



**ARAB SPRINGS AND TRANSITIONS IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN:
THE EU AND CIVIL SOCIETIES ONE YEAR ON**

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Issue 1

January 2012

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Foreword

With this issue, which constitutes a follow-up to a Workshop organised in cooperation with the IFRI and held inside the Commission premises in October 2011, BEPA inaugurates its new series of publications called “Berlaymont Papers”. Its ambition is to communicate and circulate to a wider public – well beyond the Brussels “beltway” – at least part of the reflections carried out by the Bureau of European Policy Advisers.

BEPA’s work and mandate are, in fact, two-pronged. On the one hand, we work mainly with the President of the Commission and his services by providing them targeted policy advice and support. On the other, we also liaise with the outside world of experts and think tanks in order to collect additional “intelligence” while also conveying them the Commission’s view. It is a two-way street, in other words, along which BEPA acts as an interface.

These new “Berlaymont Papers” are part and parcel of such a mission. They will deal with subjects that are both high on the EU agenda and closely monitored by BEPA – mostly in collaboration with other institutes and centres for policy analysis. They will be easily readable and accessible – also from our website (http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/publications/index_en.htm) – without aiming to convey a more or less official “take” by the Commission. And they will be distributed – on demand – to all those who may be interested in receiving them, as are also our Monthly Briefs.

We look forward to your feedback.

Préface

Le BEPA inaugure une nouvelle série de publications intitulées les « Berlaymont Papers » : la première d’entre elles, de par son thème, s’inscrit dans le prolongement d’un atelier de travail organisé en octobre 2011 dans les locaux de la Commission, en coopération avec l’IFRI. L’ambition de ces publications est de cibler un public bien plus large que le seul « microcosme » bruxellois et de partager avec lui une partie au moins des réflexions menées par le Bureau des Conseillers de Politique Européenne.

Le rôle du BEPA recouvre, de fait, deux aspects distincts. D’une part, il travaille à titre principal aux côtés du Président de la Commission et de ses services en leur fournissant un appui et des conseils politiques ciblés. D’autre part, il établit des liens avec le monde des experts indépendants et des think tanks, en vue de trouver auprès d’eux des capacités d’analyse complémentaires, mais aussi de leur faire part des vues de la Commission sur un sujet donné. Dans le cadre de ce processus d’échange, le BEPA joue en quelque sorte le rôle d’interface.

Les « Berlaymont Papers » font partie intégrante de cette mission. Ils traiteront de sujets qui tout à la fois figurent parmi les priorités de l’agenda de l’Union européenne et sont suivis de près par le BEPA – le plus souvent en collaboration avec d’autres instituts et centres d’analyse politique. Ils seront d’une lecture et d’un accès aisés – y compris par le biais de notre site Web : http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/publications/index_fr.htm – et ne prétendront pas refléter la position officielle de la Commission. Ils seront diffusés à tous ceux qui en feront la demande, selon le même schéma que celui retenu pour les « Monthly Briefs ».

Dans l’attente de vos réactions,

Jean-Claude THEBAULT
Directeur Général, BEPA



Engaging civil society in the Southern Mediterranean: Seminar Summary and Conclusions

The new political realities in the Maghreb and Mashreq countries have required the EU to take a fresh look at the Union's relationship with its Southern neighbours. In response, the recently reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has put cooperation with civil society organisations (CSOs) at the heart of the EU approach to the region. It aims at giving a greater political role to non-state actors; helping CSOs develop their advocacy capacity and ability to monitor reform; reinforcing human rights dialogue; and fostering media freedom.

Objectives

In line with the ENP approach to build partnerships with societies in the neighbourhood and following on President Barroso's visits to Tunisia and Egypt in April and July 2011 respectively, BEPA in cooperation with the Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI) organised a high level seminar on "Transitions in the Southern Mediterranean: Engaging with civil society" (see programme on p. 20). The event took place on 3rd October in Brussels.

The purpose of the seminar was to engage with civil society actors from the Southern Mediterranean and to discuss with them – as well as with experts on the region and EU officials – the role that civil society can play and the EU's contribution to the transition process.

The event brought together 55 participants, including civil society actors from Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia; senior EU officials from the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council and the European External Action Service (including its EU delegations); and European think tankers.

Discussions

An open discussion on the recent and ongoing events in the Southern Mediterranean took place around three general/horizontal themes: transitions; societies; and EU contribution. More specifically, participants debated on the complexities of transitions and particularly those in the MENA region; analysed the role of civil society actors in the transition process, including discussing potential actors, the timing and methodology of intervention; and analysed how the Union can positively contribute to this process.

EU officials admitted that the West (including the EU and its Member States) had not fully understood

the dynamics in the region. "We must listen and understand before acting", pointed out Bernardino Leon, the EUSR on the Southern Mediterranean, who opened the seminar. For his part, European Commissioner Štefan Füle emphasised that the ENP is more than instruments; it is a dynamic framework within which the dialogue with our partners, including civil society, is ongoing and will continue. EU officials therefore sent a clear message of their commitment to the Southern Mediterranean region and to transition towards democracy.

In addition, representatives of the EU institutions recognised that we face a very heterogeneous region in terms of the role of the army, republican traditions, types of monarchies, and the impact of regional actors (e.g. Qatar, Turkey, and the Arab League). As participants from the region noted, there is no "Arab world"; rather we must accept the diversities of this region and speak of "Arab worlds". The revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco (countries of origin of seminar participants) are all distinct. Accordingly, the ENP approach for increased differentiation allowing each partner country to develop its links with the EU as far as its own aspirations, needs and capacities is arguably the best way for addressing challenges in the region.

Despite the fact that transition countries are at different stages of development, there are some common challenges to face: ensuring that state structures are functional (need for reforms at constitutional and rule of law levels – especially police and justice – and security sector reform); rebuilding the education systems; reinforcing the health systems; pushing for transitional justice and national reconciliation.

Furthermore, there was consensus among participants both from the EU and the Southern Mediterranean that civil society will have a tremendous role to play in the transition process throughout the region. Civil society actors have been in opposition and kept silent for so long that they will have to (re-)learn how to act.

These new civil society actors are also much more specialised: they have created their own niches on such issues as prisons, press law, women rights. They have also become diversified during the transition period. This means that there are multiple visions of the role of secularism, Islam, women, to name a few.



The diasporas living in the EU will also have a role to play. Travelling will become easier in the post-revolution period, so the diasporas will be able to contribute to the transfer of knowledge and to build bridges between Europe and the Middle East/North Africa region.

Seminar Conclusions and Recommendations

- **Support national reconciliation:** Provide closure to families of victims – from dialogue platforms and reinsertion of freedom fighters to forensic support to identify bodies of missing persons. Societies are scarred by civil strife and hard work is needed to reconcile different (ethnic and/or religious) groups. Immediate expertise on transitional justice and specialised equipment (e.g. DNA-collecting kits) are needed.
- **Reform of administration:** The old political leadership may be gone, but it is business as usual in the administration of the countries and there is a general absence of confidence in political parties, according to the Egyptian and Tunisian participants. Thus, the revamped ENP must hold governments in the transition countries accountable.
- **Rule of Law and Security Sector Reform:** Immediate support to, advice for and strategic mentoring of the police and Ministries of Interior are needed. In Egypt, reform and training of the military is also urgent. Rapid deployment of police, rule of law and military experts as well as procurement experts is essential.
- **Reform of education systems:** Concentrate on providing training at international standards (the right to an *education system of quality*); embed the principles of human rights in school curricula; go beyond the expansion of the Erasmus Mundus programme; assist the development of university management. Rebuilding the education system will help keep young people in their countries and therefore also help contain a potential immigration issue for Europe.
- **Promote gender equality in the new legislation:** In many of the southern Mediterranean countries in transition, civil legislation discriminates against women. It is important that work on equality does not stop once legislation has been enacted: long-term work is needed to ensure that the laws are enforced without discrimination.
- **Tackle the economic crisis in the transition countries:** There are social implications to the growing unemployment (especially unemployment of youth, under the age of 30). This will also help

contain the potential problem of immigration to the EU.

- **Create a legal framework for NGOs:** Very few NGOs were allowed to exist under the previous regimes. Contacts with foreign organisations were banned. Many were actually GONGOs, funded by the previous regimes and representing its interests rather than those of the population. Other organisations were/are registered abroad. Rapid deployment of legal experts to work on this issue is necessary.
- **Build civil society capacity:** More than funding, new local non-state actors need training from EU experts on capacity building and professionalization so that they can play an important role in the democratisation of their countries. Most organisations lack basic skills and capacity. The international community could provide initial support in the creation of resource centres and the organisation of workshops on fundraising, management, public relations, lobbying and networking. Work with foreign NGOs would be welcomed, as long as it is based on an equal partnership and not on a top-down approach where foreign NGOs receive all the funding and tell locals what to do.
- **Promote civic education:** It is important to educate the population about democracy, including campaigns on constitutional and electoral processes, and promote political debate within a framework that allows civil society voices to be heard.
- **Create an independent press:** Despite the strong impact of social media on the uprisings, the majority of the populations do not have access to Facebook and Twitter. They receive messages and information through the mainstream (printed and broadcast) media outlets that are playing a negative role in the transition process. In Egypt, for example, the media is campaigning against foreign intervention/aid. Accordingly, there is a strong need for training journalists.



EU Responses to Transitions in the Southern Mediterranean

By Isabelle Ioannides*

The new political realities in the Maghreb and Mashreq countries have required the EU to review its relations with its Southern neighbours. Events in the region have also given the opportunity to the EU to further develop its external action policies and to adapt its strategic vision to the new circumstances. In this context, the Union has embarked in supporting the transition processes in the Southern Mediterranean while also identifying lessons learned from the past, especially from its experience in the Western Balkans and its Enlargement policy.

Learning from past experience

The EU has always been active in promoting human rights and democracy in its neighbourhood. Since its inception in 2004, the *European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)* has launched and promoted a variety of important initiatives, particularly on the trade and economic front, which have allowed the EU and its neighbours to develop stronger relationships in virtually all policy fields, from energy to education, from transport to research. But it has often focused too much on stability for its own sake, sometimes at the expense of other objectives.

The 2011 events in the Southern Mediterranean constitute an opportunity to overcome the reductionist alternative between dictatorship and Islamism, and the resulting “security dilemma”, which initially led to a disproportionate insistence on the potentially negative consequences of the Arab awakenings on migration and radicalisation. Political developments in the region point to possible liabilities, whether in Libya, Tunisia or Egypt. These risks, however, should not obscure proclaimed commitment to democracy and the quest for freedom, as expressed by Tunisians, Egyptians and others in the Mediterranean region – an enthusiasm that the EU should encourage. The restoration of the Sharia in Libya and the clear victory of (moderate) Islamic parties in Tunisia and Egypt should not be a cause for concern as long as democratic principles are respected. For its part, Turkey constitutes both a point of reference of the potential to combine democratic institutions

and processes with Islam, and a partner in supporting democratisation in the wider region.

The new approach

The March 2011 joint communication on *Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean* specifies the three main paths along which the EU intends to further deepen its relations with its Mediterranean partners: democratic transformation and institutions building; a reinforced partnership with the populations; and durable and inclusive economic development.¹

A simplified and coherent policy and programming framework – as described in the May 2011 Communication on the reviewed ENP – constitutes the new approach to strengthening the partnership between the EU and the countries and societies of the neighbourhood.² The EU does not seek to impose a model or a ready-made recipe for political reform, but it will insist that each partner country’s reform process reflects a clear commitment to the universal values that form the basis of its renewed approach. Furthermore, it will not limit itself to a process of economic cooperation which is not firmly rooted in democratic institutions and freedoms. Specifically, its objectives include:

- To adapt levels of EU support to partners according to progress on political reforms and build “deep democracy”. This term refers to the right to vote accompanied by the respect for human rights; forming competing political parties; receiving impartial justice from independent judges and security from accountable police and army forces; and access to a competent and non-corrupt civil service.
- To support inclusive economic development so that EU neighbours can trade, invest and grow in a sustainable way, reducing social and regional inequalities, creating jobs for their workers and higher standards of living for their people.
- To strengthen in parallel the two regional dimensions of the ENP – the Eastern Partnership and the Southern Mediterranean –

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¹ *A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean*. Joint Communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. COM(2011) 200 final. Brussels, 8 March 2011. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/euromed/docs/com2011_200_en.pdf

² *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood. A review of European Neighbourhood Policy*. Joint Communication by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission. COM(2011) 303. Brussels, 25 May 2011. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com_11_303_en.pdf



so that we can work out consistent regional initiatives in areas such as trade, energy, transport or migration and mobility, complementing and strengthening our bilateral cooperation.

- To provide the necessary mechanisms and instruments fit to deliver these objectives.

This new approach is based on three essential premises:

increased differentiation allowing each partner country to develop its links with the EU as far as its own aspirations, needs and capacities allow. There will be no bulldozer “one-size-fits-all” model. For those Southern neighbours able and willing to take part, this vision includes closer economic integration and stronger political cooperation on governance reforms, security, conflict resolution matters, including joint initiatives on issues of common interest.

“more for more”: Increased EU support to its neighbours is conditional on progress in building and consolidating democracy and respect for the rule of law. The more and the faster a country progresses in its internal reforms, the more support it will receive from the EU. This enhanced support will come in various forms, including increased funding for social and economic development; more ambitious programmes for comprehensive institution-building; greater market access; increased EIB financing in support of investments; and greater facilitation of mobility.

“less for less”: The EU will downgrade relations with governments who fail to make the necessary reforms and/or are engaged in violations of human rights and democracy standards. Such policy measures include – among other – making use of targeted sanctions. Where the Union takes such measures, it will not only uphold but further strengthen its support to civil society.

In May 2011, the Union put at the disposal of the Southern Mediterranean countries 1.24 billion euro in addition to the 5.7 billion already available in the framework the ENP. In line with the goals and principles mentioned above, the European Commission launched “*SPRING*” (*Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth*), a programme to support Southern partners and encourage democratic transformation and economic growth. The total value of this initiative is of 350 million euro for the years 2011 and 2012. Moreover, the European Investment Bank (EIB) has now made available 1 billion euro for loans to

the transition countries, supplementing the 4 billion already there before the Arab awakening. For its part, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) envisages to extend its activities to the MENA and to annually offer up to 2.5 billion euro for public and private investments to support business and infrastructure development. EU support will be tailored to the needs for each transition country and will concentrate on the following priorities.

Build a Partnership with Societies

The EU recognises that civil society plays a vital part in promoting greater social justice and democracy, including the respect of minorities, the equality of the sexes, women’s rights, environmental protection and efficient management of resources. A key factor to reaching these goals is the guarantee of the freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Another challenge is to facilitate the emergence of democratic political parties that represent the broad spectrum of views and approaches present in society, so that they can compete for power and popular support. The recently reviewed ENP puts cooperation with civil society organisations (CSOs) at the heart of the EU approach. It aims at giving to CSOs a greater political role, by enhancing their capacity building; reinforcing the dialogue on the human rights; and supporting freedom of the press. Accordingly, EU objectives include:

Establish partnerships in each neighbouring country and make EU support more accessible to CSOs through a dedicated *Civil Society Facility*. With a total budget of initially 26.4 million euro (for 2011)³, it will support a greater political role for non-state actors through a partnership with societies, helping CSOs develop their advocacy capacity, their ability to monitor reform and their role in implementing and evaluating EU programmes. In particular, the Union will encourage the exchange of best practices and training; promote institution building and increase government accountability; provide its support to regional and national projects to complement existing programmes and instruments; and promote an inclusive approach of reforms that includes non-state actors in national policy dialogue and the implementation of bilateral programmes.

Reinforce human rights dialogue: EU Delegations will seek to bring partner countries’ governments and civil societies together in a structured dialogue on key areas of cooperation. In this context, the Commission recently launched a three year programme (7 million euro) in

³ Similar amounts are envisaged for 2012 and 2013.



cooperation with the Anna Lindh Foundation, aiming at revitalising civil societies and promoting dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean by funding projects on culture, education, science, human rights, sustainable development, the empowerment of women and the arts. Such actions will also be financed through the Civil Society Facility.

Promote media freedom by supporting civil society organisations' unhindered access to the internet, the use of electronic communications technologies, and independent media in print, radio and television. While EU support is already available through the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)*, additional tools may be developed to further strengthen EU contribution in this area.

Support political actors striving for democratic change: The creation of a *European Endowment for Democracy (EED)* will provide assistance to pro-democracy movements, unregistered NGOs or trade unions and other social partners that have not been able to benefit from EU support so far. It will be designed to complement the *European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI)* and the EIDHR.

Achieve better understanding and mutual enrichment between the EU and neighbouring countries. For this purpose, the EU has expanded its *Erasmus Mundus programme* (66 million euro) to create possibilities for student and academic staff mobility (e.g., the opportunity to study in universities in EU Member States) and for exchange of knowledge and skills.⁴ 750 additional grants for students from the region (beyond the 1200 already envisaged) will be awarded during the coming university year. The Commission is considering supplementary measures for the next two academic years to further reinforce student and academic exchanges with the Southern Mediterranean. The *Tempus programme*, which supports the modernisation of universities, will be also reinforced in 2012 and 2013, as has been the case with the *Euromed Youth programme*.

Connect Parliaments with a view to building links between European and MENA societies. The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (the joint Assembly of the European Parliament and counterparts from Southern Mediterranean countries) and Joint Parliamentary Committees between the European Parliament and partner countries' Parliaments constitute essential fora for

dialogue and increased mutual understanding between decision-makers.

Intensify EU political and security cooperation

The Lisbon Treaty provides the EU with a unique opportunity to become a more effective actor in the world. Rising to the challenge requires that its policies and those of its Member States be more closely aligned than in the past, and that EU instruments be backed by Member State policies so as to deliver a common message and act coherently. Consequently, the EU intends to:

Enhance EU involvement in solving protracted conflicts (e.g. the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Western Sahara conflict), which constitute a serious security challenge to the whole region and compromise EU geopolitical, economic and security interests. Many EU instruments utilised in the neighbourhood to promote economic integration and sectoral cooperation could also be mobilised to support confidence building and conflict resolution objectives. The EU is also ready to develop, together with other relevant international organisations and key partners, post-conflict reconstruction scenarios that would act as a further incentive in the resolution of disputes by illustrating the tangible benefits of peaceful settlements.

Join the use of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and other EU instruments:

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the creation of a High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy and the set up of the European External Action Service, political and security cooperation between the EU and its immediate neighbours can be strengthened. Where the EU is already engaged operationally on the ground, further steps can aim to exploit the synergies between this operational presence and efforts to promote reforms.

Promote joint action with ENP partners in international fora on key security issues.

Support sustainable economic and social development

The immediate objective in the Southern Mediterranean countries is the promotion of sustainable economic growth and job creation and the improvement of social protection. The ENP thus aims to develop a mutually beneficial approach where economic development in partner

⁴ Nearly 30 million euro were allocated in the 2011-2012 academic year, specifically for the Southern Neighbourhood countries. It represents a doubling of the allocation originally foreseen for the Southern Neighbourhood.



countries and in the EU, well-managed legal migration, and capacity building on border management, asylum and effective law-enforcement cooperation go hand in hand.

Trade is a powerful instrument to stimulate economic growth, support economic recovery and stimulate sectoral cooperation that provides the opportunity to Mediterranean countries to advance economic integration with the EU internal market. It is essential to establish with each of the countries in transition mutually beneficial and ambitious trade arrangements matching their needs and their economic capacities. Examples of economic initiatives that could contribute to curbing high unemployment and tackling poverty in the Southern Mediterranean include: help organise events to promote investment; promote direct investment from EU SMEs and micro-credit; build on pilot regional development programmes to tackle economic disparities between regions; launch pilot programmes to support agricultural and rural development; improve the effectiveness of macro-financial assistance by streamlining its decision-making process; and negotiate Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with willing and able partners. In order to support the development of SMEs (particularly the segment of business that is too small for banks but too large for micro-finance), the Union in cooperation with the German bank KfW has created a new assistance programme, the *SANAD* (“support” in Arabic) (budget: 20 million).

The main and most effective vehicle for developing closer trade ties is the above-mentioned *Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA)*. They provide for the gradual dismantling of trade barriers and aim for regulatory convergence in areas that can impact on trade, especially sanitary and phytosanitary rules, animal welfare, customs and border procedures, competition and public procurement. Through progressive approximation of EU rules and practices, DCFTAs require a high degree of commitment to complex and broad-ranging reforms. But for the most advanced partners, these agreements can lead to a progressive economic integration with the EU internal market in key sectors of the Mediterranean region (e.g. agriculture and services). In the shorter term, partners not ready or willing to embark on DCFTA negotiations, could benefit from trade concessions that the EU would extend in existing agreements or ongoing negotiations. They would cover those sectors best positioned to provide an

immediate boost to partners’ economies, including the asymmetry in the pace of liberalisation of each partner country. Greater market access for goods through such *Agreements on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of industrial products (ACAAs)* will enable free movement of industrial products in specific sectors through mutual acceptance of conformity certificates.

Mobility and people-to-people contacts are fundamental to advancing mutual understanding and economic development. Labour mobility is an area where the EU and its neighbours can complement each other. The EU’s workforce is ageing and labour shortages will develop in specific areas. Our neighbourhood, on the other hand, has well-educated, young and talented workers who can fill these gaps. In attracting this talent, the EU is conscious of the risks of “brain drain”, which could require additional mitigating support measures.

Mobility Partnerships provide a comprehensive framework ensuring that the movement of persons between the EU and a third country is well-managed. They provide for better access to legal migration channels and strengthen capacities for border management and handle irregular migration, thus facilitating a mobility that is mutually beneficial. These partnerships can include initiatives to assist partner countries establish or improve labour migration management, including recruitment, vocational and language training, development and recognition of skills, and return and reintegration of migrants. Equally, the Commission calls on Member States to make full use of the *EU Visa Code*, whose implementation it will monitor. The EU Visa Code, seeking to enhance the mobility of citizens between partner countries and the EU, should especially target students, researchers and businesspeople.

In **the field of asylum**, the EU will contribute to strengthening international protection in the region through the implementation of the *Regional Protection Programme* – circumstances permitting – for Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. Initiatives by individual ENP partners in this area will also be supported. Last but not least, resettlement of refugees in the EU must be an integral part of EU efforts to support neighbouring countries confronted with significant refugee flows.

EU Political Action and Cooperation

In addition to the instruments available through the European institutions, the Union is also active at a political level. Examples include the creation of the *Task Force for the Southern Mediterranean* by the



High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, which aims at fostering coherent international support to strengthening democracy and inclusive economic development in the Mediterranean region, and the creation of the post of *EUSR for the Southern Mediterranean* to coordinate EU efforts in the region.⁵

In addition, the Council for Foreign Affairs of the Union has put political pressure on Syria by applying *targeted sanctions* aimed at those responsible for or associated with the violent repression and those who support or benefit from the regime (about 75 people and 20 firms). EU foreign ministers approved plans to stop Syria accessing funds from the EIB. In parallel, the Union closely supports the Arab League efforts seeking to protect civilian populations and find a political solution to the current situation.

Although it was created in (and was a product of) the pre-spring era, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) also has a role to play in the post-revolution Mediterranean societies. It complements bilateral relations between the EU and Southern partners and should encourage effective and result-oriented regional cooperation. The UfM Secretariat in Barcelona could thus operate as a catalyst to bring states, the EIB, IFIs and the private sector together around concrete projects of strategic importance and support job generation, innovation and growth throughout the region. Equally, the Union is also a key actor in the framework of G-8 where 20 billion euro were pledged. Moreover, the EU has launched with the Council of Europe a 4.8 million euro joint regional programme, in view of supporting democratic reforms, the independence and efficiency of the judiciary, and the promotion of good governance in the Southern Mediterranean. It will also target corruption and human trafficking and aim to protect human rights and democratic values by working with government officials, future leaders, youth and civil society. The programme will initially be launched in Morocco and Tunisia, while some initiatives will be implemented for three years throughout the region. These endeavours will strive for strong complementarity and coherence with other EU initiatives, such as the SPRING programme or the future EED.

Opportunities and Challenges

A year after the Arab awakenings, numerous challenges in the Southern Mediterranean persist. Given the long-term nature of democratic transitions, this is not a surprise; rather, the EU could turn these challenges into opportunities for action.

Aware of the need for differentiation among Southern Mediterranean partners – in terms of level of development, expectations, needs and/or capacities –, it is vital to identify *when* the “right” moment to become involved is; *how* to engage with the transition countries; and *who* the interlocutors and key stakeholders are. Egypt is a particularly difficult case due to its reluctance to foreign involvement – whether this takes the form of financial assistance, policy conditionality and/or security support. The EU should also be cautious in its selection of interlocutors in the transition countries to avoid being accused of applying double standards. The challenge will be to identify and include in the transition process civil society actors (and other non-official actors) from the rural areas where international players do not necessarily have a good understanding of the situation.

The international community must recognise that any democratisation process will be long and therefore its engagement in the Southern Mediterranean must be for the long-term. Substantial and consistent commitment from both the EU and its Member States is therefore required. In this context, it is important that the international community moves rather quickly from deploying humanitarian aid to offering development assistance.⁶ Aware of these complexities and given the current difficulties in the eurozone, the Union is already reflecting on the possible role the private sector could play in the EU development policy. In this context, it is vital to create long-term investment opportunities in the region and not limit international action to long-term financial assistance. The EU being the main export market and first import market for most of our neighbours, trade constitutes an enormous potential for regional economic and social growth. It requires, however, economic modernisation and support to the private sector, particularly to SMEs.

⁵ The Task Force brings together expertise from the European External Action Service, the European Commission, the EIB, the EBRD and other international financial institutions to act as a focal point for assistance to countries in North Africa facing political transformation.

⁶ The European Commission has already offered 80.50 million euro in humanitarian aid to the Southern Mediterranean region to manage the flow of refugees. The Member States for their part have contributed another 73 million euro.

The EU should also ensure that there is no overlap of financial instruments, but rather that the new instruments created in the context of the renewed ENP complement existing ones. In parallel, the Union will need to explain to its interlocutors on the ground how these new tools work, whom they are available for, and what the requirements are. Equally, EU engagement must be coordinated with other international actors active in the region (the United States, Turkey, the Gulf States, the Arab League) to avoid inefficient dispersion of meagre (at times of austerity) funds and ensure effective and coherent action. The Union should put pressure on important funders who have promised loans and other financial aid of an amount of 38 billion dollars. In the case of Egypt, although ENP action plans remain the framework for wider cooperation, the EU also seeks to create additional loan opportunities through the EIB and the EBRD. The Union could also play an active role in the monitoring and disbursement of assistance to guarantee that it meets real needs in the Mediterranean region. Funds must be distributed equitably to recipients, to those who truly need the aid rather than those who have always had access to it. For its part, the post-2013 *European*

Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) is designed to be simpler and more flexible as well as reinforce coordination between the EU and its Member States.

It is important to encourage the openness and reinforce the difficult choices that civil societies and the democratic forces in the Southern Mediterranean countries have made. To propose an “open doors” immigration policy is neither feasible nor credible. Nevertheless, it is fundamental to rebuild trust with our Southern neighbours. It is in this spirit that the Commission has significantly increased the budget of the Erasmus Mundus programme so that more student exchanges can take place and more grants can be awarded to students and teachers in the MENA region. In parallel, it is necessary to control the migratory flux from these countries of departure and contain illegal immigration by signing readmission agreements with them. In the medium term, it is crucial to seriously address the question of (im)migration within a multilateral framework, between the ageing European countries (for which foreign workers are a solution rather than a problem) and the much younger neighbouring countries (where some hope to work in Europe).



General view of the BEPA seminar of 3rd October 2011 on “Transitions in the Southern Mediterranean”.

Transitions dans le Monde arabe : la fin du paradigme sécuritaire?

Par Hasni Abidi*

On a beaucoup commenté la surprise et l'égarément des pays occidentaux face aux révolutions en Tunisie et en Egypte. En fait, cette sorte de décalage paraît bien antérieure. Les raisons sont multiples :

Au nom de leurs intérêts stratégiques et de leur hantise de l'islamisme radical, certains Etats européens ont ignoré l'influence des sociétés civiles dans les pays arabes.

Certaines figures de contestation se sont trouvées dans un huis clos violent avec leurs gouvernements des pays du Sud. Ainsi le lien de confiance est rompu.

En apportant aux régimes autoritaires un soutien politique voire matériel, l'Occident a soutenu des régimes dont il ne pouvait ignorer la nature répressive.

La surprise et la radicalité qui ont marqué les révoltes dans le monde arabe ont déstabilisé les pays européens pour prendre les décisions qui s'imposent.

Les nouveaux acteurs du changement ne sont pas forcément ceux avec qui l'Union européenne a pris l'habitude de négocier. Il faudrait du temps pour se familiariser avec les nouveaux interlocuteurs.

Les mécanismes de l'Union européenne sont en décalage par rapport à l'urgence des événements.

La notion de transition

Un courant des sciences politiques : la « transitologie » mène depuis plusieurs décennies des études sur le processus de démocratisation dans le monde et les phénomènes de transition comparée.¹ Il est utile de connaître le contenu de ces études selon les observations et leur éventuelle adaptabilité au monde arabe. La démocratisation est le moment critique où l'on négocie des pactes. Il existe donc trois étapes pour parvenir à une transition démocratique :

- la libéralisation politique ;
- la démocratisation ;
- la consolidation de la démocratie.

Mais, toujours selon ce courant de la science politique, le monde arabe est divisé en deux camps :

- La persistance de l'autoritarisme ;
- La transition par contrainte : la transition est initiée par les régimes et non par la société civile.

Robert Dahl a élaboré le modèle de transition le plus abouti. Le processus de transition engage les Etats à une restructuration à trois dimensions de leur système : passer d'un gouvernement de parti unique à une démocratie pluraliste, de la planification centrale à l'économie de marché, et d'une forme d'autarcie à l'intégration dans l'économie mondiale. Cet ordre du jour se retrouvant dans toutes les maquettes de réforme, le concept formule donc le cadre général de la transition et les problèmes à résoudre.

Mais cette transition obéit à des réflexes de survie plus qu'à des convictions profondes d'instaurer un processus démocratique sur des bases honnêtes. Disons qu'il s'agit d'une transition forcée et non pactisée². Certes, le régime politique laisse à la société des pans entiers de ses anciennes prérogatives, mais sans renoncer pour autant à son pouvoir. Cette « stratégie de survie »³ démontre que « la libéralisation économique, sans impliquer une redistribution du pouvoir »⁴. Guy Hermet insiste sur la transition démocratique en précisant qu'elle recouvre trois opérations distinctes⁵ :

- la mise en place d'institutions démocratiques ;
- l'instauration d'un jeu démocratique fondé sur le respect du droit, un système de partis viables, le compromis ;
- enfin le traitement des obstacles économiques de nature structurelle et conjoncturelle capable de faire échouer la démocratisation.

L'Europe de l'Est : une expérience à méditer

On s'est aussi beaucoup posé la question, ces derniers temps, de savoir si le printemps arabe avait des points communs avec la chute des régimes communistes d'Europe de l'Est en 1989. S'il y a une différence que l'on peut signaler, c'est justement le soutien des pays occidentaux aux pouvoirs tunisien

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¹ G. O'Donnell, P. C. Schmitter, L. Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusion about Uncertain Democracies* (John Hopkins University Press, 1986).

² J.-N. Ferrié, J.-C. Santucci (dir.), *Dispositifs de démocratisation et dispositifs autoritaires en Afrique du Nord*, (CNRS, 2006), p. 12.

³ Voir D. Brumberg, « Authoritarian Legacies and Reform Strategies in the Arab World », in : R. Brynne, B. Korany, P. Noble (dir.), *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World, Theoretical Perspectives, vol. 1* (Lynne Rienner, 1995).

⁴ J.-N. Ferrié, J.-C. Santucci, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁵ G. Hermet, « Les démocratisations au vingtième siècle : une comparaison Amérique Latine/Europe de l'Est », *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2001, p. 286.

et égyptien au détriment des sociétés. L'exact contraire, en somme, de ce qui s'était passé à l'époque, l'Occident ayant alors joué les sociétés contre les régimes, au motif de la lutte entre les deux blocs de la Guerre froide. La Tunisie, l'Égypte et la Libye se sont donc libérées de leurs autocrates par leurs propres moyens, et c'est tout à leur honneur.

Une transition incertaine

Le monde arabe est la seule région du monde qui soit restée loin des vagues de réforme démocratique auxquelles ont assisté depuis les années 1980 l'Asie et l'Amérique latine. Oui, nous vivons un tournant historique. Après la révolution tunisienne, le monde arabe ne sera plus comme avant. Les dirigeants se rendent compte que les populations sont capables d'exprimer des revendications et de les défendre jusqu'au bout. Mais les régimes en place n'y sont pas préparés. Ils n'ont pas de réponse immédiate. Une panique s'est emparée d'eux : leur seule réponse est sécuritaire et militaire. Nous sommes face à des pouvoirs qui ne savent que réprimer.

Les pays arabes vivront une phase d'instabilité prolongée. Une période de transition se définit par l'incertitude et l'inquiétude. Le retour à l'autoritarisme n'est pas rare dans ce type de processus. L'échec est une hypothèse plausible si la transition ne s'accompagne pas de la création d'institutions légitimes. Comment répondre aux attentes d'une population impatiente, qui a souffert et qui souhaite prendre son destin en main ? L'accumulation des difficultés contribue à menacer le changement. D'un côté, il faudrait convaincre les populations que les réformes nécessaires ne peuvent être que lentes. De l'autre côté, les gouvernements de transition sont obligés d'innover pour répondre à la pression populaire.

Dans les deux pays en transition – en Égypte et en Tunisie –, l'armée a nommé à des postes importants des personnalités de l'ancien régime. Certes, l'institution militaire veut rassurer. Elle veut une transition dans l'ordre, et assurer la pérennité de l'État. Mais cela exige des acteurs politiques et économiques expérimentés. Or la population ne le comprend pas, elle veut la rupture totale et immédiate. La question est de savoir comment rompre avec l'ancien régime tout en construisant un nouveau projet politique acceptable pour tous. L'avantage de la Tunisie sur l'Égypte est que, chez la première, l'armée bénéficie d'une bonne image auprès de la population. Dans les deux pays, c'est elle qui est intervenue pour éviter un bain de sang. Cependant les militaires ne sont pas formés à la démocratie. L'armée a besoin de temps pour

apprendre à jouer ce nouveau rôle et établir un lien de confiance avec la population.

L'argument avancé par les partisans de la construction européenne pour justifier l'absence d'une politique étrangère commune est le manque de moyens. Démunie d'une capacité militaire suffisante, l'Europe des 27 reste tributaire du parapluie américain en matière de défense. Tiraillements et égoïsmes nationaux empêchent l'émergence d'un consensus permettant la mise en œuvre d'une véritable diplomatie européenne.

Revisiter le processus d'Helsinki

Le vent du changement politique qui secoue aujourd'hui le monde arabe a coûté jusqu'à présent zéro centime au contribuable européen. Pourtant, depuis le fameux dialogue euro-arabe inauguré dans les années 1970 jusqu'au processus euro-méditerranéen, en passant par la « politique de voisinage » et la triste Union pour la Méditerranée, Bruxelles avait dépensé des milliards d'euros pour essayer d'obtenir une « éventuelle tentative de réforme ». Seul résultat : la consolidation de l'autoritarisme et sa mise à jour pour se conformer aux exigences européennes. Le « printemps arabe » a bousculé les paradigmes en vigueur dans les capitales européennes, dirigeants et élites, qui avaient longtemps compté sur les régimes en place pour lancer des réformes, mais jamais sur les dynamiques internes.

Il n'est pas trop tard pour l'Union européenne, qui a accompli une mission historique auprès des pays de l'ex-bloc communiste. Elle a permis la mise en marche du processus d'Helsinki, avec ses fameuses « trois corbeilles ». Une ingénierie politique qui, par son soutien à la société civile et aux dynamiques culturelles et sociales, a aidé les pays de l'Est à s'affranchir du joug soviétique. Malheureusement, le processus de Barcelone (Euromed), inspiré d'Helsinki par ses trois volets – politique, économique et culturel – n'a pas eu l'effet escompté. Il s'est heurté à l'inextricable conflit israélo-palestinien et à la tendance des gouvernements arabes à tirer prétexte de blocage du processus de paix entre Arabes et Israéliens pour traîner les pieds. Quant à l'Europe, elle n'a pas assez insisté sur son souhait de voir l'autre rive de la Méditerranée accéder à un minimum de démocratie. Elle s'est contentée d'octroyer un satisfecit à ses voisins du sud pour leur soutien dans la guerre contre le terrorisme et contre les flux migratoires et de saluer leurs efforts de libéralisation économique. Les droits de l'homme peuvent attendre. En accédant ainsi au statut d'interlocuteur des démocraties européennes, des régimes autoritaires se sont offert une nouvelle légitimité.



L'Europe : comment devenir garant de la transition

L'Union Européenne qui fut aux avant-postes de la transition démocratique dans les pays d'Europe centrale et orientale a un rôle à jouer dans l'évolution des pays arabes. Engagée à leurs côtés dans le cadre de l'Union pour la Méditerranée, l'UE pourrait réfléchir à la création de dispositifs qui créeraient un cercle vertueux, liant les réformes démocratiques à des objectifs précis et suffisamment motivants pour les pays concernés, afin de créer une véritable conditionnalité politique dans le respect des souverainetés nationales. L'Europe a aussi tout intérêt à se tourner vers les sociétés civiles des pays arabes pour créer un riche réseau d'échanges et de soutien, précurseur d'une union des peuples de la Méditerranée.

Un volontarisme diplomatique nouveau qui intervient après une longue période de sommeil, attribuable à trois principaux facteurs :

1. L'Europe n'est capable ni de mesures incitatives, économiques ou politiques, ni de mesures de rétorsions crédibles contre des belligérants.
2. les pays membres de l'Union européenne ont des préférences contradictoires et souvent, certains Etats ont des priorités incompatibles avec les objectifs immédiats du changement politique.
3. les Américains s'efforcent d'écarter les Européens des dossiers qu'ils considèrent comme leur monopole. Bruxelles ne va pas insister auprès de Washington pour lui disputer un rôle au succès incertain. Pour l'Europe, il est temps de repenser son approche stratégique, de recentrer ses activités et de rechercher une coordination plus efficace (une répartition du travail plus claire) avec les États-Unis pour contribuer à une paix et une stabilité durables au Moyen-Orient.

Conséquences pour l'UE

1. Il est difficile pour l'Union européenne d'appréhender la nouveauté et les changements fréquents dans les pays arabes après des années de stabilité figée. Le monde arabe qui change représente donc un défi pour l'UE.
2. Risque d'augmentation des flux migratoires non maîtrisés avec des conséquences néfastes sur les opinions publiques des pays membres de l'UE.
3. L'Union européenne est appelée à réorienter sa politique, s'interroger sur la faisabilité de sa politique étrangère qui a été conçue pour une élite politique aujourd'hui discréditée et pour répondre à une situation révolue.

Les atouts de l'Union européenne

Le temps d'une mission nouvelle pour l'Union européenne dans le processus de transition est arrivé. Pourquoi ?

Les divergences au sein des pays européens dans la gestion des relations avec les pays en transition est en mesure de donner des ailes à l'UE pour se profiler en tant qu'interlocuteur privilégié. L'échec des politiques précédentes des Européens est un argument pour donner à l'Union davantage de pouvoir.

L'affaiblissement de certains régimes du Sud connus par leur résistance soutenue au changement politique et économique est un élément positif dans l'affirmation des orientations de Bruxelles.

Les nouvelles instances de transition partagent les mêmes valeurs démocratiques que l'UE, ce qui faciliterait l'obtention d'un consensus européen pour engager un soutien politique et financier sans résistance de la part du Parlement européen.

L'absence d'un agent reconnu neutre et impartial dans la gestion de la transition et la régulation des conflits laisserait la place à Bruxelles pour se profiler en tant que facilitateur entre tous les acteurs. La présence de milliers de cadres européens d'origine arabe est un atout non négligeable qui pourrait être utilisé comme vecteur complémentaire de médiation et de transition.

Conclusion

Ma conclusion reprend le constat des hommes d'affaire turcs. Ils sont anonymes à considérer que dans l'état actuel, le statut d'un pays candidat est plus avantageux que celui d'Etat membre. La candidature a permis aux Turcs d'enregistrer des avancées notables sur les plans juridiques, politiques et économiques. La perspective de l'adhésion stimule la Turquie à faire des efforts pour mériter sa place à Bruxelles. Le monde arabe n'est pas en retrait. L'Union européenne devrait réfléchir sur un cadre en mesure d'alimenter la marche vers la transition. Je plaide pour une réponse concrète qui récompense ou qui soutient les peuples par un « grand prix », entre l'adhésion et la candidature.

Je reste persuadé que le processus de Barcelone était une réponse adéquate aux exigences du moment. Les régimes du Sud ont vu dans ce processus un mariage blanc, ou une offre européenne pour se re-légitimer. Ils l'ont accepté mais en le vidant de tout son sens. D'où l'échec programmé de Barcelone.



Arab Springs: Transition, Democratisation and Civil Society – Lost and Found

By Antonio Missiroli*

One year has just passed since the beginning of the end of authoritarian regimes on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean and in the wider Arab world. The sequence has been truly impressive: Tunisia first, then Egypt; Libya next; and now apparently Yemen, with Syria teetering on the brink. In parallel, Morocco has gone through significant constitutional and political change, albeit along a different pattern: namely, liberalisation “from above” rather than popular revolt or even civil war. But one thing is increasingly clear: the Arab peoples have eventually joined the global trend towards democratisation that has characterised the last quarter of the 20th century, from Southern Europe to South America, from South-East Asia and Africa to Central and Eastern Europe. In fact, until 2010, only the Algerian war of decolonisation in the late 1950s and the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (but in a non-Arab country) had seen active and even massive popular participation in the region – and neither prompted democratisation. Otherwise, regime change had only occurred through national revolutions “from above”, mostly in the shape of quasi-military coups against old monarchs and rulers.

Arab springs – and streets

Europeans (and “Westerners” at large) have come to define this ongoing development in our Southern neighbourhood as “the Arab Spring”. The label refers, more or less explicitly, to the “Prague Spring” of 1968 or, possibly, even to the *printemps des peuples* of 1848 (certainly more comparable with respect to the “contagion” spreading from Paris to other European capitals). Surely neither precedent is particularly encouraging, as both were violently repressed, although the popular uprisings were eventually vindicated a few decades later. Still, the term “spring” (preferably in the plural form, considering also the various paths taken by the phenomenon since its inception) seems broadly capable of rendering the spirit of what the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* has called “Arabellion”, as “spring” conveys – along with a sense of rebirth after a long bleak season – also the idea of a natural source and a sudden leap.

Another quite recurrent comparison in the European media in the first half of 2011 is that made with 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall. While the starting conditions were quite different from those in the Arab world – in terms of both geopolitical background (the Soviet “empire”) and local civic traditions – two other common elements stand out: the “domino” effect, yet again, and the “strategic surprise” represented by the outbreak itself.

In this respect, it is worth noting that in 1989 “regime change” became indeed ever faster from one country to another whereas, in 2011, it has become ever slower and arguably more violent¹. Timothy Garton Ash’s famous joke with Vaclav Havel – whereby the transition “took in Poland ten years, in Hungary ten months, in the GDR ten weeks: maybe it will take just ten days in Czechoslovakia?”² – can only be applied in reverse to the Arab springs: it took one month in Tunisia, then one in Egypt (but the process is not over), eight months in Libya, nine (so far) in Yemen, and Syria is still on fire. It is indeed as though authoritarian Arab rulers had learned from the alleged mistakes and weaknesses of their fallen peers and were increasingly concentrating their efforts to prevent or postpone their own end by all possible means. In 1989, the collapse of the system was a sort of work in progress, a gentle spiralling down through a mostly peaceful whirlwind – despite widespread concerns about possible bloodsheds.

As for the “strategic surprise” hitting the West (again) – whether in Europe’s East 1989 or in Africa’s North 2010 (not to mention America’s 9/11/2001) – it has been just another case of failure to connect the dots. The Arab springs were broadly predictable, or at least imaginable. The basic information was already there, and so were the symptoms: a cluster of autocratic political structures in which ageing (and often ailing) leaders presided over massively corrupt and repressive regimes, coupled with stagnating economies and an overwhelmingly young, relatively well-educated but also dramatically under-employed population.

Some triggering factors may have been contingent and country-specific (a spike in food prices, one tax too

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¹ Tunis’ “Jasmine Revolution” – a definition, once again, reminiscent of such European precedents as Georgia (the Rose Revolution, late 2003) and Ukraine (the Orange Revolution, late 2004) – suffered approximately 100 victims, out of 10 million citizens. The Egyptian “spring” in early 2011 registered roughly 800 casualties, out of a population of 80 million (but things may not be over yet). In Libya the victims were in the region of 50 000 (out of 6 million), while in Syria (with a population of more than 20 million) the casualties by December 2011 are estimated to lie somewhere between 5000 and 10000 – and counting.

² And it did: see his own account in *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of 1989 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague* (Random House, 1990).



many, or just another episode of ethnic discrimination) but the underlying causes were well discernible all across the region. What in part made it difficult to connect such dots was also the degree of collusion or tolerance by Western governments with the authoritarian rulers – in the name of stability, predictability and order. True, this varied significantly among countries and according to proximity, exposure and dependency. Yet acceptance of the status quo was quite widespread, in Europe and the wider West. This is also why the response – far more than in 1989³ – has been awkward, fragmented, and slow.

It used to be customary for Middle East and North Africa (MENA) experts⁴ to wonder what “the Arab street” thought and talked about; in most cases such “street” was perceived as a sort of whispering crowd whose moods and opinions constituted a side show to the main drama on stage. Now, however, they are being offered a clearer idea of what the Arab streets (and squares!) may think and expect. Although, what the Arab peoples might actually get in the end is much less clear at this stage.

From springs to transitions

The academic literature on democratisation – the transition process that the “springs” have triggered – has grown over the years and come in waves, mostly following successive cycles of political change: Portugal, Greece and Spain in the mid-1970s, South America’s Cono Sur in the 1980s, Central Europe since 1989, the post-Soviet “space” in the 1990s, but also various spots in Asia (from the first “tigers” to Indonesia) and Africa⁵. Comparative political scientists have constantly emphasised some key distinctions, namely:

- between liberalisation and democratisation, in that the latter entails the former but is a wider and more specifically political concept; this implies, of course,

that there can be liberalisation without democratisation (as was the case with Gorbachev’s “glasnost” and “perestroika”);

- between transition to (electoral) democracy and consolidation of democracy; this implies that not all countries that undertake a transition end up with a fully democratic system. In this case, they get “hybrid” (static) or “transitional” (dynamic) regimes in which different elements coexist and compete.

Several post-Soviet states are typical examples of “hybrid” regimes, but so are also some African and Asian countries⁶. Other analysts have defined these cases – which encompass a wide set of different transitions – as “partial” or even “illiberal” democracies⁷. What is common to them is that, once the democratic transition is under way, it becomes very difficult (but not impossible) to return to full authoritarianism: this would indeed require much greater coercive resources than previously.

In light of this significant body of research, is it possible to define what characterises a consolidated democracy? Some time ago Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996) proposed a standard definition that still appears broadly convincing, especially since it leaves ample room for several variations:

“A democratic transition is complete when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government; when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote; when this government de facto has the authority to generate new policies; and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies de jure”⁸.

More specifically, they argued that the existence of a functioning state is a crucial precondition for a

³ It was, once again, Timothy Garton Ash who underlined the high degree of acceptance of the division of Europe (and of Germany in particular) before the collapse of communism: *In Europe’s Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (Random House, 1993). But then the West’s reaction was definitely quicker, thanks to both the US lead and the Helsinki process.

⁴ MENA is indeed the acronym normally adopted in EU parlance to cover both the region as such and the non-EU countries involved since 1995 in the so-called Barcelona Process (or EuroMed). It is, however, far from being the only one in use: while the exact dividing line between Maghreb and Mashrek remains controversial, the French-speaking world often resorts to the term “*Asie occidentale*” to define the latter – which the Americans, in turn, call Greater Middle East. This said, the common historical and cultural “space” is still the “Mediterranean” at large, although so far nobody – from Fernand Braudel to Predrag Matvejevic – has been able to capture its precise contours. For an impressive historical overview and unparalleled insight see D. Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵ See for instance G. O’Donnell, P.C. Schmitter, A. Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); G. Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (University of California Press, 1990); and A. Przeworski, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁶ E. Baracani (ed.), *Democratization and Hybrid Regimes: International Anchoring and Domestic Dynamics in European post-Soviet States* (European Press Academic Publishing, 2010).

⁷ See e.g. F. Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy”, *Foreign Affairs*, no. 6 (November/December 1997), vol.76, as well as his *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (Norton, 2003).

⁸ J.J. Linz, A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).



democratic polity. Beyond that, five other interconnected and mutually reinforcing conditions must also exist (or be crafted) for a democracy to be consolidated:

- the development of a free and lively civil society;
- a relatively autonomous political society (parties and organised groups);
- rule of law to ensure legal guarantees for citizens' freedoms and independent associational life;
- a state bureaucracy usable by the new democratic government;
- an institutionalised economic society.

When all these conditions are met, democracy becomes “the only game in town” (Di Palma).

Since then, a number of additional sub-indicators and benchmarks have been invented and inserted in order to cover and compare the democratic performance of states across the world. All sorts of data have been gathered and indexes drawn up to measure democratisation, either by international organisations (World Bank, OECD, UN) or by foundations, media and NGOs: IDEA, the Bertelsmann Foundation, the Economist Intelligence Unit, and the Freedom House in particular.

For their part, the West in general and the EU in particular have since been confronted with an additional set of transitions and democratisations. The Western Balkans, in fact, have gone through a triple transition since the death of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman (1999) and the fall of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic (2000): one from war to peace (including foreign intervention); one from a command to a liberal market economy; and one from a single-party rule to a pluralist democracy – all this in a context of unresolved and contested statehood issues.

The initially transatlantic and then increasingly European effort at stabilising and integrating the new Balkan states has thus contributed to further refining the understanding of democratic transition and consolidation, e.g. with the distinction between formal (procedural) and effective (substantive) democracy⁹.

On top of that, the fact that the Balkan countries were all accepted as potential candidates to join both NATO and the EU has made it possible to intervene more directly – not unlike but less than in Central Europe – in shaping their systems: through robust conditionality, mainly, but occasionally also through quasi-protectorates (Bosnia, Kosovo).

The Balkan comparison, however, does not really fit with the Arab “springs”. Democratisation in South-eastern Europe was not triggered by any “spring” but rather by civil war and ethnic strife, plus foreign intervention. Furthermore, not only is the prospect of integration through accession not applicable in the Southern Mediterranean (thus weakening conditionality), but one of the key peculiarities of the Balkans – the influence of organised crime within both society and the state – is less relevant in the Southern EU neighbourhood.

On the other hand, nobody has factored in – at least not yet – the peculiarities of the Arab world itself, now that it seems to have started down this road too. In particular, what is normally called “political Islam” – namely the influence of religion in shaping politics and legislation – may in fact become a critical distinctive factor of this last “wave” of democratisation, and a passage that can make or break the Arab transitions¹⁰.

This will unquestionably require a lot of careful handling by Europe and the West. For, much as the final destination matters enormously, the journey itself is no less important.

“Deep” democracy and civil society

The Joint Communication by the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, released on 25 May 2011 and titled “A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood”, represents the most comprehensive common European approach to date to the new challenges posed by the Arab “springs” and to other developments in the Union’s neighbours – “whether they are experiencing fast regime change or a prolonged process of reform and democratic consolidation” – as well as a much needed review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

The Communication does indeed embrace the main findings of the academic literature on democratisation in that it defines “democracy” as a set of standards and benchmarks (but also as a value, alongside human rights and the rule of law). In particular, it articulates the new notion of “deep and sustainable democracy” as incorporating a number of distinct elements. These are:

- free and fair elections;
- freedom of association, expression and assembly, and a free press and media;
- the rule of law administered by an independent judiciary, and right to a fair trial;

⁹ For a thorough analysis of the Balkans in the democratisation context, see R. Balfour, C. Stratulat, *The Democratic Transformation of the Balkans*, Issue Paper no. 66 (EPC, November 2011): www.epc.eu.

¹⁰ Even in the case of Turkey, the first and arguably only “consolidated” democracy in the Muslim world (with possibly Indonesia trailing now), it was notably the emergence of a strong Islamist party that triggered the last direct intervention of the military in the political arena in 1997.



- the fight against corruption;
- security and law enforcement sector reform (including the police) and the establishment of democratic control over armed and security forces.

This last element clearly stems also from EU recent experience with the enlargement process as well as with its civilian crisis management operations in places as diverse as the Balkans, the Middle East and Congo¹¹ – and it highlights an additional potential supporting role for the Union in those Southern Mediterranean countries who may be willing to call on it for assistance and advice.

Interestingly, the Joint Communication makes an implicit distinction between “pursuing democratisation” in the context of the Eastern Partnership (which includes Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) and “building democracies and extensive reforms” in the Southern Mediterranean. Similar nuances were detectable also in the previous approach adopted by the EU in the ENP framework: by comparing the various ENP Action Plans, in fact, not only did the top four priorities for, respectively, the Eastern and the Mediterranean neighbours differ significantly, but the former were clearly expected to “develop” democracy, the latter to “encourage” it¹².

All this seems to indicate implicit awareness of the different stages in the democratisation process EU neighbours find themselves in – as well as, arguably, the specificities of Southern Mediterranean and Arab countries, to which the Union had proposed, in a previous Communication (8 March 2011), “A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity”.

Last but certainly not least, the ENP Communication backed the idea of setting up a European Endowment for Democracy (EED) with a view to supporting “political actors striving for democratic change in their countries (especially political parties and non-registered NGOs or trade unions and other social partners)” and bringing “greater influence and consistency to the efforts of the EU, its Member States and several of the large European political foundations that are already active in this field”.

Clearly inspired by the US National Endowment for Democracy, the EED idea was endorsed by the Polish

EU Presidency – albeit with special emphasis on the Eastern neighbourhood¹³ – and translated into preparatory work for its statute and eventual launch, culminating in a Declaration released by the Foreign Affairs Council on 19 December 2011. Still, the EED’s scope will not be limited, in principle, to the Union’s neighbourhoods, and the Endowment will operate autonomously, although with the stated goal of reinforcing “synergies and coherence” with “other democratisation tools” already adopted and implemented by the Union – starting with the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Instrument for Stability (IfS), and the newly created Civil Society Facility and the Support for Partnership, Reforms and Inclusive Growth programme, aptly branded SPRING.

Lost in transition?

All these tools will soon be confronted with what already looks to be a major policy challenge for Europe and the wider West: the emergence, in the various transitions currently under way in the MENA region, of strong Islamic parties who are all set to join government. Regardless of the modalities of the respective transition, sequencing and depth of constitutional and electoral reform¹⁴, in fact, forces of explicit (if relatively moderate) Islamic persuasion have collected a plurality – around 40 % – of the votes cast in Tunisia (23 October), Morocco (25 November), and Egypt (28 November).

However different the Nahda party, the Justice and Development party, and the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice party may be, they are likely to represent the first winners of democratisation in the region and the indispensable interlocutors – probably as senior partners in power-sharing agreements with smaller secular parties – for any common EU endeavour to “build” democracy in the Southern Mediterranean.

Furthermore, around the same time, Libya’s interim leader Mustafa Abdel Jalil pledged publicly to uphold Sharia law and make it the basic source of the new Constitution and legal code, raising a number of eyebrows among European diplomats.

This may well become a crucial test for the EU’s new approach. The first such precedent – Hamas’ electoral

¹¹ See G. Grevi, D. Helly, D. Keohane (eds.), *European Security and Defence Policy: The First 10 Years (1999-2009)*, EUISS (Paris, 2009): www.iss.europa.eu.

¹² A. Missiroli, , The ENP in Future Perspective, in R.G. Whitman, S. Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective* (Palgrave, 2010).

¹³ See for instance R. Sikorski, “Fostering Europe’s Infant Democracies”, *Europe’s World*, no. 19, Autumn 2011.

¹⁴ For an insightful analysis of the different provisions adopted since the springs’ outbreak, see M. Meyer-Resende, “Rules for Transition”, *New York Times*, 25 November 2011, and *Promoting Consensus: Constitution-Making in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya*, Briefing Paper no.19, by Democracy Reporting International, a Berlin-based NGO promoting political participation: www.democracy-reporting.org. See also K. Kausch, *Constitutional Reform in Young Arab Democracies*, Policy Brief no. 101, October 2011, FRIDE: www.fride.org.



victory in the Palestinian territories in early 2006 – was not particularly well managed by the West, even considering the different strategic context of the time.

In addition, Islamic groups are likely to advocate and possibly implement legislation that, in principle, would go against both European values and universal human rights: allowance of polygamy, for instance, lesser status for women or banning of homosexuality, and especially possible limitations to religious freedom.

In fairness, this time around Western reactions have been (to date) quite moderate, although some emerging Islamist groups in the region are not. Still, in less than one year, the shift away from the initially “modern” and secular mood of the Arab springs (with all their Facebookers and Twitterers) has been indeed quite impressive. At least in some countries, this may entail a step backwards in terms of civil society development and affect another key element of all transitions, namely national, societal, and possibly even regional reconciliation.

While some analysts in the West have started talking of an “Arab winter”, liberal activists in the region seem to believe that this is just a phase, that the springs were not carried out in the name of Islam, and that the pendulum will swing back. They also emphasise that, with the Arab springs, a new chapter in the history of the Arab world is being written, after the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the failure of modernising (but authoritarian) nationalist regimes, and the rise and fall of Islamic radicalism as embodied by the Taliban and Al Qaida – a chapter that may bring to completion the decolonisation process initiated in the second half of the 20th century¹⁵.

This peculiarity of the ongoing transitions in the Arab world has nothing to do with “Huntingtonian” views of a clash of civilisations: Arab (and more generally Islamic) societies per se are neither fully identical to nor inherently, irreconcilably different from other ones. Normative approaches are unhelpful here. What seems to matter is the degree of economic and social modernisation that took place *before* the springs – not just in specific urban areas but nation-wide – as well as the degree of modernisation that may be further

achieved by and through the current transitions. The crucial variable, in other words, is not necessarily *religion* but rather *tradition* – and how this shapes political attitudes and expectations.

Finding a new balance

The recent shift in favour of Islamic parties and the resulting tension between tradition and transition confront the West with both old and new policy dilemmas. In the field of democratisation as well as in others, in fact, the EU in particular will have to strike a new, convincing and coherent balance:

- Between conflicting priorities, as some Arab countries in the wider region are still run by authoritarian rulers but remain strategically important¹⁶;
- between its political and its commercial interests, as European trade concessions may be key to supporting Southern Mediterranean economies that trade very little among themselves;
- between its conflicting attitudes vis-à-vis migrants and the need to avoid a “brain drain” from the region;
- between its broad support for democratic transitions and its possible temptation to pick (or reject) winners;
- and between its broad ambitions (and others’ expectations) to strengthen civil society and the need to concentrate limited resources where it can make a real difference¹⁷.

Europe has never been – and is even less so now – the only international player in the Mediterranean. But, whereas the interests of other players (including the US) can afford to be more selective, the EU is much more exposed to the risks of protracted instability in the region. To get its policies right, therefore, Europe will probably have to redefine its understanding of stability, bearing in mind that the authoritarian regimes slowly being brought down were not so much stable as stagnant¹⁸, not so much secular as cynical and corrupt. And that a thriving civil society in a well-functioning state is a recipe for peaceful and mutually beneficial neighbourly relations.

¹⁵ The arguably most influential analyses in this domain are those by Bernard Lewis, from *What Went Wrong?* (2002) and *The Crisis of Islam* (2003) to *The End of Modern History in the Middle East* (2011). The insightful views of the Oxford historian transplanted to Princeton became controversial when the expression “clash of civilisations” – which he first coined to explain “the roots of Muslim rage” (*The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990) – was picked up by the American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington in his famous article “The Clash of Civilisations?” (*Foreign Affairs*, 72, no.3, Summer 1993) and subsequent book (1996).

¹⁶ See M. Ottaway, M. Muasher, *Arab Monarchies: Chances for Reform, Yet Unmet*, The Carnegie Papers, December 2011: <http://carnegieendowment.org>; and G. Paris, “Pourquoi les monarchies arabes ont mieux résisté à la contestation”, *Le Monde*, numéro spécial *Géo & Politique*, 24-25 décembre 2011, p. 14.

¹⁷ Tunisia is certainly a case in point, considering its size, its starting conditions, and its explicit willingness to work with the EU. For other reasons, also Morocco could be turned into a potential “success story” for the EU (while Moldova could represent an important test case in the Eastern neighbourhood). See i.a. S. Dennison, A. Dworkin, *Europe and the Arab Revolutions: A New Vision for Democracy and Human Rights*, Policy Brief (ECFR, November 2011), www.ecfr.eu; and C.-P. Hanelt, E. Dietl, *Europe and the Arab Spring in 2012*, Spotlight Europe, 2011/05, December: www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/spotlight.

¹⁸ V. Perthes, “Europe and the Arab Spring”, *Survival*, no. 6 (December 2011/January 2012), vol. 53.



Annex: BEPA Seminar Programme

- 10h30 **REGISTRATION/ARRIVAL OF PARTICIPANTS**
- 10h45 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
Margaritis SCHINAS, Deputy Head, Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA), European Commission
Dominique DAVID, Executive Vice-President, Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI), Paris
- 11h **QUO VADIS THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN? EU RESPONSES TO THE ARAB SPRING**
Keynote Speaker: **Bernardino LEON**, EUSR for the Southern Mediterranean
- 11h30 **PANEL I – TRANSITIONS**
Chair: **Margaritis SCHINAS**, Deputy Head, Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA), European Commission
Speakers: **Eneko LANDABURU**, Head, EU Delegation to Morocco, Rabat
Sana BEN ACHOUR, Former President, Association of Democratic Women in Tunisia, Tunis
Ahmed SAMIH, Director, Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Non-Violence Studies, Cairo

Followed by discussion among participants
- 13h **LUNCH**
SUCCESS STORIES OF EUROPEAN TRANSITIONS: LESSONS FROM THE ENLARGEMENT PROCESS
Keynote Speaker: **Štefan FÜLE**, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy

Followed by a Question & Answer session
- 14h30 **PANEL II – SOCIETIES**
Chair: **Mansouria MOKHEFI**, Head, Programme on the Middle East/Maghreb, Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI), Paris
Speakers: **Claire SPENCER**, Head, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House, London
Mokhtar TRIFI, President, Tunisian Human Rights League, Tunis
Ragia OMRAN, Activist/Volunteer, Hisham Mubarak Law Centre, Cairo
Khadija RYADI, President, Association Marocaine des Droits Humains (AMDH), Rabat

Followed by discussion among participants
- 16h **COFFEE (SERVED IN THE MEETING ROOM)**
- 16h **ROUND TABLE – EU CONTRIBUTION**
Chair: **Antonio MISSIROLI**, Adviser, Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA), European Commission
Speakers: **Hasni ABIDI**, Director, Centre d'Études et de Recherche sur le Monde Arabe et Méditerranéen (CERMAM), Geneva
Alar OLLJUM, Adviser to Hugues Mingarelli, Managing Director for the Middle East and North Africa, European External Action Service (EEAS)
Andrew JACOBS, Head of Unit, Geographical Coordination – Southern Neighbourhood, DG Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO), European Commission
Noureddine FRIDHI, Senior Correspondent, *Al-Arabiya*, Brussels

Followed by discussion among participants
- 17h30 **END OF SEMINAR**