDP growth coupled with enormous economic and social differences and massive unemployment, particularly among young and educated people, nobody could have guessed the point at which this frustration would finally be conveyed in open revolt to the authoritarian regimes. Similarly, it was not impossible to forecast that the revolts would spread from one country to the other, across the Maghreb, Mashreq and down to the Gulf. The first official reactions by EU leaders strongly endorsed the cause of the citizens that resulted in the revolutions in the Arab countries. What is more surprising is that these declarations went as far as to recognize the EU's mistakes in its relations with the Mediterranean. For example, Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and the ENP declared in February 2011:

“Europe was not vocal enough in defending human rights and local democratic forces in the region. Too many of us fell prey to the assumption that authoritarian regimes were a guarantee of stability in the region. This was not even Realpolitik. It was, at best, short-termism.”¹¹

This attitude represents a significant departure from the traditional reluctance of the EU to explicitly acknowledge the failures of its policies, which often leads to the adoption of documents that, while stating the validity of a certain policy, launch another one based on opposed principles and instruments, and leave unanswered the relationship between the two, let alone their coordination. Examples of this attitude are manifold, including the relationship between the EMP and the ENP and those between the latter and the UfM. In addition, as early as on March 8, the European Commission and the High Representative launched a specific initiative aimed at the Southern Mediterranean, that was called A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern

¹¹ “Štefan Füle European Commissioner for enlargement and neighbourhood, Policy speech on the recent events in North Africa, Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET), European Parliament Brussels, 28 February 2011,” Speech 11/130, February 28, 2011. Available online: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/11/130> [accessed on March 1, 2011].

Mediterranean.¹² The proposal, which was very rapidly endorsed by the European Council only three days later, outlines three main objectives:

1. democratic transformation and institution building;
2. a stronger co-operation with civil society;
3. fair and inclusive growth and socio-economic development.

The logic behind this document is reaffirmed in the Commission/High Representative's document on the revision of the ENP, "A new response to a changing Neighborhood," issued on May 25,¹³ which was endorsed by the Foreign Affairs Council of the EU on June 20.¹⁴ This was the culmination of a process that had started on July 26, 2010, when the Council called the Commission and the High Representative to reflect on the future implementation of the ENP, encouraging them to initiate a consultative process together with organizations that make up civil society, think tanks, etc.

The approach of the EU towards the South Mediterranean embodied in the latest decisions on the ENP and in the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity does not represent a radical departure from the traditional ENP approach, but it brings about a number of relevant innovations. First, it spells out more clearly than past documents the values on which the EU wants to base the relationship with its neighbors: universal values of liberty, democracy, and respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. The EU makes it clear that its concept of democracy is not limited to holding elections from time to time but implies the functioning of a real democratic system, with the rule of law, freedom of thought and expression, the separation of powers, accountability of the rulers, the independence of

¹² "Joint communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Region. A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean," COM(2011) 200 final, European Commission/ High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, March 8, 2011. Available online: <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0200:FIN:En:PDF> (accessed on March 8, 2011).

¹³ "Joint communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Region. A new response to a changing neighbourhood," COM(2011) 303 final, European Commission/ High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, May 25, 2011. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com_11_303_en.pdf (accessed on May 26, 2011). While the March Communication represented more a political response to the Arab Spring, that of May brings this new approach within the revision of the ENP, and it focuses more on the policy details.

¹⁴ "Conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Council of the European Union, Press release," 11824/11, June 20, 2011. Available online: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/122937.pdf (accessed on June 20, 2011).

the judiciary and freedom of the media. In practice, the EU should consider, in Catherine Ashton's own words, supporting these countries in going from surface to deep democracy.¹⁵ It is remarkable that the May 26 Communication mentions the need to ensure "unhindered access to the internet and the use of electronic communications,"¹⁶ thereby acknowledging the crucial role that the new technologies played in mobilizing the protesters, and especially the many young among them.

The new approach of the EU – see the Council Conclusions on the revision of the ENP – will be based on mutual accountability and a shared commitment to the above mentioned values. Indeed, before the Arab Spring, the EU was more timid in spelling out what, at that time, were only supposedly shared values, because most of the Southern Mediterranean states were ruled by authoritarian regimes. In any case, the EU Council is very cautious in the way it presents its relationship between the EU and its neighbors, which should be a partnership, based on two central tenets of the ENP: joint ownership and differentiation. In the documents outlining the revision of the ENP, the EU carefully avoids using language that might disclose an asymmetrical relationship, where there is a model (the EU), which the other partners have to imitate or at least get closer to, and this might result in an accusation of "political imperialism" against the EU.¹⁷ The idea is that the EU will forge closer relations with the more like-minded countries that choose to make democratic reforms. The differentiation principle, linked with the increasing political heterogeneity of

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¹⁵ "The EU wants 'deep democracy' to take root in Egypt and Tunisia," *The Guardian*, February 4, 2011. Available online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/04/egypt-tunisia-eu-deep-democracy> [accessed on February 4, 2011].

¹⁶ "A new response to a changing neighbourhood," op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁷ "Catherine Ashton EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission. A world built on co-operation, sovereignty, democracy and stability," Speech 11/126, Corvinus University Budapest, February 25, 2011. Available online: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/11/126> [accessed on March 1, 2011].

the Southern Mediterranean countries, is likely to result in a more fragmented Southern Mediterranean space, with some countries proceeding towards democracy (Tunisia), others likely to go through a long political transition (Egypt), and yet others where the struggle to put down the dictators is still raging (Syria and Libya).

In any case, while the EU avoids any explicit reference to conditionality and to compliance with EU norms and standards, it is precise in what it proposes for its neighbors: closer political association; more economic integration and increasing EU support; and in return, a commitment from those countries to implement democratic reforms. In addition, these benefits may be reconsidered should the neighboring country not implement the reforms adequately. In practice, both positive and negative conditionality is present in the revised ENP, even though it is in a disguised form. Therefore, if the ENP in the Mediterranean is becoming more value-based than in the past, the moribund UfM, to which the documents on the revision of the ENP make extremely brief reference, will supposedly focus on an even more pragmatic and project-based approach. Coordinating these two divergent approaches is very difficult and it seems that the ENP will become even more important than it is today, while the UfM will be relegated to being a hollow institution. However, this trend may be challenged should Nicolas Sarkozy again try to put the issue back onto the agenda of the campaign for the presidential elections of 2012.

New proposals for Southern Mediterranean countries and their challenges

Compared to previous proposals, it seems that the benefits envisaged by the revised ENP for the third countries are more significant: on the political side, the EU commits to launching two initiatives aimed at supporting democracy through two mechanisms, which, when compared with traditional financial instruments, should be more flexible: a European Endowment for Democracy, strongly advocated by Poland¹⁸, and a Civil Society Facility. However, many of the details concerning how these instruments will work are left unanswered: for example, the European Endowment for Democracy should help political parties, non-registered non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and trade unions and other social partners, but it is not yet clear how it will disburse the funds and some experts already fear that it will not support grassroots associations, as only well structured organizations will be able to get access to the

¹⁸ The Polish government sent a letter to C. Ashton, calling for the set up of a European Endowment for Democracy within the ENP.

funding.¹⁹ In any case, it is remarkable that the EU has finally clearly conceived of some instruments to fill one of the main gaps in the EU's approach to democratization in its neighborhood and specifically in the Southern Mediterranean: the basic lack of relations with local civil societies.²⁰ These aim to fill another gap at the same time: the different approach of the EU to civil society in the East and in the South. Indeed, while the Eastern Partnership (EaP) provided support for civil society through ad hoc programs, there was nothing similar for the Southern countries. The objective of the new approach to civil society in the South is to favor democratization, reaching out to large segments of the population, to which the EU has never had access, partly because these social structures were hardly recognized in their own countries. Indeed, as Michelle Pace has argued:

... in Islamic history, civil society was never institutionalized or centralised; it was always fluid and flexible. Sufi movements, village and urban ulama... are still active today in Muslim countries. The problem is that because they do not fit Western criteria, Muslims act as if these traditional forms do not exist; they are basically off the radar.²¹

When it comes to the issues of market access and mobility (the third "m" being money), the proposals made to Southern Mediterranean partners appear to be intended to reduce the gap between these countries and the Eastern neighbors. It is interesting to note that the benefits the EU is willing to concede are conditional on the third countries pursuing reforms. Therefore, while conditionality is not mentioned among the principles of the renewed ENP, it appears to be present when deciding how to operationalize the policy. Mediterranean countries that engage in democratic and economic reforms will be invited, as an end goal, to join the EU internal market, with the four freedoms of circulation that implies (goods, services, capital and people). While there is little chance that the right to the free movement of people will be granted any time soon (see below), the EU aims to negotiate the establishment of the so-called Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) with selected Mediterranean partners, thereby extending to them what is already on offer

¹⁹ Interview with an official from the European External Action Service (EEAS), Brussels, June 2011.

²⁰ M. Pace, "Interrogating the European Union's democracy promotion agenda: discursive configurations of "democracy" from the Middle East," *European Foreign Affairs Review* Vol. 15, No. 5, 2010.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 622.

for Eastern partners. In contrast to the simple Free Trade Areas (FTAs), the DCFTAs also imply a liberalization of trade in services, according to the relevant provisions of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) as well as the reform of behind-the-border trade rules, in order to bring legislation on these matters in line with the EU, thereby overcoming all the non-tariff barriers and increasing trade exchanges²². The prospect of negotiating DCFTAs has already been given to Eastern partners – for example, Ukraine has been in ongoing negotiations since 2008 – therefore the revision of the ENP is moving in the direction of achieving a balance between its two regional dimensions that previously privileged Eastern countries. In any case, the real test of the EU's goodwill will be the extent to which trade in agricultural products will be liberalized. In fact, only Egypt, Israel, Tunisia and Morocco have started the liberalization of agricultural, processed agricultural and fisheries products, while the other countries in the area have yet to start. One of the main problems standing in the way of this liberalization is the high EU sanitary and phytosanitary standards, which make approximation difficult and expensive.

In addition with regard to the issue of mobility, the revised ENP sets out to grant Southern neighbors what was already available for Eastern ones, namely the mobility partnership that the communication on the revision of the ENP defines as “comprehensive frameworks to ensure that the movement of persons between the EU and third country is well-managed.”²³ In particular, the mobility partnerships that were signed with Moldova in 2008 and with Georgia the following year will be negotiated with the first group of Southern countries, like Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, with others expected to follow. Mobility partnerships should combine measures aimed at strengthening the handling of illegal immigration with those aimed at improving labor migration management, including recruitment, vocational and language training, development and recognition of skills, and the return and reintegration of migrants, which “can include initiatives to assist partner countries to establish or improve.”²⁴ When looking more closely at this proposal one discovers that this is rather hollow. As Michael Emerson rightly argues,²⁵ while there is only a limited number of things that the EU as such can do concerning the handling of illegal immigration, the

²² These rules include opening up to competition and foreign investment in services, the design and management of technical and sanitary standards, the regulation of foreign investment, the protection of key intellectual property rights (e.g. patents), competitive and non discriminatory government procurement, efficient customs administration.

²³ “A new response to a changing neighbourhood,” op. cit., p. 11.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ M. Emerson, “The review of the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy,” *CEPS Commentary*, June 8, 2011, p. 3.

measures intended to maximize the positive impact of immigration mainly fall within the sphere of competence of member states, regarding the long-term permanence of third country nationals in an EU member state. In addition, it is not clear how some key concepts of the mobility partnerships, such as that of circular migration, will ever be translated into a policy practice. In fact, this is rather a matter of voluntary choice,²⁶ rather than the result of a policy measure. Furthermore, it appears that the mobility partnerships are in many respects of greater value to the EU than to the Southern Mediterranean countries.²⁷ In fact, not only are they based on the EU's attempt to elevate readmission as the guiding principle of interaction, but their scope is limited to specific types of professionals, who basically respond to the labor needs of the EU.²⁸ The same kind of logic also underpins the proposed *quid pro quo* between visa facilitation agreements for certain categories of citizens (students, academics, businessmen etc) and readmission agreements. This deal, in force with countries such as Moldova and Ukraine, will also be offered to Southern Mediterranean countries.

Although there is recognition of how the benefits of free trade and integration prospects are relevant to the economic development of the Arab countries,²⁹ it should also be kept in mind that considerable aid is needed to sustain the momentum of the democratic awakening in North Africa and the Middle East, because each liberalization implies high social costs in the short term.³⁰ In fact, the people, and especially the young that took to the streets, demanded freedom but also better living conditions and prospects for the future. In particular, they found the enormous economic and social differences unacceptable. The EU responded in a positive way to the need for increased aid: according to the revision of the ENP, the period 2011–2013 will see an increase of 1.242 billion euro in EU funding for the Southern Mediterranean, in addition to the 5.7 billion euro allocated for the same period within the

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ N. Tocci, J.P. Cassarino, *Rethinking the EU's Mediterranean policies post-1/11*, IAI Working Papers 11/6, p. 16. Available online: www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iaiw1106.pdf [accessed on June 1, 2011].

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Open for business? Economic reform in the Middle East could prove harder than in Eastern Europe. The west needs to help it along," *Economist*, June 23, 2011. Available online: <http://www.economist.com/node/18867047> [accessed on June 23, 2011].

³⁰ For example, the opening up of the Algerian market to EU products has resulted in considerable losses for the Algerian companies that suffered from the competitiveness gap with those of the EU. For this reason, the Algerian government demanded a slow down in the liberalization of bilateral trade with the EU. See "Free trade, Algeria not sure on its feet," *Bulletin Quotidien Europe*, No. 10398, June 16, 2011, p. 16.

framework of the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the financial instrument that covers the ENP countries and Russia. In addition, the European Investment Bank (EIB) will devote over one billion extra funds for those countries and so it is expected that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will change its mandate and extend its operations to include the Southern Mediterranean countries. This increase was necessary

The increase in funds for the Southern Mediterranean was advocated in particular by the Mediterranean countries, which have denounced the asymmetries that exist in the funding of the two different dimensions of the ENP in favor of the East.

not only in terms of the exceptional situation that these countries have found themselves in, but also because of the difference in the funds granted to the Eastern neighbors. In fact, if we exclude the exceptional situation of the Occupied Territory, which receives as much as 350 million euro per year, the sum that the Southern countries receives per capita each year is a modest 5.2 million euro, less than the 6.9 million euro, received by the Eastern countries.³¹

The increase in funds for the Southern Mediterranean was advocated in particular by the Mediterranean countries,³² which have denounced the asymmetries that exist in the funding of the two different dimensions of the ENP in favor of the East. However, a group of Members of the European Parliament

(MEPs) from new EU member states has in its turn warned that increased financial allocation for the South should not be at the expense of the East, as this might hamper the on-going reforms and democratic processes in the Eastern Partnership countries.³³ Increasing the funding for the Southern Mediterranean countries in the forthcoming financial period (2014–2020) will not therefore be easy in a context characterized by the East-South competition and above

³¹ N. Tocci, J.P. Cassarino, op. cit., pp. 13–14.

³² See the letter and non paper addressed to the High Representative/Vice President of the Commission Lady Catherine Ashton of February 16, 2011 by France, Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Slovenia and Spain.

³³ *Non-paper, European Neighbourhood Policy – Eastern dimension*, signed by Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, György Schöpflin, Andrey Kovatchev, Eduard Kukan and Traian Ungureanu and sent to EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle and High Representative/Vice President of the Commission Lady Catherine Ashton, http://www.eppgroup.eu/press/peve11/docs/110525nhttp://www.iai.it/pdf/Oss_Polinternazionale/pi_a_0033.pdf on-paper-enp.pdf, p. 19.

all by the difficult economic and financial circumstances of the EU and the eurozone countries, which as the ink is drying on these pages, are busy helping prevent Greece from defaulting. The amount of money given is nonetheless not everything: what would also need reforming is the disbursement system. So far, EU funding has been channeled through the governments of the Southern countries, triggering corruption and the appropriation of public resources by a restricted number of officials and businessmen, preventing the emergence of a real class of businessmen independent of political power.³⁴ Therefore, effective aid must now achieve two objectives: to tackle income differences and pay more attention to the genuine private sector.³⁵

Conclusions

The Arab Spring has undoubtedly shaken the political context of the MENA region and has also had an important impact on the Mediterranean policies of the EU, which had already undergone deep transformation since the early 2000s. While the launch of the ENP in 2003 speaks to the desire of the EU to act as a model for all its neighboring countries, Eastern and Southern alike, the period that followed led to an increasing differentiation between the two groups of countries. The Arab Spring showed that the differences lay not in the final aspirations of the people concerned, but in the specific economic-political conditions, coupled with a difficult international context and the propensity of the EU for supporting authoritarian regimes in the South. As a result, the first political reactions of the EU to the events in North Africa seemed to redress this imbalance, by offering Southern countries the same or similar incentives to those offered to the Eastern ones. Also, the pendulum of the Euro-Mediterranean policies has swung again, this time from multilateralism to bilateralism. It is to be expected that Euro-Mediterranean relations will be increasingly characterized by differentiation in the future. This, coupled with the different political system that will emerge in Southern Mediterranean countries (some countries will become democratic, others will remain halfway between authoritarianism and democracy, while yet others will have to deal with the consequences of civil war and/or foreign intervention), which will lead to an end to the EU's one-size-fits-all approach to the area. The new attitude of the EU in the Mediterranean is to be welcomed, since it is more in line with the EU's discourse on a value-based foreign policy, as enshrined even more evidently

³⁴ R. Aliboni, "I rivolgimenti politici in Nord Africa e la riforma della politica euro-mediterranea," *Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale, Approfondimenti*, No.33, 2011.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

in the Lisbon Treaty. However, it is not to be taken for granted that it will be effective in sustaining the nascent democracies, for the following reasons in particular: the EU has not so far cultivated relations with the civil societies of these countries and it is not clear how the new instruments aimed at supporting democracy (European Endowment for Democracy and Civil Society Facility) will work. The three groups of measures intended to reward countries advancing towards “deep democracy” (the three Ms: market, mobility, money) look quite adequate on paper, but when they are examined more closely, they reveal a number of shortcomings.

Adam Szymański

Turkey's role in resolving the Middle East conflicts

Abstract: The Republic of Turkey, which conducts its foreign policy on the basis of the "strategic depth" doctrine, has strengthened its position in the Middle East in recent years. One of the main roles it plays in the region is that of mediator in Middle Eastern interstate and intrastate conflicts. Turkey is able to do this because of its many assets, including its geographical and cultural proximity, personal contacts, good economic position and developed relations with the countries of the Middle East; in addition, it is accepted by the Arab world. Turkey employs a variety of mediation strategies, such as the communication-facilitation strategy, where its role is that of facilitator, easing communication between the parties it has good relations with, and trying to help them reach an understanding. However, its attempts are often ineffective due to constraints, such as the problem of neutrality and trust between Turkey and the areas in conflict; the limited capabilities of the Turkish state; the fact that its relations with the EU have deteriorated in recent years; and its own internal political problems. Under certain conditions, Turkey will be able to play the role of mediator in Middle Eastern conflicts in the future. Turkish efforts must be, however, based on a rational policy and benefits-costs analysis in the long term. Moreover, Turkey should not be over-assertive – a more selective approach to the conflicts in the Middle East is advisable. It must also think about the limits of its capabilities, assess them properly, and cooperate with the international community and other partners, especially those that have a greater impact in resolving conflicts in the region.

Traditionally, Turkey's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era can briefly be characterized by reference to its three principles: maintaining a pro-Western orientation; preserving the *status quo*; and upholding the leading role of the power elites in shaping the country's relations with the outside

world.¹ However, in the 1990s, Turkey began to change its foreign policy. To begin with, foreign policy became more active and multidimensional. As a result of these changes, Turkey's external relations are currently based on the "strategic depth" (*stratejik derinlik*) doctrine formulated by Ahmet Davutoğlu, advisor to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and, since May 2009, Minister of Foreign Affairs.² The essence of this doctrine is that Turkey's historically rooted geo-strategic importance should be used to conduct a multi-pronged foreign policy in tandem with a balanced approach towards all major regional and global actors. Davutoğlu believes that it is possible for the Turkish state to conduct an active policy in both the near and more remote vicinity. It is also possible for — Turkey to aspire to the role of being a regional power.³ Apart from the multidimensional activism, the main characteristics of Turkish foreign policy include its concern to have good relations with all its neighbors ("zero problems with the neighbors") in order to stabilize the immediate neighborhood, and a preference for peaceful means over the use of force (soft power vs. hard power), which is an important factor in developing cooperation between Turkey and the EU in foreign policy.

All these characteristics are reflected in Turkey's active involvement in resolving regional conflicts in recent years. Apart from providing humanitarian and development aid, and sometimes military assistance (excluding direct participation in combat), Turkey, first of all, tries to play the role of mediator between the conflicting parties. Mediation here is defined as:

a process of conflict management, related to but distinct from the parties' own negotiations, where those in conflict seek the assistance, or accept an offer of help, from an outsider (who may be an individual, an organization, a group, or a state), to change their perception of behavior, and to do so without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of the law.⁴

The aim of this article is to analyze Turkey's role as mediator of conflict in the Middle East – the region in which Turkey is especially active in this regard. Turkey's general activity in this region began in the 1980s during Turgüt Özal's era, but

¹ M. Özcan, *Harmonizing foreign policy. Turkey, the EU and the Middle East*, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2008, p. 82.

² See further, A. Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik, Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*, İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2009.

³ A. Murinson, "The strategic depth doctrine of Turkish foreign policy," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 42, No. 6, 2006, p. 953.

⁴ J. Bercovitch, "Introduction: putting mediation in context," in J. Bercovitch, ed., *Studies in international mediation*, Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 7.

the role of mediator was first adopted, in relation to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, in the period from 1997 to 2002, and later embraced other Middle Eastern disputes. Apart from the new foreign policy vision, there were many reasons for selecting this kind of involvement – both domestic and external – including Turkish security concerns, the vacuum in regional politics created by the decline of the traditional Arab powers, US inability and the collapse of the peace process, the need to counterbalance Iran's increasing influence, the harmonization of Turkish foreign policy with EU rules as well as improvements in the economic situation and good relations with all the areas of conflict.⁵

This article seeks to answer the following questions first of all: What kind of mediation role is played by Turkey in the Middle East? Is the Turkish involvement in resolving the regional conflicts effective? What are the prospects for the development of this role in the future? These questions are crucial especially in the context of the events occurring in the Middle East since the beginning of 2011.

To answer these questions it is important to outline at the beginning the theoretical framework for categorizing the possible mediation strategies. This paper will then define Turkish involvement in resolving the conflicts in the Middle East, giving some examples and then conclude with some predictions based on an analysis of Turkey's assets and the constraints that must be taken into account in this case.

Main mediation strategies

In the scholarly literature there are many frameworks for categorizing the mediation strategies. For the purposes of this article, it is worth outlining a framework based on one clear criterion – the scope of action taken as part of the mediation efforts. This framework was first introduced in the 1970s by Kenneth Kressel who discussed three main mediation strategies:

Apart from providing humanitarian and development aid, and sometimes military assistance (excluding direct participation in combat), Turkey, first of all, tries to play the role of mediator between the conflicting parties.

⁵ M.B. Altunışık, E. Cuhadar, "Turkey's search for a third party role in Arab–Israeli conflicts: a neutral facilitator or a principal power mediator?," *Mediterranean Politics* Vol. 15, No. 3, 2010, pp. 372–7.

1. reflexive [facilitating better interaction];
2. non-directive [working on a favorable climate for mediation]; and
3. directive [promoting specific outcomes, e.g. accepting the proposals of a mediator].⁶

This typology was developed in the 1990s by Jacob Bercovitch among others who described in detail each mediation strategy, using different terms from those employed by Kressel.⁷ The first strategy is called the *communication-facilitation strategy* and involves the most limited scope of intervention. Here, the country or other international actor plays a fairly passive role as neutral mediator; “channeling information to the parties and facilitating co-operation but exhibiting little control over the more formal process or substance of mediation.”⁸ Tactics in this case include:

making contact with the parties; gaining the trust and confidence of the parties; arranging for interactions between the parties; identifying issues and interests; clarifying the situation; being impartial; developing a rapport with the parties; supplying missing information; developing a framework for understanding; encouraging meaningful communication; offering positive evaluations; and allowing the interests of the parties to be discussed.⁹

The second strategy is described by Bercovitch as the *procedural-formulative strategy*. It is connected with more formal control over the mediation process in terms of aspects of the environment of conflict management. The aim here is to create an environment that is more favorable for conflict management. Control refers to issues such as venue, time, frequency and agenda of the mediation process. In this case the mediator is the chair of the communication process as well. The tactics chosen include:

choosing the site of meetings, controlling the pace and formality of meetings, controlling the physical environment, establishing protocols,

⁶ See more K. Kressel, *Labor mediation: the exploratory survey*, New York: Association of Labor Mediation Agencies, 1972.

⁷ J. Bercovitch, “Mediation and mediation strategies in international relations,” *Negotiation Journal* Vol. 8, No. 3, 1992, pp. 99–112.

⁸ J. Bercovitch, S.M. Lee, “Mediating international conflicts: examining the effectiveness of direct strategies,” *The International Journal of Peace Studies* Vol. 8, No. 1, 2003. Available online: www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol8_1/Bercovitch.html (accessed on June 5, 2011).

⁹ *Ibid.*

suggesting procedures, highlighting common interests, reducing tensions, controlling timing, dealing with the simple issues first, structuring the agenda, keeping parties at the table, helping parties save face, and keeping the process focused on issues.¹⁰

The name of the third strategy is *directive strategy*. It is the most extensive form of involvement in conflict mediation. The mediator determines the content of the mediation process by providing incentives for the conflicting parties, with the aim of changing the attitude, motivation or behavior of the conflicting parties. Tactics here include:

changing the parties' expectations, taking responsibility for concessions, making substantive suggestions and proposals, making the parties aware of the costs of non-agreement, supplying and filtering information, suggesting concessions parties can make, helping the negotiators to undo a commitment, rewarding party concession, helping devise a framework for acceptable outcomes, changing perceptions, pressing the parties to show flexibility, promising resources or threatening with withdrawal, and offering to verify the compliance with agreement.¹¹

It is important that one kind of strategy should not always be applied. It may be changed during the process of dynamic mediation. The choice of strategy and its potential for success are affected by such factors as the intensity of the conflict, the type of issues in conflict, the internal characteristics of the parties, the previous relations and experience of the parties, mediator identity and rank, the initiation and timing of mediation intervention as well as mediation environment.¹² That is why it is not appropriate to negatively assess a mediator who concentrates on the first, low profile strategy, providing of course that this strategy is well implemented. A strategy which suits one conflict may prove useless in the case of another.

Turkey's main mediation strategies in the Middle East

In its mediation efforts in the Middle East, Turkey uses all three mediation strategies, although to varying degrees. Moreover, it changes mediation

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² J. Bercovitch, "Mediation and conflict resolution," in J. Bercovitch, V. Kremenyuk, I.W. Zartman, eds, *The SAGE handbook of conflict resolution*, London: SAGE Publications, 2008, pp. 348–50.

strategy in relation to a particular conflict, according to the circumstances in question.

It seems that the first strategy – *communication-facilitation strategy* – is the strategy used most frequently by the Turkish government, with differing results. It plays (or in some cases played) the role of a country facilitating communication between parties it has had good relations with and trying to get them to reach some kind of understanding.¹³

Until 2008 this kind of strategy was evident with regard to Arab-Israeli conflicts, i.e. Israeli-Palestinian or Israeli-Syrian conflicts. Turkey already had good relations with all those involved in these conflicts at the beginning of the twenty first century. In 2001 and 2002 during his official visits, Foreign Minister Ismail Cem made the first attempts to get Turkey to become a facilitator between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, trying to encourage both sides into dialogue.¹⁴ In the years that followed, the use of the *communication-facilitation strategy* was more noticeable. For instance, Davutoğlu, in his capacity as Presidential advisor, traveled in 2006 to Damascus in connection with the abduction of an Israeli soldier. That year also saw the invitation of Hamas leader Khalid Mishal to Ankara. Although the way the whole issue was arranged left much to be desired, it proved the will of the Turkish government to talk (using different media or organizing meetings) with all the parties involved in the conflict in order to help find solutions.¹⁵

The first strategy was even more clearly used by Turkey in the case of the Israeli-Syrian conflict. After 2002, the AKP government attempted on several occasions to mediate between Israel and Syria. In January 2004, for instance, Israel made contact with President Bashar Al-Assad through the intermediary of Prime Minister Erdoğan. Following the conversation the latter had with the Syrian president, the AKP conveyed information about the Syrian desire to revive peace talks to the Israeli ambassador in Ankara, Pinhas Avivi.¹⁶ In 2008 Turkey was a silent mediator engaged in shuttle diplomacy. Turkish envoys traveled back and forth during successive talks that took place in Turkey with representatives of Syria and Israel in order to convey the position of the other side. It must be underlined that, after eight years, bringing the two sides together to talk, even if indirectly, was an important step.¹⁷ Of course, it was not only leading

¹³ Y. Kanlı, "The facilitator," *Turkish Daily News*, July 28, 2006.

¹⁴ M.B. Altunışık, E. Cuhadar, *op. cit.*, p. 380.

¹⁵ A. Murinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 958–9; G.E. Fuller, *The new Turkish Republic. Turkey as a pivotal state in the Muslim world*, Washington: USIP Press, 2008, p. 75.

¹⁶ A. Murinson, *op. cit.*, p. 958.

¹⁷ B. Aras, "Turkey between Syria and Israel. Turkey's rising soft power," *SETA Policy Brief*, No. 15, May 2008. Available online: www.setav.org (accessed on June 8, 2011); M.B. Altunışık,

politicians who took part in this kind of mediation process. They were supported by Turkish diplomats and representatives of civil society, including academics and businessmen, who thanks to their developed contacts made the mediation easier.

However, Turkey's actions as facilitator were interrupted by the conflict in the Gaza Strip at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009. Turkey's critical position with regard to Israel, on account of the latter's actions in Gaza, put into question Turkey's continued role as an intermediary in conflicts involving Israel. This became even clearer when further tensions in Turkish-Israeli relations erupted, including first of all the Davos row between Prime Minister Erdoğan and Israeli President Shimon Peres in January 2009 and the Israeli commando attack on the Mavi Marmara ship in May 2010.¹⁸ As a consequence Meliha Altunışık and Esra Cudahar describe the evolution of the Turkish role in Arab-Israeli conflicts after 2008 in terms of a shift in roles from facilitator towards [a less effective] principle power mediator which "remained limited to convincing Hamas and employing negative inducements on Israel"¹⁹ and is hardly compatible with the *communication-facilitation strategy* due to difficulties with sustaining neutrality and a soft power approach.

There are also other examples of Turkey's use of the first strategy in interstate conflicts in the Middle East. During the first AKP government, President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan played an important role as mediators between Iran and Western countries by trying to encourage Iranian politicians to adopt a more moderate attitude with regard to the other side's proposals and by clarifying the Western point of view. In April 2007 Turkey facilitated a meeting in Istanbul between Javier Solana and Ali Larijani – the top Iranian nuclear negotiator.²⁰ It then tried [without much success] to facilitate negotiations between Iraq and Syria in 2009 when the diplomatic row deepened after Iraq

Turkey's critical position with regard to Israel, on account of the latter's actions in Gaza, put into question Turkey's continued role as an intermediary in conflicts involving Israel.

"The possibilities and limits of Turkey's soft power in the Middle East," *Insight Turkey* Vol. 10, No. 2, 2008, p. 50.

¹⁸ See more Z.Y. Bölükbaşı, "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri," in M. Ercan, ed., *Değişen Dünyada Türk Dış Politikası*, Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, 2011, pp. 230–7.

¹⁹ M.B. Altunışık, E. Cudahar, op. cit., p. 389.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

accused Syria of hosting insurgent training camps to organize bomb attacks in Iraqi territory.²¹

The *communication-facilitation strategy* is also used by Turkey in different types of intra-state conflicts and disputes in the Middle East. In 2006, Prime Minister Erdoğan took steps to bring about a cease-fire and end the Lebanon conflict, and held repeated telephone conversations with George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Kofi Annan, Lebanese, Syrian and Iranian leaders as well as EU politicians. Moreover, in the spring of 2008, Erdoğan became involved in resolving the problem of the Lebanese presidential elections by discussing this subject (and others) over the phone with Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.²²

Turkey was also involved in the reconciliation efforts between Hamas and Fatah, although the Turkish role in reaching agreement in April 2011 on forming the common interim government seems to have been auxiliary. Another current example of the involvement of Turkey in resolving intra-state conflicts in the Middle East is connected with the events that took place in North Africa at the beginning of 2011. The *communication-facilitation strategy* was used by Turkey and others in Libya to mediate between Moammar Qaddafi and the opposition, with the aim, first of all, of convincing the former to make concessions to the latter and advise forces in Benghazi against taking radical steps and later to facilitate an agreement on ceasefire between the parties.²³

Sometimes the conflicts are connected with religious divisions and the struggle for power: After the toppling of Saddam Hussein, the Turkish government tried to defuse tensions between Iraq's Sunnis and Shiites, and its representatives traveled on diplomatic missions to countries neighboring Iraq (for example, in December 2006, Prime Minister Erdoğan traveled to Iran and to Syria).²⁴ Good contacts with both communities as well as with the Iraqi Kurds may be helpful now in solving disputes and helping these groups come to agreement. Another, current example of the Turkish involvement in resolving political conflict based on religious divisions is the case of Bahrain in 2011.

²¹ "Turks begin Iraq-Syria mediation," *BBC News*, August 31, 2009. Available online: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8230168.stm> [accessed on June 7, 2011].

²² G.E. Fuller, op.cit., p. 77; F.S. Larrabee, "Turkey's new Middle East activism," in F.G. Burwell, ed., *The evolution of U.S. - Turkish relations in a transatlantic context. Colloquium report*, Carlisle: SSI, March 2008. Available online: www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil [accessed on June 8, 2011], pp. 75-83; V. Boland, "Turkey claims Mideast peacekeeper role," *Financial Times*, September 6, 2006.

²³ M. Champion, "Turkey plays mediator in Libya crisis," *Wall Street Journal*, April 4, 2011. Available online: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703806304576242341957722026.html> [accessed on June 7, 2011].

²⁴ A. Davutoğlu, "Turkey's foreign policy vision: an assessment of 2007," *Insight Turkey* Vol. 10, No. 1, 2008, pp. 181-2.

Turkey made an effort to calm tensions between the ruling Sunni minority and the Shiite majority. Its representatives talked with both the government and opposition as well as with regional powers, i.e. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Iran.²⁵

The second strategy (*procedural-formulative*) is used by Turkey in mediation efforts in the Middle East as well, although not so often as the first strategy. This type of Turkish engagement usually involves Turkey hosting conflicting parties and/or regional countries interested in conflict resolution.

This was the case with Iraq under the rule of Saddam Hussein. In January 2003, Turkey organized a meeting of the region's ministers of foreign affairs in Istanbul so that they would call on the Iraqi authorities to cooperate with the Western inspectors investigating the case of weapons of mass destruction. In November 2007, the second conference between Iraq's neighbors – following the one in Sharm el-Sheikh – took place in Istanbul. The aim of this Turkish initiative was to define a common international position with regard to the situation in that country.²⁶

Before 2009 the *procedural-formulative strategy* was also used by Turkey in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert traveled to Turkey on November 12–13, 2007, just prior to the summit in Annapolis (November 27, 2007), which Turkey participated in as well. For the first time ever, they were invited together to the presidential palace by the Turkish head of state. They took part in the Ankara Forum for Economic Cooperation, during which they signed a declaration in which they expressed their support for the actions of Turkish private enterprises on the territory of the Palestinian Autonomy and the new Tarkumia industrial zone in the West Bank. They also both gave speeches during one of the sessions of the Turkish parliament. This initiative together with Turkish actions to create an environment more favorable for conflict management (initially economic measures such as those mentioned above) was recognized by the EU. At the beginning of July 2008, the EU commissioner for trade, Peter Mandelson, offered Turkey the role of mediator between Israel and the Palestinian Autonomy for the purpose of normalizing trade relations.²⁷

²⁵ "Bahrain thanks Turkey over its role in ending turmoil," *Hurriyet Daily News*, May 12, 2011. Available online: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=bahrain-thanks-turkey-over-its-role-in-diffusing-tension-2011-05-12> (accessed on June 8, 2011).

²⁶ A. Davutoğlu, op. cit., p. 184.

²⁷ S.M. Bölme, "From Ankara to Annapolis: Turkey and the Middle East peace process," *SETA Policy Brief* No. 5, December 2007. Available online: www.setav.org (accessed on June 8, 2011); "Turkey to offer economic mediation," *Turkish Daily News*, July 4, 2008.

The third, *directive strategy* is very rarely used by Turkey – in the Middle East and generally. It never plays a key role in Turkish mediation efforts and is limited more to attempts than real results. In the Middle East this strategy concerns the proposals presented by Turkey to the conflicting parties with the aim of achieving a ceasefire and adopting other measures to resolve conflicts. This was the case with the conflict in the Gaza Strip at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009. A more current example is a plan for Libya presented in April 2011, which consisted of three elements: a ceasefire in the cities surrounded by Qaddafi's forces; a humanitarian corridor to allow aid to enter; and negotiations leading to a new political process in Libya, including free, democratic elections.²⁸ However, these cases can be considered only as semblances of real direct strategy.

Effectiveness of the Turkish mediation efforts in the Middle East

Having outlined the main strategies used by Turkey in resolving the conflicts in the Middle East it seems opportune to consider the question as to the effectiveness of the Turkish efforts. It seems that most of Turkey's actions are attempts to play a mediator role rather than to mediate effectively. Only in some cases, such as the pre-2009 Israeli-Syrian conflict, did the mediation strategy used by Turkey bring positive results. This is related to the question concerning assets/constraints, which will be analyzed in this section.

Turkey has real potential and many assets that it can use in playing the role of mediator in the Middle East, using all the strategies mentioned above. What is important, of course, is its cultural and geographic proximity. Turkey, more than any other country, is familiar with and understands the countries of the region and their societies, including their mentalities, ways of thinking and patterns of behavior. It is especially significant in the context of the mediation issue that leading Turkish politicians personally know many Middle Eastern politicians (from both government and opposition); this has been a real asset in talks with both parties in the conflicts and tensions that erupted in 2011.

Turkey has strengthened its position as a regional power not only by improving its economic situation (it is now a member of G20), but also thanks to the development of economic relations with the Middle Eastern countries in recent years. In 2007 exports to the states of the "Near and Middle East" amounted to about \$15 billion, while in 2010 that figure was more than \$25

²⁸ C. Mc Greal, H. Sherwood, S. Milne, "Libyan minister to take Turkish peace plan to Gaddafi," *The Guardian*, April 7, 2011. Available online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/07/libya-minister-turkish-peace-plan-gaddafi> [accessed on June 8, 2011].

billion. Imports from the same region totaled around \$12 billion in 2007 and \$16 billion in 2010.²⁹

What is also important is the Arab world's increasing acceptance of Turkey. According to a survey conducted by the Turkish think-tank TESEV in the fall of 2010, 85 per cent of citizens in several Arab states of the Middle East and Iran expressed a positive attitude towards Turkey in 2010.³⁰ Reasons for this included economic success and the process of democratization under the AKP government, integration with the EU, as well as a tough stance towards Israel. Turkish culture – TV series, music and football – is very popular in the Arab world. Consequently, Turkey's initiatives in the region rest on legitimate foundations.

However, there are also some constraints which limit the effectiveness of the Turkish mediation efforts. First and foremost is the problem of Turkey's neutrality concerning conflicts in the Middle East. Since 2008 relations with Israel have clearly deteriorated. This makes it very difficult for it to play the role of facilitator effectively in Israeli-Palestinian or Israeli-Syrian conflicts, especially when the emotive actions of Prime Minister Erdoğan start to prevail. There seems to be a similar

It seems that most of Turkey's actions are attempts to play a mediator role rather than to mediate effectively.

problem in the "Iran-West" mediation attempts concerning the Iranian nuclear program. The Western partners justifiably have doubts over the neutral Turkish stance on the problem after Turkey signed the trilateral agreement with Iran and Brazil as well as the "no" vote on the sanctions against Iran in the UN Security Council. Therefore Ziya Öniş is quite right to state: "by adopting active pro-Palestine and pro-Iran positions in these respective conflicts, Turkey progressively lost its ability to play a constructive role as a mediating power."³¹ There was a period of time when Turkey chose to back one of the parties in particular that was involved in the conflict in the Hamas-Fatah dispute as well.³²

²⁹ Data: *Foreign trade by country groups*, Turkish Statistical Office. Available online: www.turkstat.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do?tb_id=12&ust_id=4 [accessed on June 6, 2011].

³⁰ *Orta Doğu'da Türkiye Algısı 2010*, İstanbul: TESEV, 2011, p. 10. Available online: http://www.tesev.org.tr/UD_OBJS/PDF/DPT/OD/YYN/Ortadogu_arastirma_2010.pdf [accessed on June 6, 2011].

³¹ Z. Öniş, "Multiple faces of the 'new' Turkish foreign policy: underlying dynamics and a critique," *Insight Turkey* Vol. 13, No. 1, 2010, p. 60.

³² Y. Kanlı, "The mediator," *Hürriyet Daily News*, January 21, 2009. Available online: <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr> [accessed on June 8, 2011]; S. İdiz, "Dış politikamızı altüst eden sözler," *Milliyet*, January 19, 2009.

The neutrality question is connected with the trust issue. If there is no trust between the mediator and both parties in a conflict, it is impossible to achieve positive mediation results. Israel and Turkey lost trust in each other after Prime Minister Olmert failed to inform Prime Minister Erdoğan during his visit to Ankara about the plans to start the intervention in the Gaza Strip. Further tensions in the bilateral relations only made the situation worse.³³

A similar problem concerns the Turkish involvement in the resolution of conflicts in North Africa in 2011. Relations (especially over the economy) with the dictators from countries in the region make it difficult for Turkey to take a clear position on the conflicts, in Libya, for instance. The trust the opposition in Benghazi has towards the Turkish mediators was undermined by the lack of a firm stance towards Qaddafi and the clear support for democratic changes (attitudes towards President Ahmadinejad of Iran and Omar Al-Bashir, the Sudanese leader should also be taken into account). The same dilemma meant it would be extremely difficult to talk with the Syrian opposition, despite Turkish gestures such as hosting Syrian representatives on Turkish territory (in Antalya).³⁴

The other constraint which makes it difficult for Turkey to use the *procedural-formulative* and *direct* strategies in particular concerns capability. Although Turkey has both economic and human resources, these are often not enough for Turkey to play a leading role in mediating Middle Eastern conflicts. There are simply other actors whose capabilities are better than Turkish ones. On the regional level, it is primarily Egypt that has traditionally played a key role – as the Hamas-Fatah agreement clearly proved. Although US policy towards the Middle East has changed in recent years, the state still plays a leading role in resolving the conflicts in the region.

In addition to these constraints there are other issues which certainly do not help the Turkish mediation efforts. The following have had an adverse impact: the deteriorating relations with the EU in recent years (which Arab states pay significant attention to) and internal political problems – the struggle between the Kemalist elites and religious-conservative circles (which makes it impossible for them to concentrate on external activities).

³³ W. Hale, "Turkey and the Middle East in the 'new era,'" *Insight Turkey* Vol. 11, No. 3, 2009, p. 149.

³⁴ S. Küçükkoşum, "Syrian opposition gather in Antalya to set up 'transitional council,'" *Hürriyet Daily News*, May 30, 2011. Available online: www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=syrian-opposition-gather-in-antalya-to-set-up-a-8220transitional-council8221-2011-05-30 (accessed on June 9, 2011).

Conclusion – prospects for Turkish mediation in the Middle East

The above mentioned constraints weaken Turkey's ability to mediate in Middle Eastern conflicts. However, this does not mean that Turkey's role in this field will diminish in the future. As the events in North Africa and the whole of the Middle East in 2011 have proved, there is great scope for Turkish mediation activities, using all three of the strategies mentioned – both in cases of inter-state and intra-state conflicts.

However, in order to play the role of mediator in the Middle East effectively, Turkey must fulfill some important conditions. First, the shortsighted policy focus on gaining support in the country and region as well as the use of emotional rhetoric and actions cannot outweigh a rational policy based on a benefits-costs analysis in the long term. The case of relations with Israel shows how the former kind of policy can negatively influence Turkish mediation efforts.

Second, Turkey should consider a selective approach to the conflicts in the Middle East. The pro-active policy in the region is a positive factor. However, too much activism and over-assertiveness can lead to over-extension as Turkey wants to be involved everywhere; this is true in the current turmoil in the Middle East that involves ever more states.³⁵

This is connected with the third and fourth issues. If Turkey wants to play the role of mediator in Middle East conflicts effectively, it must think about the limits of its capabilities and assess them properly.³⁶ If it decides to become involved in resolving a conflict, it should choose the right strategy. As mentioned before, choosing the *communication-facilitation strategy* does not signal that the mediating state is weak. Moreover, Turkey can show partners both in the Middle East and outside the region that it adopts a realistic approach. This is linked to the need for Turkey to act multilaterally, cooperating with other partners, especially those that have a greater impact in resolving a conflict. Turkey often acts together with countries such as Qatar, but sometimes its eagerness to conduct policy independently brings negative results (some of its proposed solutions, for example, do not win enough support – see the conflict in the Gaza Strip and the Turkish ceasefire plan). If Turkey

If Turkey wants to play the role of mediator in Middle East conflicts effectively, it must think about the limits of its capabilities and assess them properly.

³⁵ M.B. Altunışık, E. Cuhadar, op. cit., p. 53.

³⁶ Ibid.

wishes to use mediation strategies of broader scope in the region, such as embracing specific proposals for conflict resolution, it must cooperate with other partners and co-present initiatives. Only then would there be enough resources to convince the conflicting parties to come to agreement.

The final issue to be mentioned in this context is that Turkey can and has the right to conduct an independent foreign policy, and in the Middle East. At the same time it should “situate itself firmly within broader international coalitions and act collectively with Western powers”³⁷ if it wants to play a constructive role in resolving regional conflicts. It must take into consideration Western interests and Turkish obligations (connected, for instance, with NATO membership). Too independent a policy may lead to negative developments as was the case with the Iranian nuclear program. There is a danger of becoming isolated in the international arena, which precludes the success of any mediation efforts. This last issue reads like a cliché, but is quite important regarding, for example, the prospects of Turkish–EU cooperation in the region.

³⁷ Z. Öniş, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

A timely overview of contemporary security and identity in the V4

Visegrad countries, the EU and Russia: challenges and opportunities for a common security identity

By Ivo Samson, ed. Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2010. 164 pp. ISBN 978-80-89356-14-0

Several studies by academic authors and foreign policy analysts have already examined various aspects of the Visegrad Group – Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – after the watershed event of the EU accession of its constitutive countries. Experts from the region have identified that EU membership means the V4 partners are faced with both novel opportunities as well as challenges at the same time, and rightly stressed that possibilities and dilemmas equally define the choices presented by the new context of Visegrad co-operation.¹

The security dimension of Central European interactions and identity represents another specific and complex area of V4 relations. Closer examination of the security implications and the potential role of the V4 Group in the external security of the region could provide us with an insight into understanding another dimension of the multiple layers of potential contents and meanings associated with the Visegrad co-operation. Some analyses in the field have sought to cast light on the benefits of V4 interactions within the broader transatlantic security community including, but also reaching beyond, the European Union as a policy framework.²

Sources and structure

The book currently under review relies on a variety of sources – primary and secondary alike – which include official documents, public opinion surveys, sociological studies of identities and statistical data. These sources of information have been aptly combined to produce a political analysis of the complex determinants that define

¹ M. Gniazdowski, "Possibilities and constraints of the Visegrad countries co-operation within the EU," *Foreign Policy Review* Vol. 3, No. 1–2, 2005, pp. 77–96; A. Duleba, T. Strážay, "New chances, new challenges," in A. Jagodziński ed, *The Visegrad Group – A Central European constellation*, Bratislava: International Visegrad Fund, 2006.

² I. Samson, "The Visegrad Four: from loose geographic group to security internationalization?" *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* Vol. XVIII, No. 4, 2009, pp. 3–18; M. Wagrowska, "Visegrad security policy: how to consolidate its own identity, *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, 2009, pp. 31–43.

the crucial subjective (perceptions) and objective (behavior) aspects of the security identity of the Visegrad countries, both individually and also as a group, with regard to the external environment of shared interests. Some of the security challenges, emanating from various directions and of different characters, may affect the Central European partners unevenly, but the main issues identified in the second half of the book (energy policy and Russia) represent common security concerns which demand a conscious drive towards concerted responses at both V4 and EU levels.

The book comprises five larger themes that set the scope and course of the investigation. The first part examines the historical and practical aspects of identity in each Central European country. After establishing lessons and motivations from national histories as well as the affinities and differences of the Visegrad countries, the key foreign policy challenges and tasks are laid out in order to draw up the inspirational baseline for Visegrad co-operation in its potential function as a regional platform for the formation of a shared security consciousness and purpose.

The sources and discernible elements of a common V4 security identity are studied and assessed in the book not in an abstract and theoretical academic perspective, but rather as a subject matter for policy analysis presented in a manageable size and written in accessible prose. One of the added values of the book comes right at the beginning (somewhat unusually) in the form of conclusions and recommendations to illustrate the underlying purpose of the investigation: the delivery of an overview and guidance for academic experts, policy analysts and practitioners as well. It seems to have been intended to help all possible interested parties from within and outside the region to successfully navigate their way through the issues of security policy conditions, considerations and choices in contemporary Central Europe through the lenses of the Visegrad Group.

National interests and the question of security consensus among the V4 countries

In search of the positions of V4 states with respect to international security challenges, the authors of this composite study undertake to assemble the elements of an applicable framework of reference in the light of the main events and features of the last couple of years. The exploration of what unites and divides Visegrad countries in the context of their external security opens with a review of the public perception of global security challenges in the four Central European countries examined and then probes into the definition of their national interests and the frequent lack of consensus among the V4 on security matters.

In this respect, it must be recalled that the disparate reactions of V4 governments to the sinister Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008 served as a sobering reminder of the divisions that can characterize the EU as a whole and the Visegrad

subset of its Member States even with shared memories of the recent history of Russian hegemony. The crisis highlighted not only the principal source of weakness, which precluded the possibility of a unified EU response, even given the grave and perilous consequences for the security of the European states, but also the frailty of Visegrad co-operation on foreign and security policy in its Eastern dimension. While effective co-ordination has evolved among the V4 countries in other aspects, the Visegrad Group markedly failed to attain and sustain solid ground for concerted foreign policy when it was most needed in times of a real “stress test” of European security in the near abroad to the east of the Union. Their disparate answers to the Russian military intervention in Georgia sharply exposed the potential depth of disagreement even on such significant issues of strategic consequence for the larger Eastern European region and its relations with NATO as well. Although the book makes brief reference to this highly disquieting example of division within the V4 along national lines, it could have elaborated the lesson to be learnt from Visegrad disunity in the face of a crisis of such gravity in the Eastern Neighborhood of the Union.

In contrast to the occasionally very diverging Eastern directions of the foreign policies of Visegrad countries, the transatlantic relationship represents an important dimension in which the V4 security identities, aspirations and positions generally tend to coincide. The Atlanticism (i.e. the Atlantic commitment) of the Central and Eastern European countries from the Baltic to the Black Sea remains a centerpiece of their declared foreign policy allegiances and public stances despite casual deviations by certain V4 governments as mere examples of “pragmatic policies.” The commitment and importance given to transatlantic relations may seem to, and in fact occasionally does, compete with “loyalties” towards the European Union in the joint pursuit of its Common Foreign and Security Policy. The resulting actual or perceived acts of disloyalty of [some] Visegrad states (and other Member States) may contribute to the disruption or prevent the formation of a united EU position on international foreign and security policy issues. The book rightly points out that the Atlanticism of the V4 countries can be traced back to the fundamental sources of the sense of (in)security in Central Europe. Only NATO, with the United States as its most central and sustaining pillar is able to offer an appropriate remedy in the form of “classic” security guarantees of collective defense. It continues to hold highest currency in Central and Eastern European security considerations even as the credibility of collective response might seem to the sceptics ever more diluted by every wave of NATO enlargement.

The analysis clearly points out that the foreign policy positions of the V4 countries with regard to their Eastern and Southern neighborhoods have demonstrated more diversity than their more generally recognizable and, at least rhetorically, more coherent transatlantic engagement. Both the Eastern and Southern directions revealed important cracks in any conceivable unitary Visegrad approach to these

adjacent areas of European neighborhood. The Eastern dimension of V4 co-ordination has much better prospects for improvement since the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was conceived and introduced into the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) of the EU. On the Southern flank, concerted V4 engagements (such as the transfer of Central European experience in democratic transition, privatization and regional co-operation) in the Western Balkans are certainly possible as long as they do not involve Kosovo, whose status stubbornly splits the Visegrad group.

In the next and larger section of the book, the analysis shifts its focus to the pursued benefits and expected dividends of Visegrad co-operation in its security dimension from the point of view of every participant. Each partner is systematically covered in terms of defining concept and practice, and their perceptions and expectations of national, regional as well as continental security parameters.

V4 and energy security

This slender, but focused volume explores questions concerning policy initiatives and/or responses to the complex issues of Central Europe and its energy supplies, Central Europe and Russia together, and the possible position and role of the V4 Group in EU–Russia relations. In addressing these questions, the book provides a useful and comprehensive summary of national security policies enabling the reader to learn the motives and rationales that lie behind the foreign policy choices and decisions with regard to the major issues of energy policy and Russia.

In the sections that examine these more focused and practical elements of security policy challenges, the analysis first dives into the geopolitical depth of the energy dilemma of Central Europe. It explains the defining conditions of energy security in the region and the decisive role Russia has been empowered to exercise in this respect. Energy security must be conceived of and understood in the broader context of the subject, and on a European scale that shapes the contours of possible alternative solutions to the current situation in the Visegrad states. In line with the rest of the study, the assessment of the strategic situation takes into consideration the political and economic determinants and the feasibility of various energy policy choices considering the different avenues and more diversified sources that may be available to the V4 region. Since regional moves alone cannot secure diversification and liberate Central Europe from its energy dependence on external Russian natural gas supplies, adequate solutions require the involvement of the larger community of European states beyond the V4 group. This places the question of the energy security of the Visegrad countries in the wider context of evolving policy initiatives and appropriate measures at the EU level. The enlarged framework for the examination of energy policy emancipation in the Visegrad region needs to include an appraisal of EU–Russia energy relations.

The relations between the EU and Russia present an interesting range of issues on the limits and results of co-operation along pragmatic and/or principled foreign policy lines pursued by the EU towards its largest immediate Eastern neighbor. From the perspective of this volume, the place and conceivable role (if any) of the V4 group in the EU–Russian relationship remains the most relevant question. The book pays particular attention to the instructive case of Poland in the EU–Russian gas and oil nexus as the largest participant in Visegrad co-operation and as the country constituting the strategic energy corridor between the eastern sources and western (primarily German) consumers.

The V4 and Russia

Beyond the implications of the unhealthy and risky exposure of the Visegrad countries – though in varying degrees – to eastern hydrocarbon energy sources, Russian foreign policy looms large on the list of variables that principally determine and condition the security policy decisions and the way they are interpreted in the four Central European countries. In a separate section, the book takes on the challenging task of providing a comprehensive, but contained analysis of V4 relations with Russia within the limits of one chapter. The resulting analysis offers a systematic examination of the perceived threat relating to the pursuit of Russian foreign policy with regard to its aims as well as the ways and means of its conduct in Central Europe. The strategic direction and implementation of Russian foreign policy will be assessed not only in the immediate Central European region but through other relevant arenas and aspects of international politics that could directly or indirectly affect the prospects for security in the Visegrad countries.

The book highlights the broader strategic and extra-regional context for the evaluation of chances for the successful promotion and preservation of V4 security interests with regard to Russian positions or aspirations. The strategic issues that constitute this context are identified in three areas of international bargaining between the West and Russia: the US–Russian “reset,” the prolonged Western military campaign in Afghanistan and the fate of the Iranian nuclear armament program. The Visegrad countries are neither participants in nor the objects of the political process of bargaining on these matters of strategic significance. They are rather the subjects and recipients of the political and strategic consequences arising from the concessions and compromises struck with Russia in the interest of its effective co-operation on issues of perceived higher strategic significance for Europe and, more importantly, for the USA.

In addition to explaining the relative weight of V4 interests in comparison with the overwhelming Western/US strategic concerns that require Russian co-operation in their elimination or, at least, containment, the chapter on Central Europe and

Russia serves as a useful reminder of the perception of Russia as a regional security policy challenge and the importance of coherence in order to overcome differences among EU members over the common European policy towards Russia. A unified EU stance can hardly be achieved if consensus is difficult to obtain even among the V4 partners.

At the end of this section, one of the most interesting contributions of the book summarizes the complexity and the competing arguments leading to a desirable and possible policy consensus on Russia and its acceptable interests in Central Europe and in its Eastern neighborhood.

The difficulties of conceptualization of Central Europe and its security identity

The final section of the book turns to the ambitious enterprise of conceptualizing “the common element” in the security identity of the V4 countries. In seeking a systematic framework of interpretation, this section not only presents the central questions of a fulsome and perceptive discourse on conceptual grounds for the proper understanding and definition of shared Visegrad needs and aims. In the course of this conceptual investigation, the book duly reaches three sets of conclusions. The first one draws attention to the particularities of the local (regional and national) perceptions of the current conditions and tendencies of the global landscape generally identified as security threats. The second conclusion defines the combination and coincidence of security interests of the Visegrad countries that can form and hold the core of shared identity together. The third conclusion underlines the continued prominence of the transatlantic bond in the security of V4 partners which in itself does not guarantee full or sustained agreement in the Visegrad quartet. Any real consensus among the Visegrad countries on NATO must extend to all the political and security matters of alliance policy, inside and outside the transatlantic institutional structure. These include the internal operation (political consultation and the decision-making process) and external relations that NATO shares with third countries and other organizations.

The final closing observations correspond to the issues outlined in the conclusions and recommendations found in the opening section of the book. The two sets of conclusions – at the start and at the end – combined together, envelop the study and highlight questions to be recalled at later phases of the development of a common Visegrad identity in the security policy of the Central European countries in question.

Csaba Törő
senior research fellow, Hungarian Institute of International Affairs

Deconstructing development discourse: buzzwords and fuzzwords

By Andrea Cornwall, Deborah Eade, eds, Practical Action Publishing, Oxfam GB, 2010. 321 pp. ISBN 978-1-85339-706-6

“Systematically balanced cooperative action,” and “comprehensively mobilized rural participation” (p. 306) are two of the 38,316 possible development programs generated from 56 development buzzwords and fuzzwords arranged into four rows of adverbs, adjectives and nouns. Please, visit the Oxfam site, download the book, and play this game. Unlike Orwellian newspeak trying to eliminate words in order to prevent crimethink, this game illustrates the emergence of an unlimited “developmentspeak” allowing phrases, projects and programs to be created without any meaning. The more one engages in the game, the more one realizes how real (and terrifying) this game is and how real these combinations of words sound.

In order to expose the hollow (or overfull) nature of various buzzwords in the “development” discourse, Andrea Cornwall and Deborah Eade decided to put together thirty contributions from authors with academic or practical backgrounds. The result was the publication in 2007 of a special issue of *Development in Practice*, which was then turned into a book, *Deconstructing development discourse: buzzwords and fuzzwords*, published last year by Practical Action Publishing in association with Oxfam.

The anthology is based on the notion that “language does matter for development” (p. 2) and it “reflects a shared concern about the way in which buzzwords serve to numb the critical faculties of those who end up using them.” (p. ix) Most of the texts follow a similar structure, engaging in something like a genealogy of the concept followed by a critical account based on its use in the real world of “development” and usually conclude on a positive note that the term may serve well if used wisely. Perceived as a critical encyclopedia of “development” jargon, the book is useful for anyone requiring a short introduction to the more radical criticism found within “development” studies.

However, unlike *The development dictionary*, which was according to Cornwall a “landmark publication” (p. 1), this book does not attempt to write “an obituary to the age of development,” rather it suffices for the editors to leave the reader “feeling less than equivocal about taking for granted the words that frame the world-making projects of the development enterprise” (p. 1). Although the book certainly succeeds in this endeavor, it remains an open question as to whether this mainstreaming of deconstruction does not allow for another round or decade of “development” failures. Only one quote of Escobar’s *Encountering development* clearly indicates that

most of the authors do not seek “alternatives to development” but that their goal is to offer a critique which could lead to some kind of improvement in “development” practice.

Cornwall in her introductory contribution suggests several strategies for dealing with the buzzwords. The first is similar to Aram Ziai’s suggestion – stop using them and replace them with “captivating new alternatives” (p. 12). There is, however, no guarantee that they would not become new buzzwords. The second strategy is first to view the fact that mainstream “developers” have accepted radical terms such as empowerment in terms of success and then to use their current ambiguity for subversive aims. Thirdly, “constructive deconstruction” is supposed to “make evident the variant meanings that popular development buzzwords carry” (p. 14). The aim is to reveal ideological differences in using the same words. This clearly involves the continued use of buzzwords, which is also the case with the fourth strategy – putting them into different Laclauian “chains of equivalences.” The buzzword in question gains its meaning depending on the words surrounding it. The word freedom thus means something completely different when occurring in a chain consisting of good governance, accountability or reform than it does when found in a chain consisting of social justice, solidarity or participation.

Contributors follow their editors and mostly try to retrieve the more radical meanings of the buzzwords. There is not enough space here to deal with all the contributions. I shall not mention the excellent chapters by, for instance, Pablo Alejandro Leal (Chapter 8 on participation), Elizabeth Harrison (Chapter 25 on corruption), or Thandika Mkandawire (Chapter 26 on good governance), and instead will focus on some common issues and some problematic points. The most prominent author, Gilbert Rist (Chapter 2), expands on arguments developed in his famous *History of development*. Ironically, his “down-to-earth definition” (p. 22) reveals the theoretical ambiguity of the book – “[t]he essence of ‘development’ is the general transformation and destruction of the natural environment and of social relations in order to increase the production of commodities (goods and services) geared, by means of market exchange, to effective demand” (p. 23). On the one hand the “catchword had proved so helpful in sanctifying so many different ventures” (p. 21) being a metaphorical “empty plus” as Aram Ziai has called it, on the other hand the definition by Rist based on Durkheim’s positivism places it outside the post-structuralist tradition. Though “deconstructing” occurs in the title, there is not a single quote by Jacques Derrida throughout the edited volume.

Quite a few authors show the discursive shift towards neo-liberalism within the “development” world. Naomi Alfini and Robert Chambers (Chapter 3) used software called Automap to count words and pairs of words in six UK government White Papers from 1960 to 2006. The analysis shows, among other things, a shift from “industrialization and import substitution to agriculture and cash-crop exports” (p. 30).

This pattern is observable within the realm of “social protection” (Guy standing – Chapter 5). The neo-liberal turn led to the need for an “active labor market policy” distinguishing itself from the previous allegedly “passive” policy. The same distinction can be seen in the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor and the notion of a “moral hazard,” “dependency” or “social protection as a productive factor.” The right to unconditional support from society is not a right one could claim anymore. In order to avoid moral hazard or to prevent dependency, the undeserving poor need to be activated to deserve support. Social protection thus becomes a productive factor, which leads to measurable efficiency.

Another common feature of various buzzwords is their radical past and their incorporation by the main actors into the “development” industry. Evelina Dagnino (Chapter 9) writes about “a perverse confluence” of the buzzword “citizenship.” While for the social movements in Latin America, the notion of citizenship had a strong cultural dimension of identities, subjectivities and the right to difference and expected citizens to be active social subjects, in the neo-liberal perspective, citizenship is primarily understood as the integration of individuals into the market. This re-signification of the term then “erodes the sense of public responsibility and public interest that had been so hard-won in the democratizing struggles of Brazil’s past” (p. 108).

Similarly, the term “empowerment” analyzed by Srilatha Batliwala (Chapter 10) has a radical past running from the Protestant reformation to liberation theology, popular education or black power and feminist movements. From these, “the term was hijacked, in the 1990s, [...] converted from a collective to an individualistic process” (p. 112). This process, in the case of the women’s movement in India, happened through the so-called self-help groups which instead of shifting the social power relations “engaged in little else but savings and lending” (p. 117). Supported by international agencies and governments these easily quantifiable projects replaced more radical multi-faceted approaches.

Miguel Pickard (Chapter 12) shows how the notion of “partnership” has changed over time among Mexican NGOs. From the essentially paternalistic relation between the “developed” and “underdeveloped” the term was supposed to denote the change that took place throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The shift during the 1990s towards more government funding led to a demand for clearly identifiable “results.” Indicators of success were made up and the Northern agencies slid back into their role of setting the priorities.

There are a few objections to be made. Firstly, even though the authors try to deconstruct “development” buzzwords, they tend to use them unproblematically, focusing only on the one they are dealing with (Robin Broad, in a very good Chapter 29 on the paradigm maintenance in the World Bank, being a sympathetic exception). This certainly would be a very difficult task, but the use of the D-word by Eghosa

Osaghae in an otherwise critical Chapter 28 on fragile states is striking. He writes about “developing countries” with or without capacities to “promote and consolidate development” (p. 284) and about those Third World states that “remain afloat” and “have in fact been effective drivers of the development process” (p. 287) as if this should have a positive connotation. A similar “developmentalist” approach is present in Willem Buiter’s Chapter 21 on “country ownership.” Here the reader is told that, “[m]ost of the time, however, bad luck does not explain why a country is confronted with the programs and conditionality associated with external assistance. The most frequent reasons are bad institutions, bad institutional leadership, and bad policies” (p. 226). The accomplices from the North seem to be missing from this picture.

The gravest deficiency of most of the text is explicitly articulated by Deborah Eade in her otherwise very good Chapter 19 on “capacity building.” After exploring its radical past and current neo-liberal appropriation while also pointing to the complicity of NGOs in the depoliticization of social movements, she concludes that “disengagement is not an option” (p. 212). Disengagement certainly is not an option, but rather than reforming the “development” apparatus, one should support “alternatives to development.”

That said, Cornwall and Eade have put together a very useful anthology, which deals with most of the current concepts within “development” and one can only recommend this leftist critique without the most radical consequences to the students of “development” studies to have something to begin with.

Tomáš Profant

Contributors

Michele Comelli is a senior fellow at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), in Rome, where he deals with the EU institutions and with European foreign and security policy, notably towards EU's neighbours. He has widely published on these topics, in Italy and abroad, including in peer-reviewed journals, such as *European Foreign Affairs Review* and *The International Spectator*. He has recently edited a book, *The European Neighbourhood Policy and the Southern Mediterranean*. Michele Comelli has taken part in several international research projects and is currently a member of the steering committee of two EU-supported projects, EU4SEAS and LISBOAN. He has worked at the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) in Berlin and at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) in Stockholm within the "European Foreign and Security Policy Studies Programme." Michele Comelli is also a lecturer on European security policies at Roma Tre University.

Katarína Pevná studied political science at Comenius University in Bratislava and is currently continuing her studies there for a PhD in political science. She focuses on political movements in Arab countries and the phenomenon of authoritarianism and the prospects for democratization in these countries. Her other interests include studying radical and moderate Islamist movements and their impact on political systems in Arab countries. She has participated in several academic conferences.

Erzsébet N. Rózsa graduated from the Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest (Departments of English Studies, Semitic and Arabic Studies, Iranian Studies) and received her PhD in international relations from the Corvinus University of Budapest. She has been working at the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs since 1990, where she is Executive Director and Senior Research Fellow. She is also a lecturer and Head of the Department of International Studies at Zrínyi Miklós National Defense University. Her research interests include political, social and security developments in the Middle East, Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and nuclear non-proliferation.

Ioannis Saratsis is the Communications Manager for Hudson Institute. In addition, he is also Hudson's intern coordinator and a research associate with the Center for Latin American Studies. He holds a B.A. degree from Bryant University in International Studies and an M.A. degree from the University of Sussex in International Relations, focusing on ethnic nationalist conflict in the Balkans. Ioannis is tri-lingual in Greek, English, and Spanish, and has lived in the US, Greece, Mexico, Japan, and the United Kingdom.

Adam Szymański is a political scientist and assistant professor at the Institute of Political Science, University of Warsaw. Between 2004 and 2011 he also worked as an analyst at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM). He has been awarded a number of scholarships, including Program Start 2007 of the Foundation of Polish Science, project Modern University (2010), as well as those provided by universities in Bonn, Konstanz, Vienna, Berlin (FU), Ankara (METU) and Istanbul (Istanbul University, Koç University). Szymański is a specialist in the enlargement of the European Union, Turkey's political system and foreign policy – particularly concerning relations with the EU. He is the author of a number of publications, for instance *Constitutional system of Turkey*, Warsaw 2006; *Between Islam and Kemalism. Problem of democracy in Turkey*, Warsaw 2008), in addition to various articles, analyses and reports on European integration, and the political systems of selected states and international relations.