Impartial, Inclusive, Influential

GCSP Policy Paper n°13

April 2011

Transition in Arab States: Time for an "EU-Master Plan"

by Walter Feichtinger

Key Points

- Since the end of January 2011 Arab countries have been confronted with the biggest upheaval since their establishment. Besides all political aspirations towards democracy, political participation, rule of law or civil rights one should not forget root causes that have led to these revolutions. Population growth, a disproportionally high number of young people, unemployment, less developed industry and agriculture, as well as migration pressure from sub-Saharan countries, are remaining and unresolved challenges.

- The process of transformation will not be clear cut – we are facing a long transitional period of about 20 years with different speed, intensity and outcome in the affected countries. Disappointment leading to protest and civil unrest can be expected and will put newly installed governments under strong and permanent pressure.

- Europe, as a neighbor to the Arab World, will likely be the most affected region. This will happen in economic, energy, social, as well as security/political terms. Therefore, it is in Europe's highest interest to provide any assistance possible to bring the revolutions to a good end. The political shift in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region will be of similar importance for Europe as the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the former Soviet Union were.

- The EU is facing serious internal and external challenges in tackling the revolutions on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea. Internally coherent and cohesive action is needed; while externally the biggest problem could be to (re)gain credibility and trust because of the long period of good relations with the former autocratic regimes and leaders. The decisive point will be to change the strategic approach from containment to inclusive partnership. A new Overall Strategy is required – the time is ripe for an "EU-Master Plan".

Don't forget root causes

The revolts in Tunisia and Egypt were effective in ousting the regimes of Ben Ali and Mubarak, bringing rumor and protests to Yemen, Syria and other places and starting a violent revolution against Muammar Gaddafi – but it remains to be seen whether the abrupt achieved cohesion among the protesters will overcome the political transformation and bridge long existing gaps between the various groups and factions in these countries. Demonstrations in Tunisia, and also in Egypt, indicate that there is limited cohesion and tolerance within politics and civil society when it comes to tackling daily problems and finding lasting solutions.

Looking at the Arab World one has to keep in mind – besides all political deficits and problems – other root causes for the uprisings and revolutions. People are no longer willing to accept corruption, political exclusion, denial of civil rights or absence of perspective due to unemployment. However, we know from other countries that these points are the real challenges. To meet the needs of ordinary people is of highest importance in order to gain common ground and to get public support for substantial social and political reforms.[1]

proportion of young people.[4] Unrest gets more momentum if members of the elite see themselves as marginalized due to their lack of economic participation and access to jobs. In addition, empirical findings indicate that where liberal democracy emerged before a large youth-bulge declined – as in Colombia, Ecuador, Fiji, India, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Venezuela and others – regimes failed to stabilize, retreating to less democratic practices and institutions of governance.[5]

Selected projected figures of population growth, the situation of the labor market, the slow decrease of the youth bulge, and urbanization indicate the tough situation Arab countries will be facing in the next 10-15 years (see table below and additional figures in *GCSP Policy Paper* n° 12, March 2011, by G. Herd).

Economic development and job creation are therefore of utmost urgency to any government in place in the future. Many of the existing jobs are of low quality, underpaid, insecure and without respect for basic labor standards or representation of workers.[6]

Table: Current and Projected Population Figures

	Algeria	Egypt	Libya	Morocco	Tunisia	Jordan	Saudi Arabia	Syria
Pop. (mio) (1) 2010	35.423	84.474	6.546	32.381	10.884	6.472	26.246	22.505
2030	44.726	110.907	8.519	39.529	12.127	8.616	35.545	30.560
Working Age (1) 2010	68.4%	63.2%	65.6%	66.9%	70.4%	62.4%	65.1%	62%
2030	69%	66.8%	70.3%	67.4%	68.6%	68.9%	68.7%	68.3%
Youth (2) 2010	44.9%	46.1%	42.7%	36.7%	41.1%	48.5%	48.4%	49.5%
2030	32%	37.3%	35.3%	33.5%	28.4%	37.6%	35.4%	36.2%
Urbanisation (3) 2010	66.3%	43.3%	77.9%	58.2%	67.3%	78.5%	82.1%	55.7%
2030	76.2%	50.9%	82.9%	69.2%	75.2%	82%	86.2%	65.4%

(1) Source: *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision Population Database*,
    http://esa.un.org/unpp, accessed on 25 February 2011.
(2) Share of People between 15-29 years in relation to people in working age (15-64).
(3) *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision and World Urbanization Prospects: The 2009 Revision*,
    http://esa.un.org/wup2009/unup/, accessed on 21 February 2011.

Most of the Arab countries are confronted with at least two out of four demographic risk factors: a high proportion of young people and rapid urbanization. In addition, the two other factors can also become important – scarcity of arable land and fresh water and the effects of HIV/AIDS.[2] According to *World Population Prospects*, Egypt, Tunisia and Libya will still have a disproportionally configured population in 2030.[3] Of course, the youth bulge will dwindle, but the cohort of people aged 15 to 29 will still exceed 40% of the working age population until the mid 2020s. Substantiated by empirical findings this is a crucial figure for the stability and prosperity of developing and/or transforming countries. As evidence shows, there is a strong link between the likelihood of civil unrest and the

Another key factor is the increasing pressure of migration from sub Saharan Africa. This region will be one of the most affected in the world by the negative impacts of environmental change. MENA states are already transit or destination countries for people fleeing from that region. This trend will increase as water stress, loss of arable land, droughts and desertification increase. On average, more than 60% of the population of MENA countries lives in and around cities. It is inevitable that, mainly due to irregular migration and transition from an agriculture-based economy to a primarily industrial one, "informal settlements" and slums are growing, with the effect of worsening safety and security conditions.[7]

Transformation – a question of decades, not months

We may be at the beginning of a revolutionary period bringing not only Arab leaders to the test, but also authoritarian regimes worldwide. There is already discussion of whether the upheavals will follow the French Revolution-model of 1789 or the "soft model" experienced in Eastern Europe in1989. No one can predict how "strong and stable" existing regimes really are and how much pressure they are willing or able to exert on their people to stay in power. The example of Gaddafi shows that there is a high price to be paid for freedom, but it is a matter of fact that the clock cannot be turned back.

It is not expected that the incumbent interim political bodies in the revolutionary states can tackle all of the problems that led to the revolutions promptly. What can be done immediately is to signal efforts for greater political participation and to prove it during the upcoming period of elaborating basic documents (i.e. constitution, laws) and providing free and fair elections. However, no one can guarantee that the living standards of the masses will be better in the immediate future. Instead, some experts expect that the economic situation will worsen, as usually happens in times of political upheaval.[8] Egypt, Tunisia and the other Arab states that are concerned by revolt are not isolated. Indeed, the fighting in Libya has had a strong impact on the labor market – bringing back migrant workers to Egypt, with no chance to find adequate jobs in their home country. Even if there is a rapid outcome in Libya – which cannot be expected now – it remains to be seen in what condition the oil producing industry will be in after a return to "normality".

As we saw in many countries after World War II, transformation from authoritarian to democratic political systems takes time, patience of the people, vast resources, and external assistance. According to the findings of Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhard, who did intensive research on fixing failed states, it is of highest importance to have a citizen-based approach to state building with a new legal compact between citizen, state and the market, not a top-down imposition of the state.[9] That approach would require a double compact – one between the state and its citizens (providing and enforcing citizenship rights, embedded in a coherent set of rules) and another between the state and the international community to ensure adherence to international norms, standards of accountability and transparency.[10] The next steps of the interim political bodies will show whether they are going that way or not. The quick fix in Egypt to adapt the existing constitution instead of elaborating a new one – as some groups have suggested and wanted – sets a first question mark on how transformative the process can be and whether it will meet the expectations of both the majority and minorities. Achieving consensus on the future and the aims of the country will be decisive for the mid- and long-term development and stability of these countries.

If there is no sufficient and satisfying offer to the young people, generally three options remain to them: emigration to the West, affiliation with a fundamentalist party or organization, or joining a guerilla group.[11] Emigration will still be an option as it was in the past. Some countries, like Morocco, have developed a specific political and legal framework for immigrants to ease tensions on the local labor market and to avoid additional social problems. In this context emigration can be seen as a safety valve, with the additional benefit of the inflow of remittances increasing to an estimated 8% of GDP in the case of Morocco in 2009.[12] But, emigration cannot be a solution to all problems.

MENA and the EU

It seems obvious that the transformation of Arab countries from authoritarian to democratic states requires external assistance. The extreme form we can see now is Libya where a "Coalition of the Willing" is bombing Gaddafi's troops in order to prevent them from killing Libyan people. No one knows what comes next, but it is clear that the overwhelming need will be in the economic, political, humanitarian and social fields. The international community is trying hard to address the urgent needs – but it will be just as important to address mid- and long-term requirements in order to accompany and to support a peaceful transformation.

This is the second compact Ghani and Lockhard described in their findings on state building efforts – the compact between the state and the international community.[13] There cannot be a plan following the concept of "one size fits all". The starting points in the various countries are too different for that approach. What the countries have in common is the envisioned end state – democracy, pluralism, the rule of law, human rights and social justice.[14] Division of labor and a shared vision of the desired outcome will also be necessary among the international community to shoulder existing and forthcoming challenges on the road to success.

The MENA states are neighbors to Europe. The Mediterranean Sea is not a border – it is a common space. Not long after the fall of the Iron Curtain, it became obvious that developments in that region would have strong effects on Europe directly and immediately. However, it was not evident to everyone because the wars in former Yugoslavia absorbed most attention. A structured cooperation between the European Union and the neighboring countries in the Mediterranean Region was established in 1995 by the launching of the Barcelona Process. It was not really a success story due to limited action and constraints on both sides, but the process was restarted in 2008. Following a French initiative, the Union for the Mediterranean was founded with the aim of promoting stability and prosperity throughout the region. Twenty-seven EU member states and sixteen partner countries from North Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans agreed on intensifying cooperation and setting up a secretariat. Despite all hopes and aspirations, the biennial summit of Heads of State and Government could not be held in 2010 because of the serious tensions between Israel and the Arab partners following the Gaza War.

The EU may be well aware of the realities concerning the deficits and lack of efficiency of the EU-Mediterranean cooperation. The declaration following the Extraordinary European Council on 11 March 2011 stated that "…the

European Union also stands ready to review the missions of the Union for the Mediterranean, with the objective of promoting democracy and fostering stability in the region".

However, the key problems within this framework will remain; in particular, the shadow of the three long lasting conflicts (Israel-Palestine, Turkey-Cyprus, Western Sahara) that have hampered real progress. Even if "…The European Union is conscious of the wider political and economic impact of these events on the wider region and calls for reactivating the Middle East Peace Process…",[15] this does not mean that the urgent problems can be tackled in a proper manner. It will be a huge challenge to find a way to overcome or to bypass these persisting blockages in order to assist the re-establishment of governments and societies.

Looking at the essential problems for future cooperation, three interrelated complexes can be identified: a) different interests and approaches within the EU towards the MENA region or single countries; b) the above-mentioned conflicts among the Arab countries-group; and c) a limited will for collaboration or, in other words, a complex competition between these countries.

As stressed in many strategic arrangements, the most important point will be to achieve a real partnership and to avoid post-colonial perceptions, feelings and behavior. For Europe, it will also be necessary to (re)gain trust on the Arab side, as most EU member states have collaborated with the old authoritarian regimes for so long. They have to keep in mind what a professor and spokeswoman of the Libyan rebels said just before the air campaign against Gaddafi's troops began: "… we will never forget the people who stood with us and the people who betrayed us".[16]

The EU is therefore facing a double challenge – to achieve consensus and cohesion within the EU, as well as to develop an appropriate and comprehensive strategy for the MENA region. As the disputes around Europe's engagement in Libya show, consensus on foreign policy and EU leadership is still lacking– and some countries like France may be over-ambitious. Intra-Arab tensions and contests will also be an impediment to future development and prosperity.

A "Master Plan" for the establishment of a real partnership
It will not be easy for the EU to find an appropriate way to tackle all of the challenges already on the table or that will be expected. Different and sometimes contradictory expectations, interests, historical experiences or ambitions will accompany all political actors and civil societies. Hence, a clear vision is needed on both sides (EU and MENA countries) to achieve progress and to pave a promising way forward. The most challenging and important factor may be a change of mindset – to replace strategic thinking dominated by "containment" with creativity and thinking about inclusive partnerships and collaboration.

The call for a "Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity"[17] by EU representatives sounds good, but concrete and measurable steps and actions are needed to make it run. The chapters developed already in the framework of the Barcelona Process are still in place in the Union for the Mediterranean: Politics and Security, Economics and Trade, Socio-Cultural Affairs and Justice and Interior Affairs. This can provide a useful structure for further engagement. The EU also has plenty of experience in supporting institution building, security sector reform, economic and social reforms, fostering civil society and enhancing regional cooperation. The transition of former European authoritarian regimes of the Warsaw Pact and the transformation and peacebuilding processes after the Yugoslav wars were a good training field for developing concepts, mechanisms and instruments and making the EU fit for these challenges.

Taking also into account experiences from the Mediterranean Cooperation, the EU should be able to develop a set of adequate measures and instruments to accompany the Arab neighbors through their change. A general framework exists already by the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), established in 2003, offering EU-neighbors a privileged relationship building upon a mutual commitment to common values. A special fund – the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument – was also designed in 2007 to provide financial support.[18] An additional element may be found in the African Peace Facility – established in 2004, the EU has channeled € 740 million into it for developing and supporting African efforts in peacebuilding, peace operations, early response mechanisms, and other unforeseen needs.[19] It is time now to identify and reconsider all options and to adjust them to the post-revolutionary situation.

In this context, the EU is asked to identify itself and to articulate where it wants to go. The Declaration of the Extraordinary Council of 11 March 2011 can be seen as a first step to an overall strategy: "All countries in the region need to undertake or accelerate political and economic reforms. The European Union will support all steps towards democratic transformation, political systems that allow for peaceful change, growth and prosperity, and a more proportionate distribution of the benefits of the performance".[20] However facts will count, not declarations. Bearing in mind the above-mentioned underlying problems, it will be necessary to intensify economic cooperation and trade, support youth employment, set up transformation programs and consider visa regulations, as well as smart migration models. To provide assistance must not mean to throw money at a problem. The best qualified people should sit together and work on a master plan to detail the Declaration and make it work. However, the EU should stick to an accompanying role – understanding that the principle of local ownership is vital to the transformation process. That means, in other words, that new governments have to assume responsibility and define their relationship towards the EU and other external actors.
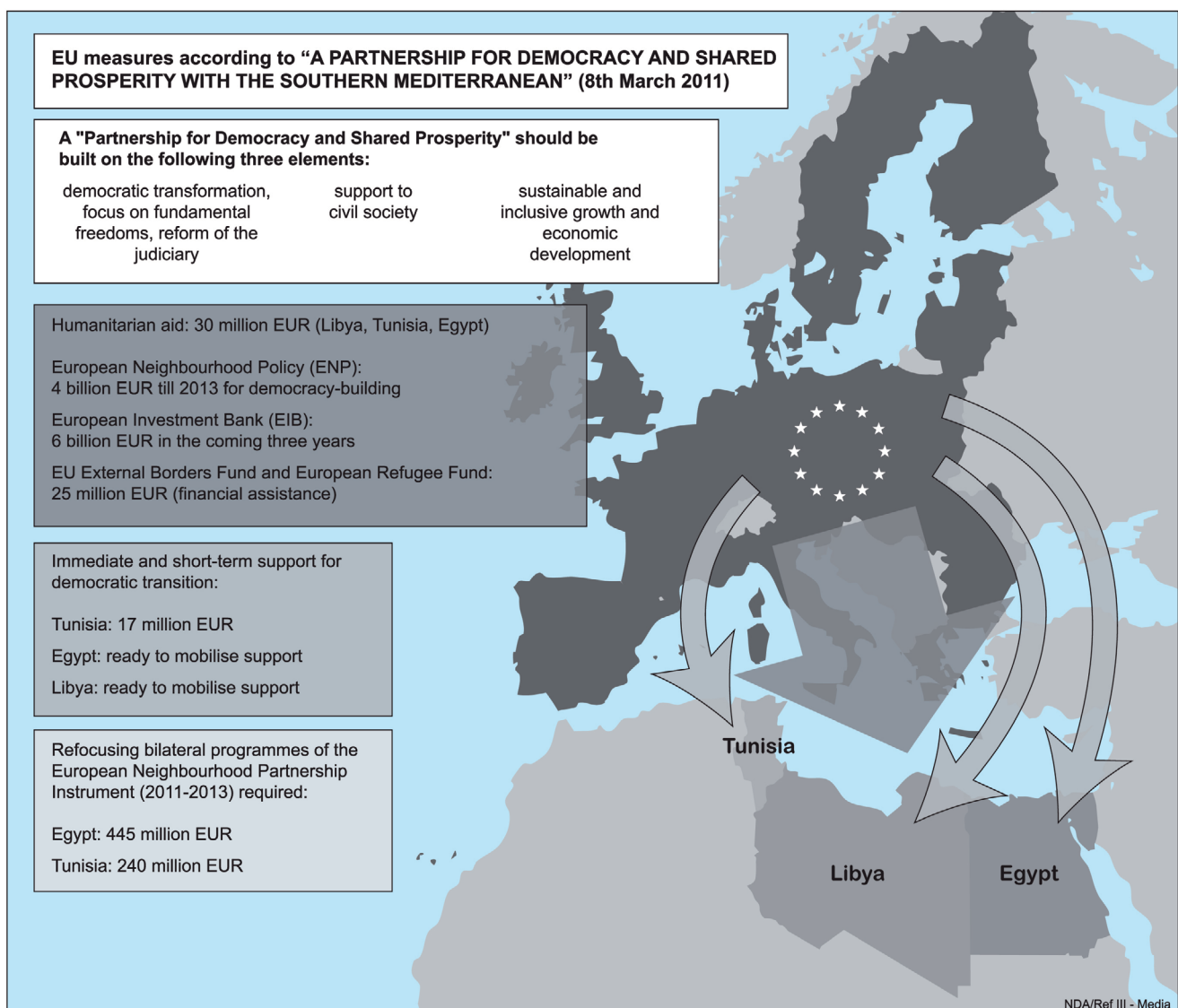
As the developments in MENA countries are so different in time, content, background and specific agendas, the EU has to observe and collaborate with each country case by case. This can provide appropriate means and solutions in different situations. Nonetheless, every single action has

to fit in the overall strategy that encompasses the whole region. The EU should also be clear in its statements and speak frankly about what is acceptable and what is not. Some guiding principles from the EU's Stabilization and Association Process for the Western Balkan countries can be taken as a model for achieving the desired "democratic end state". Further, the peacebuilding measures practiced by the Union vis-à-vis the political leaderships in the post-war territories in Southeast Europe have demonstrated the important impact that policies of conditionality can have on daily action.

After World War II many European states were enabled to recover and to transform by the US-donated European Recovery Program, the so-called "Marshal Plan". The MENA region is facing a similar challenge and also needs to rely on the international community. The EU is gaining status as an actor on the global stage, spending huge amounts on international recovery programs, development and humanitarian assistance. Taking into account the enormous importance of MENA countries to Europe, this could be a great opportunity to develop an "EU-Master Plan" in close cooperation with the international community. This overall strategy could not only be pivotal for future relationships, but also put pressure on the EU itself to move forward in establishing a Common Foreign and Security Policy. If not now – when?

NB: The views expressed in this paper are entirely and solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the GCSP.

EU measures according to "A PARTNERSHIP FOR DEMOCRACY AND SHARED PROSPERITY WITH THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN" (8th March 2011)

A "Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity" should be built on the following three elements:

| democratic transformation, focus on fundamental freedoms, reform of the judiciary | support to civil society | sustainable and inclusive growth and economic development |

Humanitarian aid: 30 million EUR (Libya, Tunisia, Egypt)

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP):
4 billion EUR till 2013 for democracy-building

European Investment Bank (EIB):
6 billion EUR in the coming three years

EU External Borders Fund and European Refugee Fund:
25 million EUR (financial assistance)

Immediate and short-term support for democratic transition:

Tunisia: 17 million EUR

Egypt: ready to mobilise support

Libya: ready to mobilise support

Refocusing bilateral programmes of the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (2011-2013) required:

Egypt: 445 million EUR

Tunisia: 240 million EUR

Tunisia

Libya

Egypt

NDA/Ref III - Media

Source: National Defense Academy – Media/Vienna, 28 March 2011

About the author
Brigadier General Walter Feichtinger is Director of the Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management at the National Defense Academy in Vienna. He was Visiting fellow at the GCSP from February to March 2011. His research interests include international conflict and crisis management as well as international and Austrian security and defence policy. His latest publications are W. Feichtinger and G. Hainzl (eds.), *EUFOR Tchad/RCA Revisited*, Schriftenreihe der Landesverteidigungsakademie, 3/2011/S, Vienna, 2011; W. Feichtinger, E. Felberbauer, and P. Jurekovic (eds.), *Failed Prevention – The Case of Georgia*, Study Group Information, Landesverteidigungsakademie, Vienna, 2010.

Endnotes
1 G. Schultink, "Comparative Environmental Policy and Risk Assessment. Implications for Risk Communication, International Conflict Resolution and National Security", in E. Petzold-Bradley, A. Carius, A. Vincze (eds.), *Responding to Environmental Conflicts: Implications for Theory and Practice*, NATO Science Partnership Sub-Series, Vol. 78, 2001, p.103.
2 L. Mastny, R.P. Cincotta, "Über den Zusammenhang zwischen Bevölkerungsentwicklung und Konflikten", in: *Worldwatch Institute* (ed.) *Zur Lage der Welt 2005. Globale Sicherheit neu Denken. Münster 2005*, p.104.
3 *World Population Prospects. The 2008 Revision Population Database*, http://esa.un.org/unpp/p2k0data.asp
4 L. Mastny, R.P. Cincotta, op.cit., p.86-88.
5 R.P. Cincotta, "Half a Chance: Youth Bulges and Transition to Liberal Democracy", in Report Issue 13, Woodrow Wilson International Center, 2008-2009, p. 11.
6 *Global Employment Trends* 2011, ILO.
7 Red Cross/Red Crescent, *World Disasters Report 2010*, Chapter 4, "Urban violence", www.ifrc.org/publicat/wdr2010/summaries.asp
8 H. Münkler, "Ereignisse, die sich nicht vergessen lassen", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 9 March 2011, p.49.
9 A. Ghani and C. Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States. A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.
10 *Ibid.*, p,8.
11 *Ibid.*, p.91.
12 K. Koser and F. Laczko (eds.), *World Migration Report 2010*, Geneva, 2010, p.136.
13 A. Ghani and C. Lockhart, op.cit.
14 Extraordinary European Council, 11 March 2011, Declaration, p.1.
15 *Ibid.*, p.6.
16 Cited in *International Herald Tribune*, 16 March 2011, p.6.
17 Extraordinary European Council, 11 March 2011, Declaration, p.5.
18 European Commission, webpage information, http://cc.europa.eu/world/enp/funding_en.htm, accessed on 30 March 2011.
19 African Peace Facility, webpage information, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/regional-cooperation/peace/index_en.htm, accessed on 30 March 2011.
20 Extraordinary European Council, 11 March 2011, Declaration, p.1.

6

On the same topic

- *GCSP Policy Paper* n°12 (March 2011):"The Great Arab Revolution: Challenges, Dilemmas and Opportunities?" by Graeme P. Herd, available at: www.gcsp.ch/Sidebar/GCSP-Papers.

- *GCSP Policy Paper* n°11 (February 2011): "The Arab Revolt: Roots and Perspectives" by Vicken Cheterian, available at: www.gcsp.ch/Sidebar/GCSP-Papers.